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SPOTLIGHT

Rethinking the Colonial in the Greater War

Dónal Hassett

Department of History, Maynooth University, Maynooth, Ireland
Email: donal.hassett@mu.ie

The Centenary of the First World War saw unprecedent prominence given to the 'colonial contribution' in commemorative discourse. While this newfound public recognition sometimes relied on simplistic and sanitised narratives of the war, scholarship produced in the period has greatly enriched understandings of how conflict was experienced by colonised peoples. In this article, I explore the utility of one of the key conceptual innovations of the Centenary, the Greater War, for the analysis of colonial experiences of the conflict. I do this by considering three key questions: Can the Greater War framework facilitate new comparative histories of violence in the war? How do its expanded chronologies account for colonial contexts? Can we adapt its conceptual frameworks to better integrate colonial histories? Exploring the potential answers to these questions will point to new avenues of research that can ensure the colonial is effectively incorporated into our narratives of the global conflict.

On 13 November 1914, an ill-advised sortie led by a French officer, Colonel René Laverdure, resulted in the loss of his own life and those of 612 of the men under his command. Mass death of this kind had become grimly familiar since France entered the Great War in early August of that year. However, these soldiers were not lost in the midst of the major offensive launched by the Germans on the Ypres Salient in November 1914. Rather, they met their deaths at the hands of the troops of the Zaian Confederation in the foothills of the Atlas mountains. The battle of El Herri pitted French, Algerian, Tunisian, Senegalese and Moroccan soldiers serving under the tricolour against a loose alliance of Amazigh tribal groups resisting the encroachment of the colonial state into the Moroccan interior.[1] The conflict that sparked it pre-dated the July crisis that precipitated war in Europe while the broader French effort to secure sovereignty in Morocco would long outlast the Armistice of November 1918.[2] The way this war was conducted differed significantly from the conduct of conflict on the Western Front. Indeed, the clash at El Herri had begun as a classic colonial punitive raid defined by the type of extreme violence against civilians that was a key characteristic of colonial warfare.[3] Yet it is impossible to fully disaggregate these two contemporaneous conflicts from each other. Rivalry over French expansion in Morocco had fuelled tensions in Europe before the war, while German propaganda and material support sustained rebellion elsewhere in Morocco during the war.[4] The wartime demands made of Moroccans exacerbated colonial disruption of the local social order, fuelling resistance, while the withdrawal of troops to be sent to Europe weakened the coercive power of the expanding colonial

[1]William A. Hoisington, Jr., *Lyautey and the French Conquest of Morocco* (London: MacMillan, 1995), 74–6.

[2]Jonathan Wyrtzen, *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 50.

[3]Caroline Campbell, 'The Battle of El Herri in Morocco: Narratives of Colonial Conquest during World War I', *Historical Reflections* 46, no. 3 (2020): 9–30.

[4]Jonathan Krause, 'Islam and Anti-Colonial Rebellions in North and West Africa', *The Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2021): 674–95, 694.

state.[5] The fallout of the debacle within the French military was played out in a much broader debate about competing visions of military strategy and practices across all the contexts of the First World War.[6] While the perceived peripheries of the First World War have become increasingly prominent in narratives and analyses of the conflict, the expanding scholarship on the global Greater War still has to grapple with the tension between the universal and the specific. The challenge that faces us as historians is how we can account for these histories, and many others like them, together, recognising the interconnections without obscuring the particularities.

The period of the Centenary of the First World War was marked by the heightened prominence of the 'colonial contribution' to the conflict in commemorative discourse. While this new attention to colonial experiences helped diversify popular understandings of the war and opened space for discussion of enduring postcolonial injustices, 'instrumental' approaches to the memory of the war frequently won out over 'ethical' explorations of the complexity of its history.[7] Thankfully, the scholarship produced in recent decades has largely eschewed simplistic narratives of the 'colonial contribution'. Around the turn of the millennium, the growing emphasis on the global nature of the 'world war' saw a greater integration of the existing work on colonial experiences of the war into broader narratives.[8] This was further accelerated in the lead up to the Centenary, as the colonial became increasingly prominent in the major edited volumes published on the Great War.[9] The tentative prediction of an 'imperial turn' in First World War Studies in 2014 has largely been borne out by a flurry of high-quality publications.[10] In particular, the 'imperial turn' has intersected with older cultural and material turns in First World War Studies, with scholars focusing not just on how, why and where colonial subjects were mobilised during the war but also on how they, their families and their wider communities experienced and grappled with mobilisation.[11] The result is a richer account of the war that offers insights into colonial subjects' collective and individual agency, as well as the war's impact on emotions, social structures and political and cultural imaginaries in the colonies.

However, the impact of this scholarship on the broader theoretical understandings of the history of the war as a global phenomenon remains relatively limited. While colonial contexts can no longer be omitted from wider narratives, they remain on the margins of the conceptualisation of conflict in the period. As Michelle Moyd has convincingly argued, we need to 'do more to fold work on the Great War . . . into a sustained conversation with other historiographies' of colonial contexts, ensuring that we do not simply reproduce and transfer Eurocentric frameworks of analysis of the war in societies and

[5]Wyrtzen, *Making Morocco*, 49.

[6]Campbell, 'The Battle of El Herri', 17.

[7]Santanu Das, *India, Empire and First World War Culture: Writings, Images and Songs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 415.

[8]See for example Hew Strachan, *The First World War, Volume I: To Arms* (Bloomington: Oxford University Press, 2001); John H. Morrow, *The Great War: An Imperial History* (London: Routledge, 2004); and Michael Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[9]See for example: John Horne, ed., *A Companion to World War I* (Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010) and Jay Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Volume I: Global War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[10]Andrew Tait Jarboe and Richard S. Fogarty, 'Introduction: An Imperial Turn in First World War Studies', in *Empires in World War I: Shifting Frontiers and Imperial Dynamics in a Global Conflict*, ed. Andrew Tait Jarboe and Richard S. Fogarty (London: IB Tauris, 2014), 1–22, 4–8.

[11]There are many texts one could mention here but this small selection is representative: De-Valera NYM Botchway and Kwame Osei Kwarteng, eds., *Africa and the First World War: Remembrance, Memories and Representations after 100 Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018); Santanu Das, Anna Maguire and Daniel Steinbach, eds., *Colonial Encounters in a Time of Global Conflict, 1914–1918* (London: Routledge, 2022); Philip Buton and Marc Michel, eds., *Combattants de l'Empire: Les troupes coloniales dans la Grande Guerre* (Paris: Vendemiaire, 2018) Das, *India, Empire and First World War Culture*; Jarboe and Fogarty, *Shifting Frontiers and Imperial Dynamics*; Radhika Singha, *The Coolie's Great War: Indian Labour in a Global Conflict, 1914–1921* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); and Sarah D. Zimmermann, *Militarizing Marriage: West African Soldiers' Conjugal Traditions in the Modern French Empire* (Bloomington: Ohio University Press, 2020).

communities to whom their application is limited.[12] This is not simply about avoiding the flattening of colonial experiences that might result from shoehorning them into existing frameworks of analysis; it also encourages us to consider how these experiences in the colonial world might help us refine, even reimagine, the conceptual tools we use to understand this global conflict. In this article, I consider how one of the great theoretical innovations of recent scholarship, the Greater War concept, might facilitate a more extensive integration of colonial contexts into our analysis and trace what impact this might have on our broader understanding of conflict in the period.

The rise of the Greater War paradigm, a framework that conceives of 'imperial survival and expansion' as the driving force of violence, has pushed beyond the geographical and chronological boundaries of traditional narratives of the First World War, tracking conflict across large swathes of the world in the years directly before and after the declarations of war in August 1914 and the Armistice of November 1918.[13] It has emphasised the need to centre the experiences of perceived peripheries, especially in the shatterzones of the great dynastic land empires,[14] but also in colonial contexts. The expansion of the chronology of violence in the period has inevitably shifted focus away from the once-dominant Western Front and towards the complex and multiple conflicts that defined the war and its aftermath in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, as well as the disintegrating Ottoman Empire. Across these contexts, the 'war proper' between the armies of the belligerent empires cannot easily be disentangled from the extreme violence deployed against internal minorities and peripheral populations nor from the death and destruction that accompanied the foundation of new nation states in the years after the Armistice. The extent to which similar dynamics played out in colonial contexts has been less explored by the existing scholarship, even if the Greater War paradigm calls out for this type of interrogation.

