

*Dreams and Nightmares: Imagining the Aftermath of War, 1815–1945**

Thinking about and planning for the end of war generally begins as soon as fighting breaks out, if not long before. Yet few studies analyse how participants considered and prepared for the outcome of war amid ongoing violence, compared with the wealth of those that document the long-term impacts of war.¹ Even fewer compare the dynamics of wartime projections in different times and places. Scholarship on the aftermath of war tends to spotlight the personal or political ramifications of a single conflict, focusing, for instance, on enduring trauma, the redrawing of boundaries or the often-troubled transition from wartime to peacetime society.²

One area on which scholars have focused is the porous relationship between war and peace. Jay Winter has argued that this distinction no longer holds for the inter-war years, which he suggests is an ‘outdated phrase’, one which historians should relinquish.³ Ute Planert has described the transition from war to peace as ‘fluid’.⁴ The intersections between war and post-war periods have been the subject of much scholarship which identifies how the two are intertwined.⁵ Many of these studies are focused on specific time frames. In her wide-ranging study, Stella Ghervas instead takes five moments from the eighteenth century to the twentieth to argue that peace fostered the ‘political idea’ of Europe, and Europe shaped the concept of peace. Ghervas draws on the collective

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1. L. McEnaney, *Postwar: Waging Peace in Chicago* (Philadelphia, PA, 2018), is rare in looking at ‘peace’ not as a phenomenon that occurs on the date on which state-sanctioned violence ends but as a process created afterwards by the clash of wartime hopes and expectations.

2. Scholarship relating to these topics is too vast to encompass here. A good starting point on demobilisation and enduring trauma in Western Europe after the First World War is J. Crouthamel and P. Leese, eds, *Psychological Trauma and the Legacies of the First World War* (Cham, 2017). For work focusing on the Second World War and Eastern Europe, see V. Kivimäki and P. Leese, eds, *Trauma, Experience and Narrative in Europe after World War II* (Cham, 2022).

3. J. Winter, *The Day the Great War Ended, 24 July 1923: The Civilianisation of War* (Oxford, 2022), p. 4.

4. U. Planert, ‘Introduction: Neither War nor Post War: Decades of Reconstruction’, in U. Planert and J. Retallack, eds, *Decades of Reconstruction: Postwar Societies, State-Building, and International Relations from the Seven Years’ War to the Cold War* (Cambridge, 2017), p. 2.

5. Ibid., pp. 6–7.

meaning of the 'Spirit of Enlightenment' to examine in a longitudinal study those who argued for perpetual peace. In doing so she considers the diplomacy of war and peace through peace treaties and laws.⁶ Leading scholars have considered the aftermaths of war in broader works which include, for example, the extensive scholarship of Tony Judt, Eric Hobsbawm and Mark Mazower.⁷ We build on the insights of historians investigating 'past futures' to understand the 'peculiarity' (*Eigenart*) of a given historical epoch. As Reinhard Koselleck has stressed, paying attention to the dreams and nightmares of the past offers insights historians cannot ignore. Dreams, he argues, 'testify to an inescapable facticity of the fictitious'.⁸ Expanding on Koselleck's approach, historians of Stalinism have also explored how terror and dreaming were entangled in the Soviet 1930s, when people learned to perceive the present through the lens of an imagined future.⁹

Our approach takes inspiration from such work by investigating how contemporaries dreamt of the aftermaths of war while they were still enmeshed in the everyday of ongoing war. This article seeks to contribute to the existing wide-ranging and influential scholarship on aftermaths of war by suggesting that, during the conflicts we have selected, the concept of the aftermath of war was a major source of discussion, writing and engagement during the conflict itself. This is a distinctive point of departure from current scholarship, which has explored many facets of the relationship between war and peace but not this perspective. In all of the wars examined here, the aftermaths are envisioned during the period of conflict itself, which we argue is a distinctly modern phenomenon. We consider not only the practicalities of what states did (diplomacy, treaties and territorial exchanges), but also what people fighting the wars hoped they would gain, or what society might look like after war came to an end. Many understood that war could be a revolutionary moment, and the link between war, the upheaval that ensued and the potential for social and political change appears to have been a constant since the Napoleonic Wars.

Rather than focus on the differences in those visions, which necessarily vary enormously from one war and one period to another, our comparison focuses on similarities that one can find across all modern wars. In

6. S. Ghervas, *Conquering Peace: From the Enlightenment to the European Union* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 1–17.

7. See T. Judt, *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945* (London, 2005); E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century* (London, 1994); M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (London, 1999); E. Hobsbawm, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present* (London, 2012).

8. R. Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (4th edn, Frankfurt am Main, 2000), quotation at p. 19, and pp. 283–4.

9. S. Fitzpatrick, 'Becoming Cultured: Socialist Realism and the Representation of Privilege and Taste', in S. Fitzpatrick, *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca, NY, 1992), pp. 216–37, esp. p. 217; K. Schlögel, *Terror und Traum: Moskau 1937* (Munich, 2008); M. Edele, *Stalinist Society, 1928–1953* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 136–8.

practical terms, the modern era gave rise to visions of 'eternal peace' for many—visions fuelled in the nineteenth century by millenarist expectations or the hope that enlightened leaders could devise new political systems based on law and reason rather than brute force. By the twentieth century, wartime writing charting an imagined peacetime had become more prolific, forming a distinct genre that spun off in multiple directions as diverse voices made future plans and predictions. With the rise of mass armies filled with soldiers mobilised to fight on behalf of nation-states, military leaders had to accommodate ordinary peoples' ambitions, promising that wartime sacrifice would be recouped in years to come—whether through imperial ventures or colonisation, the forced expulsion of religious or ethno-linguistic minorities, or state aid to veterans and their families. Studying the potency of such wartime imagining—the depth of hopes raised and thwarted—suggests that few projections were benign; one group's dreams were invariably another's nightmare, often establishing the grounds for future conflict. Looking at how people caught up in wars variously understood and conceptualised the post-war era while its shape remained unknown, however, can reveal how war became a framing device for understanding past, present and future. It can highlight conventional dynamics in wartime and raise questions about beginnings and ends, sorting the specific from the general and transforming periodisation.

Taking a transnational longitudinal approach, this article focuses on a series of case-studies: the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1792–1815) and the American Civil War (1861–65); the First World War in Britain and the Ottoman Empire (1914–18); and the Second World War in Eurasia, represented by the Japanese, Soviet and German experiences (1939–45). This survey uncovers a preoccupation with what the end of war would deliver, what its impact and legacy would be. We focus on the complex and multi-layered purposes the narratives of the aftermath of war may serve during conflict and question a sharp delineation between war and post-war periods. Concentrating on 'imaginings', we highlight interactions between war and its aftermaths, challenging the notion of 'the post-war' as an *a priori* category by stressing its historical contingency and fluidity. The 'aftermath of war' is constantly in the process of formation, contestation and evolution. The conclusion brings us to the present by exploring how and when the aftermaths of these distinct but interrelated wars end or, by contrast, endure and overlap.

Wars are moments in