This article explores both the potential and the limits of the Greater War as a prism through which we might integrate the colonial into not just our narratives of conflict in the period but also the way we theorise, analyse and conceptualise it. With this in mind, I will focus on three key questions. First, I ask if and how the Greater War paradigm might allow for new modes of comparison that have been previously been neglected but may offer original insights into the conduct and experience of war across the world in this period. Second, I consider the specific temporalities of violence and conflict in colonial contexts before, during and after the First World War and explore their interactions with and implications for the Greater War framework. Finally, I argue for a critical rethinking of the taxonomies of the Greater War so that colonial experiences can be reflected in and help to refine the key categories we use to describe and understand conflict in this era. This analysis will also allow us to consider whether the Greater War concept is sufficiently capacious and flexible to encompass the wide variety of histories at play here and, indeed, whether it is the best prism through which the global history of conflict in the era of the First World War can be written.

Colonial Comparison and the Global Greater War

While the move to centre what were once considered peripheries has helped to provincialise the Western Front in narratives of conflict, this has yet to fully filter down to comparative histories of the global Greater War. The important work tracing the contrasts and commonalities between experiences on the peripheries, be they in the shatterzones or in the colonies, and in the supposed 'Western European core' has done much to challenge hegemonic understandings of wartime mobilisation and

[12]Michelle Moyd, 'Centring a Sideshow: Local experiences of the First World War in Africa', *First World War Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016): 111–30, 113.

[13]Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, 'Introduction', in *Empires at War, 1911–1923*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1–16, 4.

[14]The concept of the 'shatterzone' was pioneered by Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz in their extremely influential collection *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

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the dynamics of violence across time and space in the period. However, we have not yet seen a comprehensive effort to draw global comparisons between colonial spheres of conflict and the imperial shatterzones, even though both contexts saw extensive use of extreme violence justified by and bound to shifting perceptions of the alterity of population groups under imperial rule. The dominant modes of comparison within the historiography of the First World War have not realised, and often have not even acknowledged, the potential of this type of comparison.

The Greater War framework's insistence on conceiving of conflict in the period as a struggle for 'imperial survival and expansion' implies the necessity of thinking of colonies and the perceived peripheries of the multinational land empires alongside each other.[15] Imperial rule in both contexts was structured by a 'politics of difference'[16] that eschewed notions of universal rights and instead favoured a flexible patchwork of regulation of alterity that deployed coercion, accommodation and collaboration to shore up its control of subject populations. In both contexts, the belief in a cultural hierarchy of ethnicities both reflected and constituted the uneven distribution of power and deployment of violence within the imperial polity while also fuelling, with varying degrees of intensity, 'civilising missions' to impose the cultural norms of politically dominant groups. However, the rigidity of the 'grammars of difference'[17] that underpinned the colonial state in its distinct forms, their expression in explicitly racial terms, and the scale and intensity of violence used to sustain them distinguished colonialism, defined by 'a relationship of domination',[18] from the practices of rule, discriminatory and repressive as they often were, in the perceived peripheries of the dynastic land empires. Historians of the Ottoman Empire who point to some commonalities in practices of rule between European colonial powers and the Ottoman administration of non-Turkish territories, sometimes even speaking of 'colonial Ottomanism',[19] stress the absence of the explicitly racial discourses and the sharp legal distinctions between subject and citizen that underpinned European imperialism overseas.[20] In the Russian Empire, the state itself distinguished the peoples of the Central Asian colonies and other indigenous groups from other subject peoples, categorising them as 'inorodsty' and developing specific regulations and practices to govern them.[21] The formal inclusion of the empire's Jewish population within this category and its informal application to restive national minorities in the empire's peripheries and borderlands underlines the extent to which processes of racialisation and othering and the forms of governance (and violence) that accompanied them could transcend the space between territories and peoples that were the subject of explicitly colonial policies of rule and those who were subjected within multinational imperial polities.[22] Indeed, a closer

[15]Gerwarth and Manela, 'Introduction', 4.

[16]Here I am using the term deployed by Thomas Kühn in his exploration of the nature of Ottoman rule in Yemen, a territory that sits between the blurred categories of imperial periphery and colonial territory: *Empire, Islam, and Politics of Difference: Ottoman Rule in Yemen, 1849–1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

[17]Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 1–56, 4.

[18]Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1997), 16.

[19]Thomas Kühn, 'Shaping and Reshaping Colonial Ottomanism: contesting Boundaries of Difference and Integration in Ottoman Yemen, 1872–1919', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 315–31.

[20]For a good account of the debates around colonialism in the Ottoman contexts see: Özgür Türesay, 'L'Empire ottoman sous le prisme des études postcoloniales. À propos d'un tournant historiographique récent', *Revue d'histoire moderne & contemporaine* 60–2, no. 2 (2013): 127–45, and Mostafa Minawi, *The Ottoman Scramble for Africa: Empire and Diplomacy in the Sahara and the Hijaz* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 14–15.

[21]Most 'inorodsty' were exempt from military service, and it was the attempt to conscript Central Asian populations into labour service that sparked the major revolt of 1916. See Tatiana Kotiukova, 'The Exemption of Peoples of Turkestan from Universal Military Service as an Antecedent to the 1916 Revolt', in *The Central Asia Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Aminat Chokobaeva, Cloé Drieu and Alexander Morrison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 45–70.

[22]See John W. Slocum, 'Who, and When, Were the Inorodtsy? The Evolution of the Category of "Aliens" in Imperial Russia', *The Russian Review* 57, no. 2 (1998): 173–90.

comparative study of the way violence was deployed in both the shatterzones of the land empires and colonial territories in this period will help us further refine our understanding of the commonalities and contrasts between these contexts and the structures of imperial rule that governed them.

Colonial historians have yet to really embrace this form of comparative thinking. While the one-country/one-colony monograph continues to serve as the primary building block for our understanding of colonial communities in the First World War, the comparative mode has become increasingly important. We can identify three main forms of comparison that have shaped historiography in recent decades. First, the metropole–colony comparison has implicitly, and often explicitly, underpinned much of the work on colonial soldiers, exploring the extent to which the 'rule of colonial difference'[23] dictated the distinct experiences of subjects and citizens within specific empires.[24] It has highlighted the divergences in treatment between the racialised subjects of empire and its predominantly white citizens. This has been complemented by an expansion in intra-imperial comparisons, with several more recent surveys and collective volumes highlighting the commonalities and contrasts in the experiences of different colonies within the same imperial formation.[25] This second strand of comparative work has explored the tension between policies articulated from the imperial centre and innovation and implementation of wartime policy on the ground in individual colonies, stressing the patchwork nature of empire and its role in differentiating the impact of the war on distinct groups of colonial subjects. Finally, a flurry of research deploying inter-imperial comparison has complicated and enriched our understanding of the 'colonial experience' of the war, stepping outside the silos of specific imperial historiographies to consider how certain logics and modes of mobilisation, repression and governmentality were common or particular to distinct imperial formations.[26] Trans-imperial comparison is also evident in regional studies of the war's evolution, impact and legacies across colonially imposed boundaries in extra-European spaces.[27] The contribution of this combined scholarship in forging new narratives of the First World War that are simultaneously more diverse, inclusive and representative of experiences around the world cannot be underestimated. And yet, the intra-imperial, inter-imperial and metropole–colony frameworks rely on limited and colonially structured geographies of the conflict that run the risk of reifying the division between 'colonial'

[23]Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 10.

[24]See for example, Richard S. Fogarty, *Race and War in France: Colonial Subjects in the French Army, 1914–1918* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 2008); Tyler Stovall, 'The Color Line behind the Lines: Racial Violence in France during the Great War', *American Historical Review* 103, no. 3 (1998), 737–96; Philippa Levine, 'Battle Colors: Race, Sex, and Colonial Soldiery in World War I', *Journal of Women's History* 9, no. 4 (1998): 104–30; and David Killingray, 'British Racial Attitudes towards Black People during the Two World Wars, 1914–1945', in *Colonial Soldiers in Europe, 1914–1945: 'Aliens in Uniform' in Wartime Societies*, Eric Storm and Ali Al Tuma (London: Routledge, 2016), 97–118.

[25]Julie d'Andurain, *Les troupes coloniales: une histoire politique et militaire* (Paris: Passés Composés, 2024); Buton and Michel, *Combattants de l'Empire*; Jacques Frémeaux, *Les colonies dans la Grande Guerre: Combats et épreuves des peoples d'outre-mer* (Paris: SOTECA, 2006); Ashley Jackson, ed., *The British Empire and the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2016); and Anna Maguire, *Contact Zones of the First World War: Cultural Encounter across the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021).

[26]See for example Heike Liebau, Katrin Bromber, Katharina Lange, Dyala Hamzah and Ravi Ahuja, eds., *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives from Africa and Asia* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Santanu Das, ed., *Race, Empire and First World War Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Fogarty and Jarboe, *Empires in World War I*; Ben Wellings and Shanti Sumartojo, eds., *Commemorating Race and Empire in the First World War Centenary* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018); and Dónal Hassett and Michelle Moyd, 'Colonial Veterans of WWI', Special Issue, *First World War Studies* 10, no. 1 (2019).

[27]Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Anne Samson, *World War I in Africa: The Forgotten Conflict Among the European Powers* (London: IB Tauris, 2012); Maxime Reynaud, *La Première Guerre mondiale dans le Pacifique: De la colonisation à Pearl Harbor* (Paris: Passés Composés, 2021); Heather Streets-Salter, *World War One in Southeast Asia: Colonialism and Anticolonialism in an Era of Global Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Guoqi Xu, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

and 'non-colonial' as 'two distinct worlds of warfare'.[28] This has impeded the kind of imaginative comparative work that considers the experiences and histories of conflict in the colonies alongside those in the perceived peripheries of the conflict as it unfolded in Europe.

Colonial historians looking at structures of violence tend to focus, perhaps unsurprisingly, on the histories of the specific territories they study. It makes sense for a historian of Indian military labour to contextualise the heightened corporal punishment of Indian soldiers in service during the war in terms of the longer history of physical disciplining within the colonial army and colonial society more broadly.[29] After all, even as modes of governmentality shifted over time, 'the deployment or the threat of violence still remained at the core of colonial relations'.[30] Likewise, historians of repression in the Bani-Volta region in West Africa, Northeastern India or Central Asia quite logically frame their discussions in terms of longer histories of repressive violence on the colonial frontiers.[31] Here we can see the influence of the 'savage war' paradigm, which contends that 'ideas of racial and cultural hierarchies present in the West . . . permeated military thinking and practice' in colonial campaigns. This made permissible forms of violence and technologies of warfare that were increasingly stigmatised within Europe.[32] The structuring role of this vision of warfare – and its indifference to distinguishing between civilian and soldier – in shaping colonial officials' responses to wartime resistance is crucial to understanding how conflict played out in colonial contexts. However, we must be careful not to simply assume 'the colonial particularity of a context as a given'.[33] This means proactively comparing practices of violence with those deployed in other, non-colonial parts of the world that were caught up in the great conflagration of the First World War. In doing so, we can identify specific elements of the culture of violence that may have been particular to colonial contexts and those that were or became common across different contexts around the world.

Where we have seen an interrogation of the connections between colonial conflict and the Greater War in Europe is in the scholarship focused on the colonial genealogy of practices of extreme violence. This historiography, centred on the German empire, suggests, with varying degrees of determinism, that the origins of the extreme violence in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century can be traced, at least in part, to the cultures of coercion developed in the colonies.[34] Even those who are sceptical of these arguments acknowledge the role of the 'colonial archive' of violent practices 'accumulated by western powers over the course of colonial history' in structuring cultures of coercion in Europe.[35] While this willingness to think of the continuities between modes of warfare in colonial

[28]Jack Levy and William Thompson, *The Arc of War: Origins, Escalation, and Transformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 186.

[29]Radhika Singha, 'The "Rare Infliction": The Abolition of Flogging in the Indian Army, circa 1835—1920', *Law and History Review* 34, no. 3 (2016): 783–818.

[30]Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettleback, 'Savage Wars of Peace', in *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World*, ed. Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 1–22, 4.

[31]Mahir Şaul and Patrick Royer, *West African Challenge to Empire: Culture and History in the Volta-Bani Anticolonial War* (Colombus: Ohio University Press, 2001) and Ian W. Campbell, 'Violent Acculturation: Alexei Kuropatkin, the Central Asian Revolt, and the Long Shadow of Conquest', in *The Central Asia Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Aminat Chokobaeva, Cloé Drieu and Alexander Morrison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 191–208.

[32]Kim A. Wagner, 'Savage Warfare: Violence and the Rule of Colonial Difference in Early British Counterinsurgency', *History Workshop Journal* 85 (2018), 217–237, 220–1.

[33]Bart Luttikhuis and C. H. C. Harinck, 'Nothing to Report? Challenging Dutch Discourse on Colonial Counterinsurgency in Indonesia, 1945–1949', in *Violence, Colonialism and Empire in the Modern World*, ed. Philip Dwyer and Amanda Nettelbeck (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 265–86, 266.

[34]Jürgen Zimmerer, *From Windhoek to Auschwitz? Reflections on the Relationship between Colonialism and National Socialism* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2023), and Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[35]Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, 'Hannah Arendt's Ghosts: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz', *Central European History* 42, no. 2 (2009): 279–300, 287.

contexts and Europe is most welcome, the central teleology underpinning much of this analysis suggests a spatial shift in violence from a point of origin in the colonial peripheries to an end destination in the European centre. This obscures the endurance of violence in the colonies throughout the First World War and its aftermath. Even if we accept that practices developed in the colonies transferred into military culture in Europe, this does not mean we should ignore how they continued to evolve in colonial contexts with disastrous and often deadly results for colonised populations. The neglect of these contemporaneous conflicts within the colonial world in the historiography of atrocity in Europe is striking. Writing in 2013, Mark Levene expressed frustration at the extent to which acts of extreme violence in the colonies 'remained outside the mainstream historical discussion zone', overshadowed by 'the convulsions in the imperial rimlands of the Great War'.[36] Although the scholarship produced over the course of the Centenary has shed new light on these conflicts, they have yet to be fully integrated into comparative histories of this period.

At the heart of the Greater War paradigm lies a comparative impetus to think of the multiple beginnings and endings of the First World War across space and time. This is evident in the edited volumes and the published series that have promoted the paradigm as a means of understanding conflict in the period. These collections, though rich in content, usually leave the comparative heavy lifting to the reader, especially when it comes to thinking of colonial contexts in relation to Europe's perceived peripheries.[37] Reading scholarship on mass violence in West Africa and in Western Ukraine or in Amritsar and Armenia in the same volume or within the one publication series inevitably points us to the potential of comparative analysis, but this is rarely specifically articulated and even less frequently actually realised. While we have seen excellent individual monographs exploring how violence played out across different contexts in Europe and in the shatterzones of the dynastic land empires that crumbled in the wake of the First World War, colonial contexts have typically been marginal to these analyses.[38] The Greater War framework has facilitated rich work on extended conflict within individual imperial polities that included both colonial peripheries and ethnic borderlands that morphed into shatterzones. This is evident in Vanda Wilcox's magisterial work on the Italian Empire and is perhaps the defining feature of Joshua Sanborn's provocative account of the collapse of the Russian Empire.[39] The challenge that now awaits us is to try, through more extensive collaboration and the co-production of research, to extend this type of analysis beyond one specific imperial formation and build a trans-imperial comparison that will facilitate a truly global history of the Greater War.

Here we might think how new scholarship could transcend national, imperial and regional borders by tracing the wartime evolution of particular coercive practices across time and space. This would require a more thorough interweaving of specific colonial histories of violence with the scholarship on the radicalisation of violence during the war and in its aftermath that has become central to the

[36]Mark Levene, *The Crisis of Genocide, Volume 1: Devastation, The European Rimlands 1912–1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 66.

[37]Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, eds., *Empires at War, 1911–1923* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Elizabeth Piller and Neville Wylie, eds., *Humanitarianism and the Greater War, 1914–1924* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023); and the range of high-quality monographs published in the Greater War series at Oxford University Press.

[38]Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (London: Allen Lane, 2017); Ryan Gingeras, *Fall of the Sultanate: The Great War and the End of the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Ota Konrád and Rudolf Kucera, *Paths Out of the Apocalypse: Physical Violence in the Fall and Renewal of Central Europe, 1914–1922* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022); and Jochen Böhler, *Civil War in Central Europe, 1918–1921: The Reconstruction of Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). Alan Kramer's *Dynamic of Destruction* centres the brutality of the Italian conquest of Ethiopia in its conclusion, arguing that the type of 'fascist warfare' it represented 'totally eradicated the distinction' between combatant and non-combatant, but colonial conflict in the earlier period of the Great(er) War itself is marginal to the analysis. Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 329.

[39]Vanda Wilcox, *The Italian Empire and the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); Guoqi Xu, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); and Joshua Sanborn, *Imperial Apocalypse: The Great War & the Destruction of the Russian Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Greater War paradigm. We must embrace a form of 'reciprocal comparison' in which colonial experiences of the war are used to inform analysis of experiences elsewhere in the world and vice versa, with no one set of experiences held to be normative or universal.[40] We should, for example, ask what might a history of forced labour look like if it incorporated the compulsion of colonial subjects into forms of war work, and the large-scale impressment of Africans into often lethal service as porters on the battlefields of the colonial spheres of conflict, alongside the regimes of coerced labour in the occupied zones and borderlands of Europe?[41] How might historians incorporate the forced migration of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz populations of Semirech'e province in Central Asia and the mass displacement of Kanaks in New Caledonia alongside the expulsions and deportations experienced by so many in Europe and Anatolia?[42] How do the scorched earth policies pursued along much of the Eastern Front and in occupied France during Operation Alberich compare to similar tactics of destruction in the African theatres of inter-imperial clashes, the systematic devastation of villages in the Bani-Volta War and the brutal violence deployed across Central Asia? Scholars have pointed to the potential that a comparative approach to answering questions like these holds for forging new understandings of the global Greater War.[43] The challenge is now to build the capacity for the kind of collaboration and co-production of research essential to deep comparative analysis.

Comparison, of course, does not mean equation. The differences in the scale, form, duration, intention and impact of these coercive policies between colonial and non-colonial contexts (and across distinct colonial contexts) are just as significant as the commonalities between them. In much of the colonial realm, the end of the war was not followed by the kind of mass violence that would define the imperial shatterzones of the great dynastic land empires. The victory of the two largest colonial powers, France and Britain, and the endurance of the coercive power of the colonial state meant that, while the early post-war period was marked by unrest in some areas, there was no direct equivalent to the vacuums of power that emerged in the shatterzones of the land-based empires. This was not the case in the former Russian Empire. There, the collapse of imperial authority that had been accompanied by such extreme violence during the war in both the western borderlands and the colonies of Central Asia opened a space for competing political projects that deployed extensive violence to impose forms of control that perpetuated at least some of the logics of imperial and colonial rule. The specificity of Russia as a multinational and colonial land empire means that its historiography has been more attentive to comparison between shatterzones and colonial peripheries, offering generative debates for the broader field.[44] The Greater War framework can facilitate the extension of this kind of comparative work beyond the internal dynamics of violence within one empire to a much broader and

[40]For an explanation and an example of this approach, see Gareth Austin, 'Reciprocal Comparison and African History: Tackling Conceptual Eurocentrism in the Study of Africa's Economic Past', *African Studies Review* 50, no. 3 (2007): 1–28.

[41]Jens Thiel and Christian Westerhoff, 'Forced Labour', in *1914–1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, 8 Oct. 2014.

[42]Alexander Morrison, 'Refugees, Resettlement and Revolutionary Violence in Semirech'e after the 1916 Revolt', in *The Central Asia Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Aminat Chokobaeva, Cloé Drieu and Alexander Morrison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 209–26; and Adrian Muckle, *Specters of Violence in a Colonial Context New Caledonia, 1917* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

[43]Mark Levene specifically called for the types of comparison envisaged here in *The Crisis of Genocide*, 65–8, while Hans-Lukas Kieser and Donald Bloxham implicitly do the same in their chapter 'Genocide', in *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Volume I Global War*, ed. ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014,) 585–614.

[44]See Joshua Sanborn, 'The Russian Empire', in *Empires at War, 1911–1923*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 91–108; Tomohiko Uyama, 'Why in Central Asia, Why in 1916? The Revolt as an Interface of the Russian Colonial Crisis and The World War', in *The Central Asia Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Aminat Chokobaeva, Cloé Drieu and Alexander Morrison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 27–44; and Niccolò Pianciola, 'Scales of Violence: The 1916 Central Asian Uprising in the Context of Wars and Revolutions (1914–1923)', in *The Central Asia Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Aminat Chokobaeva, Cloé Drieu and Alexander Morrison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 169–90.

concerted engagement with the commonalities and contrasts in coercive practices deployed across the globe in this period.

The Temporalities of the Colonial Greater War

The concept of the Greater War not only alerts us to broader geographies of conflict; it also highlights the extended timescales of violence. Many parts of Europe had not enjoyed uninterrupted peace prior to August 1914, and many did not after the Armistice of November 1918. This was also true in the colonies, where fragile forms of imperial sovereignty were established and sustained through violence. However, where the shatterzones of the land-based empires were defined in the period of the Greater War by a 'continuum of violence' that transcended the chronological boundaries of interstate conflict, violence in the colonies in this period must be seen as integral to a continuum of colonial violence that both predates and outlasts the expanded temporalities proposed by the Greater War paradigm.[45] A reassessment of the temporalities of colonial experiences of the war is not merely about expanding or reshaping our chronologies. It also requires us to analyse how different understandings of the past and visions of the future influenced the conduct of conflict in the present. This is true in those territories like Morocco where conflict during the First World War is best understood as a constituent part of the longer process of colonial conquest. It is also true in places like Punjab where the brutality of the repression deployed in Amritsar reflected not just the post-war anxieties and instability of the colonial order but also the historical legacies of previous anti-colonial revolts and the repression that followed them. To fully account for this, we must embrace a 'thick periodisation' of colonial conflict in the period that not only acknowledges that conflicts were rooted in a broader global war but also highlights both how histories of colonial violence structured these conflicts and how the communities impacted integrated them into their own complex temporalities of past, present and future.[46]

Although the classic cartographic representations of the warring imperial formations present the world in solid blocs of competing colours, the limits of imperial sovereignty on the peripheries and in the interiors of the colonial empires meant European rule was heavily contested. This was especially acute in those territories whose relatively recent 'conquest' was partial, ongoing and tenuous when the First World War began. The costly defeat inflicted by the forces of the Zaian tribal confederation in Morocco in November 1914 was just one bloody chapter in the long-running story of the resistance to French expansion.[47] Meanwhile, the Italian defeat of the Ottomans in Libya in 1912 did not signal an end to resistance to their rule. The Italians continued to wage a counter-insurgency campaign against Libyans who rejected colonial rule prior to their entry into the world war and long after it ended.[48] In both cases, the demands made by the war in Europe and the support of the rival belligerent powers strengthened resistance and weakened the capacity of the colonial state to respond.[49] Post-Armistice resistance in Morocco and Libya would continue beyond the traditional endpoint of the Greater War (1923) and require major mobilisation of troops and modern technologies of warfare to finally assure imperial sovereignty.[50] In India, British control in the borderlands of the Raj on both the northeastern and northwestern frontiers was never fully assured, and military campaigns there were

[45]Robert Gerwarth, 'The Continuum of Violence', in *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Volume 2: The State*, ed. Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 638–62.

[46]Kim A. Wagner, 'Calculated to Strike Terror: The Amritsar Massacre and the Spectacle of Colonial Violence', *Past & Present* 233, no. 1 (2016): 185–225, 195–6.

[47]Jonathan Wyrtzen, *Making Morocco: Colonial Intervention and the Politics of Identity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), 50.

[48]Wilcox, *The Italian Empire*, 102.

[49]Richard Bosworth and Giuseppe Finaldi, 'The Italian Empire', in *Empires at War, 1911–1923*, ed. Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 34–51, 42, and Jonathan Krause, 'Islam and Anti-Colonial Rebellions in North and West Africa, 1914–1918', *The Historical Journal* 64, no. 3 (2021): 674–95, 694.

[50]Wrytzen, *Making Morocco*, 50–6, and Wilcox, *The Italian Empire*, 230–7.

constant before, during and after the war.[51] While these conflicts were integral to the Greater War, they were also constitutive of the longer process of colonial conquest and the resistance it provoked. This reality shaped how they were understood and conducted by both coloniser and colonised alike.

Even in those conflicts that were most closely bound to the chronologies of war in Europe, histories of colonial repression shaped how warfare was conducted and experienced. In German-ruled Southwest Africa, local experiences of the war cannot be divorced from the legacies of the recent genocidal campaign against the Herero and Nama peoples (1904–8). For the surviving Herero, the advent of the war was an opportunity to undo the harsh logics of colonial violence that had defined German rule. The advance of South African troops saw Herero desert their former employers, break with colonial institutions and return to the localities from which they had been displaced or expelled.[52] While the process of dismantling German structures of rule and their replacement with a South African administration that followed did create space for the Herero and other peoples to rebuild, the brutal repression in 1922 of the Bondelwarts, a small Nama polity struggling to recover from the genocide, confirmed that South African rule would also be sustained by extreme racial violence.[53] In East Africa, the memory of past campaigns of colonial conquest and repression shaped the experiences of both colonial officials and subject peoples. Southern highland areas were the subject of Schutztruppe violence of varying levels of intensity from the 1890s through to the Maji Maji War of 1905–8 and on to von Lettow-Vorbeck's (in)famous roving and destructive campaign during the First World War.[54] Here again we see how a continuum of colonial violence that often stretched far beyond even the expanded chronologies of the Greater War remains vital to understanding the way conflict unfolded in many colonial contexts.

Beyond the logic of total war, colonised people often saw coercion as part of longer processes of colonial exploitation and violence. Joe Lunn's oral history of Senegalese veterans underlines how some understood their initial mobilisation for transport overseas on large ships through the prism of communal narratives of the transatlantic slave trade, in which 'precedents for their kinsmen ever returning were virtually non-existent'.[55] The additional demands made of colonised populations during the war, coupled with the diminution of military manpower and the stretching of administrative authority, fuelled insurrection against colonial rule in different imperial formations during the First World War.[56] The connection between revolt and the growing pressure, often violent, exerted on colonial populations to supply troops, labourers and resources to feed the war machine is visible in Algeria, French West Africa, Angola, Nigeria, Russian-ruled Central Asia, British-ruled Southern Africa, India's Northeastern Frontier and Vietnam. If the war was the trigger for rebellion in these and other contexts, it was never the sole motivating factor. Each of these insurrections was inscribed into the longer histories of colonial conquest and anti-colonial resistance.[57] In Central Asia, Kyrgyz oral poets linked both the labour conscription draft that sparked insurrection in the territory and the harsh repressive violence that followed it to the policies of sedentarisation of nomadic groups,

[51]Mark Condos and Gavin Rand, 'Coercion and Conciliation at the Edge of Empire: State-Building and Its Limits in Waziristan, 1849–1914', *The Historical Journal* 61, no. 3 (2018): 695–718 and Robert Lunkhopao, 'Empire of Violence: Colonial State-Making and Frontier Violence during the Anglo-Kuki War', in *Against the Empire: Polity, Economy and Culture during the Anglo-Kuki War, 1917–1919*, ed. Ngamjahao Kipgen and Doungul Letkhojam Haokip (London: Routledge, 2021), 71–90.

[52]Jan-Bart Gewald, *Herero Heroes: A Socio-Political History of the Herero of Namibia, 1890–1923* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999), 232–3.

[53]Ibid., 273–4.

[54]Moyd, 'Centring a Sideshow', 118.

[55]Joe Lunn, *Memories of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999), 100.

[56]Jonathan Krause, 'Rebellion and Resistance in French Indochina in the First World War', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48, no. 3 (2020): 425–55, 426. Krause is currently working on a monograph exploring the global history of anti-colonial revolt during the First World War, sure to be a vital contribution to the field.

[57]Ibid., 447.

dispossession of collectively held land and settlement of Russian colonisers that had so brutally disrupted economic, social and cultural life in the years preceding the First World War.[58] Enforced sedentarisation was also a key motivator for resistance to labour recruitment in Northeastern India.[59] In both Algeria in November 1916 and in the Bani-Volta region of West Africa from 1915 to 1917, the arrival of recruiting commissions was the immediate spark for resistance, but broader hostility to the exploitative and coercive nature of colonial rule gave this resistance meaning.[60] The war may have accelerated, exacerbated and intensified the impact of colonial demands and the violence that accompanied them, but it was not the origin of extreme forms of coercion in the colonies. Far from it.

Across the colonial world, anxieties about potential violence grounded in extensive past experiences of arbitrary repression by the state, extreme and brutal force by settlers and periodic bloody resistance by the indigenous population fuelled the escalation of conflict during the First World War. For example, in New Caledonia, the Kanak rebels, the settlers, the state authorities and those Kanaks who allied with them all understood the conflict in 1917 through the prism of the colonial past, especially the mass insurrection of 1878.[61] Similarly, both the contemporary reality and the historical experience of massacres of settlers radicalised the deployment of extreme violence by settler militias and Tsarist forces in Central Asia.[62] Memories of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 were, as Kim Wagner has shown, crucial to the deployment of extreme violence in the repression of protest in the Punjab, most notoriously at Jallianwala Bagh in April 1919.[63] In each of these cases, past violence and fears of future violence intermingled to unleash violence in the present. Here there are strong, if underexplored, parallels with imperial shatterzones, where the 'spectres' of past and prospective future acts of violence structured the use of coercion by states, old and new, their proxies and those who challenged their authority.

Ultimately, the temporal elasticity of the Greater War concept reaches its limits in at least some of these colonial contexts. While setting the end date of the First World War as the signature of the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923 might make sense for the imperial shatterzones of the Ottoman Empire,[64] how do we then account for the war's relationship to the continued violence in Morocco, escalating in the wake of the declaration of the Rif Republic in February of that year, or the scale of the brutality that followed the launch of the Italian 'pacification' campaign in Libya that spring? If a fragile peace seemed to have been established in Europe following the conclusion of the civil wars in Russia and Ireland, the end of the occupation of the Ruhr and the settlement in Anatolia,[65] conflict was ongoing or soon to flare up across significant parts of the colonial world, in North Africa, Syria, Waziristan and French Equatorial Africa. Here it seems that the Greater War framework works best if

[58] Jipar Duishembieva, 'From Rebels to Refugees: Memorialising the Revolt of 1916 in Oral Poetry', in *The Central Asia Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Aminat Chokobaeva, Cloé Drieu and Alexander Morrison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 289–307.

[59] David Vumlallian Zou, 'Patriots and Utilitarians in the Anglo-Kuki War: The Case of Southern Manipur, 1917–1919', in *The Anglo-Kuki War, 1917–1919: A Frontier Uprising against Imperialism during World War I*, ed. Jangkhomang Guite and Thongkholal Haokip (London: Routledge, 2019), 157–67, 157–8.

[60] Şaul and Royer, *West African Challenge*, 120–2, and Ouanassa Siari Tengour, 'La révolte de 1916 dans l'Aurès', in *Histoire de l'Algérie à la période colonial*, ed. Abderrahmane Bouchène, Jean-Pierre Peyroulou, Ouanassa Siari Tengour and Sylvie Thénault (Paris: La Découverte, 2014), 255–60.

[61] Muckle, *Specters of Violence*.

[62] See Jörn Happel, 'Fears, Rumours, Violence: The Tsarist Regime and the Revolt of the Nomads in Central Asia, 1916', in *The Central Asia Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Aminat Chokobaeva, Cloé Drieu and Alexander Morrison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 126–44, and Aminat Chokobaeva, 'When the Nomads Went to War: The Uprising of 1916 in Semireche', in *The Central Asia Revolt of 1916: A Collapsing Empire in the Age of War and Revolution*, ed. Aminat Chokobaeva, Cloé Drieu and Alexander Morrison (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 145–68.

[63] Kim A. Wagner, *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear & the Making of a Massacre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

[64] Jay Winter, *The Day the Great War Ended, 24 July 1923: The Civilianization of War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

[65] Gerwarth and Manela, 'Introduction', 3.

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it conceives of the First World War as an agglomeration of different armed conflicts, all interlinked but each with its own specific modalities, logics and temporalities. Scholars may debate when to impose a start and an end date on the Greater War, but it is perhaps more useful to think of the framework less as offering an expanded chronology of conflict and more as facilitating the interrogation of the interconnections of conflict across time and space in this period. In particular, it can allow us to begin to think of the intersections (and divergences) between the continuum of colonial violence that structured the experiences and practices of conflict in the colonial world and the continuum that shaped the dynamics and logics of violence identified by historians of the Greater War in Europe and the shatterzones.

Towards a New Taxonomy of the Global Greater War

The drive to incorporate the colonial into the history of the First World War requires a reconsideration of existing taxonomies of violence and their deployment so that they can better account for the diversity of colonial experiences. The Greater War framework has already significantly reimagined hegemonic conceptualisations by paying close attention to the blurred boundaries between peacetime and wartime, the civilian and the military and state and non-state actors. It has effectively broken with the 'Eurocentric thinking' that held 'real war' to be 'interstate war fought by nation-states with regular armed forces'.[66] Even so, the predominant focus on the imperial shatterzones has marginalised colonial contexts in the remaking of conceptual histories of conflict in the period. This runs the risk of embedding a new form of 'semiotic inequality' that, while it provincialises Western European experiences, still limits engagement with colonial contexts of conflict.[67] It is worth reflecting, therefore, on how our conceptualisation and use of categories such as 'war', 'prisoner of war', 'war internee', 'war veteran' and 'paramilitary' might be adapted to better incorporate the realities of conflict in the colonies.

While the notion of a 'Greater War' is articulated in the singular, its analytical mode is distinctly plural, pointing to the diversity of the forms and spaces in which conflict occurred in the period. This challenge to normative conceptions of what conflict looked like, the rules that governed it and the practices that shaped it reinforces long-standing critiques among scholars of violence in the colonies in this era. Although colonial historians are particularly aware of the blurred boundaries between peacetime and wartime, some scholars of colonial campaigns of repression during the Greater War insist on the use of the term 'war' to describe these conflicts.[68] This is, in part, a response to official colonial discourses that sought to minimise the extent of the violence by using the language of 'disorder', 'rebellion' or 'revolt'. It is also a critique of the echoing or even reproduction of these discourses in the existing historiography, which contributes to an interpretation of colonial violence as 'incidental to the war in Europe rather than as a conflict worthy of examination in its own right'.[69] Again, if we are to reconceptualise the First World War as an agglomeration of multiple interrelated wars, we must include the significant conflicts of the period within that category of analysis.

This argument merits closer attention from historians of the Greater War, particularly given the scale of the violence and disruption generated by colonial conflict in the period. In the case of the Bani-Volta region, the conflict impacted the lives of up to 900,000 people. While the nature of the colonial archive means the death toll is hard to establish, it likely resulted in more than 30,000 deaths.[70] Even in New Caledonia, where the death toll was in the hundreds rather than the thousands,

[66]Tarak Barkawi, 'Decolonizing War', *European Journal of International Security* 1, no. 2 (2016): 199–214, 199–200.

[67]Yuri Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (London: IB Tauris, 1990).

[68]Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 195, and Celeste-Joseph Moussa Coulibaly, *La guerre du Bani-Volta (1915–1916)*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017), 142.

[69]Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 195.

[70]Şaul and Royer, *West African Challenge to Empire*, 4–5.

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the insistence on calling the conflict of 1917 a 'revolt' rather than a 'war' runs the risk of minimising the mobilisation of military resources involved, the level of violence deployed and the degree and duration of disruption to the lives of the colony's inhabitants it caused.[71] This same logic can be extended to the far bloodier conflict that rocked Central Asia in the period and the lengthier one that brought death and destruction to India's northeastern borderlands.[72] These were conflicts that required the mass deployment of forces by colonial states and major mobilisation by those they sought to repress. They were characterised by extensive and evolving campaigns in which each side sought to adapt their tactics to enhance their own structural advantages. They saw the cultural mobilisation of indigenous societies, the restructuring of the social and symbolic order and the (re)activation and renewal of traditional cultures of warfare to support and sustain the war effort in ways that the term 'rebellion' may underplay.[73] The warring parties typically had diverging cultural and political understandings of what war meant, how it should be conducted, what its possible outcomes would be and how it could be brought to an end. The complexities of these conflicts and the hundreds of thousands of lives impacted by them mean they should be subject to the same analytical scrutiny that applies to the other constituent wars that make up the Greater War.

A full reckoning with the colonial dimensions of the Greater War also requires a deeper engagement with colonial practices of detention. The treatment of both colonial POWs in Europe and enemy citizens detained as aliens in the colonial territories of rival empires has been explored in rich and insightful scholarship.[74] Yet, colonial prisoners of war in the colonies themselves remain marginal to the literature, while those captured during wartime repression of resistance are all but invisible in it. The scholarship on practices of detention during the First World War in Africa points not just to a greater recourse to summary executions of enemy combatants[75] but also to more willingness to allow prisoners of war to defect and be remobilised in the ranks of the armies that had captured them.[76] This distinct set of practices reflected a belief in the fundamental difference in the nature of warfare in colonial contexts. This 'rule of colonial difference' underpinned the legal framework that emerged to regulate the conduct in conflict, including the treatment of POWs, in the years before the war. The Hague Convention's claim to rely on the 'usages established between civilized nations'[77] did not automatically render its provisions inapplicable to the colonies,[78] but it did reflect a broader cultural understanding, sometimes explicitly articulated and defended by colonial officials, that these rules

[71]Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 195.

[72]Chokobaeva, 'When the Nomads Went to War', 158–60, and Jangkhomang Guite and Thongkholal Haokip, 'Introduction', in *The Anglo-Kuki War, 1917–1919: A Frontier Uprising against Imperialism during World War I*, ed. Jangkhomang Guite and Thongkholal Haokip (London: Routledge, 2019), 1–33, 1–4.

[73]Hemkhochon Chongloi, 'Colonialism and Khankho: An Indigenous Reading of the Anglo-Kuki War', in *Against the Empire: Polity, Economy and Culture during the Anglo-Kuki War, 1917–1919*, ed. Ngamjahao Kipgen and Doungul Letkhojam Haokip (London: Routledge, 2021), 172–90, 173.

[74]Heather Jones, 'Imperial Captivities: Colonial Prisoners of War in Germany and the Ottoman Empire, 1914–1918', in *Race, Empire and First World War Writing*, ed. Santanu Das (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 175–93; Ravi Ahuja, Heike Liebau and Franziska Roy, eds., *When the War Began We Heard of Several Kings: South Asian Prisoners in World War I Germany* (New Delhi: Social Science Press, 2011); and Mahon Murphy, *Colonial Captivity during the First World War: Internment and the Fall of the German Empire 1914–1919* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

[75]Daniel Steinbach, 'Prisoners of War (Africa)', in *1914–1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, 17 Nov. 2020.

[76]Michelle Moyd, *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa* (Colombus: Ohio University Press, 2014).

[77]This term was used in the Preamble to the 1899 Hague Convention on the Laws and Customs of War on Land and repeated in the Preamble to the 1907 Hague Convention. Both texts are available at: https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/treaties-and-states-parties.

[78]Christopher Szabla, 'Civilising Violence: International Law and Colonial War in the British Empire, 1850–1900', *Journal of the History of International Law* 25, no. 1 (2023): 70–104.

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were not relevant to colonial conflict.[79] This meant POWs of the inter-imperial conflicts in colonial spheres were not extended the same protections granted to their peers in Europe. It also meant that those non-state actors who challenged colonial rule in the period (and long beyond it) were treated as criminals, not as POWs. The challenge for historians is not to reproduce the exclusionary logics of the early international humanitarian law framework and to expand the conceptual understanding of the POW so as to integrate 'these voices behind the barbed wire' from the colonial world alongside those of detainees around the globe.[80]

Mass internment was another crucial feature of the Great(er) War, with the major belligerent powers in the First World War detaining more than 400,000 enemy civilians between 1914 and 1920.[81] Here again the impact of this phenomenon on citizens of an enemy country who were interned in colonial territories has been the subject of rich scholarship that highlights the tension between inter-imperial conflict and the preservation of white supremacy, but the practice of internment of subject populations has largely been ignored.[82] Indeed, the colonial genealogy of the concentration camp as a technology of repression has generated more interest among scholars of the period than the realities of internment for civilians in the colonies during the Greater War.[83] And yet, efforts to crush resistance in the colonies saw the adoption of policies of confinement and/or surveillance of local populations in colonially designated reserves and villages and, in the case of India's northwestern borderlands, specially constructed concentration camps.[84] These practices, designed to isolate 'rebels' from the communities who supplied them and extend control and discipline over subject populations, represented both an evolution of past practices of colonial confinement and a prefiguration of the counter-insurgency tactics that would shape later wars of decolonisation.[85] Alongside this recourse to forms of confinement, colonial administrators also resorted to hostage-taking. While the practice of hostage-taking in the Western Front was the subject of contemporaneous controversy and has since generated high-quality scholarship, its use in colonial contexts has received much less attention. And yet colonial authorities across different contexts took captives with a view to coercing subject populations into loyalty, a practice that had long been integral to the practice of 'savage war'. Indeed, Mark Levene has suggested that the fact that Jewish male leaders were taken as hostages in Russia while it was women and children in the Upper Volta region tells us 'us something about the similarities, but

[79]Wagner, 'Savage Warfare', 229.

[80]Steinbach, 'Prisoners of War (Africa)'.

[81]Matthew Stibbe, 'Enemy Aliens and Internment', in *1914–1918-online: International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, ed. Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin, 8 Oct. 2014.

[82]Stefan Manz and Panikos Panayi, *Enemies in the Empire: Civilian Internment in the British Empire during the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) and Daniel Steinbach, 'Challenging European Colonial Supremacy: The Internment of "Enemy Aliens" in British and German East Africa during the First World War', in *Other Combatants, Other Fronts: Competing Histories of the First World War*, ed. James E. Kitchen, Alisa Miller, and Laura Rowe (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), 153–75.

[83]See for example these works that focus on the 'return' of the concentration camp from the colonies to Europe during the First World War: Klaus Mühlhahn, 'The Concentration Camp in Global Historical Perspective', *History Compass* 8, no. 6 (2010): 543–61; Andrea Pitzer, *One Long Night: A Global History of Concentration Camps* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2017); and Dan Stone, *A Short History of Concentration Camps* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[84]Muckle highlights how all Kanaks were required to descend to closely surveilled coastal reserves led by 'loyal' chiefs or else they were considered legitimate targets for violence, while French forces in West Africa destroyed rebel villages and insisted that any reconstruction follow models of urban planning that would facilitate easy access for repressive forces. British officials explicitly used the term 'concentration camps' to describe their repressive activities in Manipur. Muckle, *Specters of Violence*, 109; Şaul and Royer, *West African Challenge*, 228; and Thongkholal Haokip, 'Breaking the Spirit of the Kukis: Launching the "Largest Series of Military Operations" in the Northeastern Frontier of India', in *The Anglo-Kuki War, 1917–1919: A Frontier Uprising against Imperialism during World War I*, ed. Jangkhomang Guite and Thongkholal Haokip (London: Routledge, 2019), 93–117, 109.

[85]Jangkhomang Guite and Thongkholal Haokip explicitly situate the internment camps and broader British repressive tactics in the Anglo-Kuki War in the longer history of colonial counter-insurgency in their introduction to the edited volume *The Anglo-Kuki War*.

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also critical differences' between the practice of violence in these contexts.[86] It also points to the analytical potential of a greater integration of the colonial into our histoires of internment in this period. The archival trace of these practices and their effects may be fainter than in European contexts, but this does not absolve us of the duty to write them into our broader histories.

The figure of the colonial war veteran seems to embody the Greater War framework's imperative to push both our spatial and our temporal conceptions of global conflict in the period. While veterancy in specific colonial contexts has been the subject of a rich and varied historiography, this has rarely been integrated into the broader scholarly discussion of the construction of veterancy as a global social and political category in the wake of the First World War.[87] Recent shifts within veteran history, undoubtedly linked to the rise of the Greater War framework, mean that the field is no longer focused 'almost exclusively on Western nations', as a leading comparativist historian asserted in 2000.[88] New scholarship has emerged to consider veterancy in the shatterzones of the multinational empires of Central and Eastern Europe, not only expanding the imagined geography of veteran history but also complicating pre-existing visions of what veterancy looked like in the inter-war period.[89] Practitioners of veteran history have increasingly embraced trans-national and comparative approaches, tracing the commonalities and contrasts in veteran experiences across a range of contexts.[90] These innovations have run in parallel to an explosion in literature on the wartime experience of colonial soldiers and a broader move to 'decolonise the soldier' within the scholarship of the First World War. However, we have yet to really see a strong intersection between these new approaches that would give colonial veterans the place they deserve in the history of modern veterancy.

Integrating colonial experiences of veterancy in the period will serve not just to expand the geographies of veteran history but also to reshape how we think of the veteran as a category of analysis, as a political actor and as a social subject. In the wake of the Armistice, Eurocentric models of veterancy worked to limit access to the status of veteran to many colonial subjects who were active contributors to the war but, because of their ethnicity and/or gender, were not integrated into the forms of service to which veteran status was accorded. Porters, camp followers, militarised labourers and soldiers deployed in non-combat units, as well as the women who often accompanied them in the colonial spheres of the war, were typically marginalised within or excluded from the limited legal regimes of veterancy that emerged in colonial contexts after the Armistice. Thinking about how we account for their post-war experiences has the potential to help us reimagine the category of veterancy. If scholars of individual colonial contexts have highlighted the importance of veterans as political actors, embodying the 'tensions of empire' in the inter-war period, veteran activism and veteran associations in the colonies have yet to be fully integrated into broader political histories of veterancy in the period. A detailed exploration of how administrators and veterans across colonial contexts sought to negotiate the 'idioms of mutual if uneven obligation' that arose from wartime service is vital to any

[86] Levene, *The Crisis of Genocide*, 66.

[87] Thomas Grillot, *First Americans: U.S. Patriotism in Indian Country after World War I* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Michael Joseph, 'First World War Veterans and the State in the French and British Caribbean, 1919–1939', *First World War Studies* 10, no. 1 (2019): 31–48; Lunn, *Memories of the Maelstrom*; Driss Maghraoui, 'Moroccan Colonial Soldiers: Between Selective Memory and Collective Memory', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 20, no. 2 (1998): 21–41; Mann, *Native Sons*; Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of Colonial Military Service in the King's African Rifles, 1902–1964* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999); and Richard Smith, *Jamaican Volunteers in the First World War: Race, Masculinity and the Development of National Consciousness* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

[88] David Gerber, *Disabled Veterans in History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), xii.

[89] Maria Bucur, *The Nation's Gratitude: World War I and Citizenship Rights in Interwar Romania* (London: Routledge, 2021); Julia Eichenberg, *Kämpfen für Frieden und Fürsorge. Polnische Veteranen des Ersten Weltkriegs und ihre internationalen Kontakte, 1918–1939* (Berlin: Oldenbourg, 2011); and John Paul Newman, *Yugoslavia in the Shadow of War: Veterans and the Limits of State Building, 1903–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[90] Ángel Alcalde, *War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Julia Eichenberg and John Paul Newman, eds., *The Great War and Veterans' Internationalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Natali Stegman and Katrin Boeckh, 'Veterans and War Victims in Eastern Europe during the 20th Century', *Comparativ* 20, no. 5 (2010).

effort to build a global history of veterancy and may lay the foundation for a more nuanced interrogation of relations between a whole range of polities and their veterans around the globe.[91] Finally, a comparative analysis of the efforts of colonial empires to cater for and control their subject veterans through forms of social provision has the potential both to enrich our understanding of the distinct cultures of veteran welfare in the imperial metropoles and to incorporate colonial contexts into our analysis of the intersection between veteran provision and the emergence of the welfare state. While historians of veterancy in the colonies have explored these questions in detail, their analysis has rarely been fully integrated into broader historiographies of the shifting modes of governmentality under colonial rule and the rise of colonial welfare states. The crop of innovative and high-quality comparative research on colonial veterancy produced by early career researchers in recent years offers new and rich analysis on all of these issues.[92] The challenge we now face is how we build upon and further extend this expanding historiography while also incorporating its insights into a truly global history of veterancy.

The final category that I suggest here might benefit from reconsideration through the prism of colonial experiences is that of the paramilitary. The analysis of the phenomenon of paramilitary violence has been central to the development of the Greater War framework. While recent historiography has explored the longer genealogy of paramilitarism in Europe (and its connection to colonialism), the conjuncture of the bitterness at defeat, perceived or real, the fear of revolution and disorder, and the collapse of state authority in imperial shatterzones was crucial to the uneven distribution of paramilitary violence in the wake of the Armistice.[93] As Rick Fogarty and David Killingray have convincingly argued, these factors were largely absent from the African colonies (at least south of the Sahara) of the two major colonial powers who emerged victorious from the First World War.[94] Delayed demobilisation and the confiscation of weaponry constituted practical obstacles to the formation of paramilitary organisations. Moreover, the threat of extreme repression and the reliance of returned veterans on the state for prestige and financial support meant that ex-servicemen, who were crucial to paramilitarism in Europe, had neither the incentive nor the opportunity to organise in this way in these African colonies.[95] In the post-Armistice colonies, it was, as the events at Amritsar in 1919 demonstrated, men who remained in the formal service of the empire and followed the orders of colonial officers, not paramilitaries who were distanced from or acted outside the authority of the state, who were responsible for most of the extreme violence.

This is not to say that the military cultures of mobilisation that underpinned paramilitarism in Europe were irrelevant in the colonial world. Settler colonies did see violence that mirrored some of the practices in Europe but was structured by the racial logics of colonial rule. The Rand Revolt in South Africa combined labour militancy and contestation of the state order with both a desire to maintain the grammars of racial difference that sustained the colonial state and the evocation of racialised 'spectres of violence' to justify the brutal killings of black South Africans.[96] In Algeria, an imagined union of the radical left and Muslim nationalists led one settler columnist to declare: 'the danger is as grave for Algeria as it was for France when war was declared . . . the threat is all

[91] Mann, *Native Sons*, 65.

[92] Hilary R. Buxton, 'Disabled Empire: Race, Rehabilitation, and the Politics of Healing Non-White Colonial Soldiers, 1914–1940' (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 2018); Michael Joseph, 'Beyond the Nation: Anticolonialism in the British and French Caribbean after the First World War (1913–1939)' (PhD diss., Oxford University, 2019) and George N. Njung, 'Victims of Empire: WWI Ex-Servicemen and the Colonial Economy of Wartime Sacrifices in Postwar British Nigeria', *First World War Studies* 10, no. 1 (2019): 49–67.

[93] Nicolas Camilleri, 'Gunshots, Sociability and Community Defence: Shooting Associations in Imperial Germany and Its Colonies', *Journal of Modern European History* 20, no. 2 (2022): 236–57; Robert Gerwarth and John Horne, 'Vectors of Violence: Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War, 1917–1923', *The Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 3 (2011): 489–512, 491–5.

[94] Richard S. Fogarty and David Killingray, 'Demobilization in British and French Africa at the End of the First World War', *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 1 (2015): 100–123.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Jeremy Krikler, 'Lost Causes of the Rand Revolt', *South African Historical Journal* 63, no. 2 (June 2011): 318–38.

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the more acute because the enemy comes from within and he could carry along with him in his anti-French action the natives whose attitude does nothing to allay our fears'.[97] This spectre was brandished to legitimise the recourse to far more extreme forms of violence by the local branches of the civic unions than would have been permitted by their equivalents in metropolitan France.[98] This points to the necessity for a more comprehensive analysis of the intersection between long-standing militia culture in settler colonies and the post-war dynamics of paramilitarism.

While paramilitarism did not become a major feature of political life elsewhere in the colonies immediately after the war, martial cultures of masculinity shaped by the war were clearly visible. This was most evident in the phenomenon of the Otruppa in Namibia, in which young Herero men asserted their masculinity and sought to enact the reconstruction and transformation of their community through the reimagination of the aesthetics of the German Schutztruppe.[99] It echoed through the incorporation of military drills into the performances of 'dance societies' that helped structure post-war social relations across much of East Africa in the period.[100] The rise of scouting culture among colonised populations in the inter-war period, in some cases explicitly linked to emergent forms of anti-colonial mass politics, must also be considered in light of the evolution of cultures of military mobilisation in the wake of the war.[101] Later in the inter-war period, more explicitly paramilitary organisations would play an important role in political life in India.[102] These diverse histories of the adoption, adaptation and appropriation of militarised cultures of mobilisation across the colonial world should factor into our analyses of paramilitarism and the broader militarisation of cultures around the globe in the wake of the Greater War.

Moving colonial experiences of conflict closer to the centre of our analyses of the global Greater War will require us to interrogate, expand and likely reimagine some of the key categories we use to talk about conflict. A critical re-engagement with concepts like POW, internee, veteran and paramilitary through the prism of colonial experiences in the period has the potential not only to extend the geographical reach of our scholarship but also to refine our frameworks of analysis so they can better account for the diversity of experiences of conflict across all of the spaces touched by the Greater War. It should also facilitate more extensive comparative work across a wide range of contexts that will allow us to explore how shifting grammars of class, gender, race and ethnicity structured experiences of conflict around the globe.

Conclusion

In April 1927, the French president, Gaston Doumergue, travelled to Marseille to inaugurate the city's new war memorial. While the *monument aux morts* had become a standard feature of the urban landscape in towns and cities across France and its colonies in the years after the Armistice, the memorial in Marseille was somewhat distinct. Dedicated to the 'Heroes of the Army of the East and the Distant Lands', it decentred the Western Front, so dominant in French narratives, to honour those who had fallen in the shatterzones of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires and in the war's colonial

[97] Pierre-Edmond, 'L'Effort Révolutionnaire', *L'Echo d'Alger*, 4 May 1920.

[98] Dónal Hassett, *Mobilizing Memory: The Great War and the Language of Politics in Colonial Algeria, 1918–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 40.

[99] Molly McCullers, '"We Do It So that We Will Be Men": Masculinity Politics in Colonial Namibia, 1915–49', *The Journal of African History* 52, no. 1 (2011): 43–62.

[100] Moyd, 'Centring Sideshows', 121.

[101] See for example Katrin Bromber, 'Soldier-Citizen Training: The Early Boy Scout Movement in Ethiopia (1920s–1950s)', *Northeast African Studies* 20, no. 1–2 (2020): 91–116; Mahfoud Kaddache, '"Les soldats de l'avenir". Les Scouts musulmans algériens (1930–1962)', in *De l'Indochine à l'Algérie: La jeunesse en mouvements des deux côtés du miroir colonial, 1940-1962*, ed. Nicolas Bancel, Daniel Denis and Youssef Fates (Paris: La Découverte, 2003), 68–77, and Timothy H. Parsons, *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa* (Colombus: Ohio University Press, 2004).

[102] Ali Raza and Franziska Roy, 'Paramilitary Organisations in Interwar India', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38, no. 4 (2015): 671–89.

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spheres of conflict. The monument's Western flank, emblazoned with the dedication 'To the Sons of Greater France', included an exoticised sculptural representation of colonial soldiers from North Africa, West Africa and Indochina beneath a list of non-European spheres of conflict: Morocco, the Levant, Syria, Cilicia and Cameroon. This juxtaposition conflated the contribution of colonial troops, most of whom fought on European battlefields, with the colonial spheres of conflict themselves, with Otherness the main uniting category. The inclusion of Morocco is notable in that unlike in the Levant and Cameroon, the enemy against which French troops had fought in the recently declared protectorate was not the forces of the Ottomans or the Germans but rather the putative 'Sons of Greater France' themselves. It was not a conflict that had begun in August 1914 nor had it been brought to an end by the Armistice or even the Treaty of Lausanne, a reality that would have been clear to the attendees at the inauguration for whom the brutal violence of the Rif War that had ended less than a year before was a recent memory. This confusion between the memory of the First World War and that of colonial conflict would be further exacerbated by a number of subsequent commemorative interventions on the site, marking, in a profoundly sanitised narrative, French rule in Indochina and Algeria and the conflicts that brought it to an end.[103] The memorial complex thus came to embody, in complicated and contradictory ways, the intersections between the continuum of colonial violence and the dynamics, logics and temporalities of violence that shaped the Greater War in the imperial shatterzones.

The great task that faces historians of conflict in the period as we move beyond the shadow of the Centenary is to grapple with these intersections in ways that transcend both the sanitisation and flattening impulses of commemorative discourse, past and present, and the limitations of the existing scholarship. The Greater War framework can help us to do this by facilitating and encouraging forms of reciprocal comparison between and within what were once the perceived peripheries of the First World War. Exploring the contrasts and commonalities between experiences of conflict in colonial contexts and the imperial shatterzones will help us better grapple with the dynamics that structured extreme violence in the period and their relations to the shifting regimes of alterity that were central to imperial collapse, survival and expansion. This, of course, necessitates the kind of thorough engagement with colonial historiographies that Michelle Moyd has so convincingly advocated.[104] We cannot simply shoehorn colonial experiences into existing temporal or conceptual frameworks that, as we have shown here, do not always capture the complexity of these histories. Instead, we need to think of the Greater War as a flexible framework, less concerned with imposing new fixed chronologies, geographies or categories of analysis on conflict and more focused on interrogating the potential of alternative and evolving temporal, spatial and conceptual analyses of violence in the period. Here the Greater War should function as a federating concept, one that can bring together the agglomeration of wars that defined the era to consider how their specific logics, modalities and temporalities intersect, how they diverge and what this might tell us about a global history of conflict in the period.

Whether the Greater War framework crumbles under the interpretative weight of the type of substantial and substantive comparative analysis envisioned here remains to be seen. If the collaborative work required to realise this comparison ends up either transcending this paradigm or crashing up against its limits, this too will be a useful contribution to both our methodological understandings and our historical knowledge of conflict in the period. Indeed, the greatest obstacle to the co-production of research necessary for this broad comparison is ultimately not the theoretical framework we rely on to organise it but rather the broader structures – economic, cultural and institutional – that have so often pushed histories and scholars of and, especially, from what were once imperial shatterzones and colonial contexts to the margins of historiographical debates. It may well be the case that 'the

[103]For an account of the memorial's history see: Dónal Hassett, 'Marseille's Porte d'Orient: Commemoration of Conflict and Colonialism on the Mediterranean's Northern Shore', https://www.peopleinmotion-costaction.org/2024/01/12/marseilles-porte-dorient-commemoration-of-conflict-and-colonialism-on-the-mediterraneans-northern-shore/.

[104]Moyd, 'Centring a Sideshow'.

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ontological inequality cannot be broken by mere academic efforts',[105] but a broad, inclusive and comprehensive attempt to more thoroughly integrate colonial histories into the Greater War paradigm and put them into dialogue with other histories in the peripheries can help us both to reimagine our interpretative frameworks to better account for the diversity of the experiences of conflict in the period and to build a more inclusive community of scholarship of the global Greater War.

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[105] Maria Todorova, 'Are the Balkans Connected? When and How?', *Balkanologie* 18, no. 1 (2023): 1–6, 6.

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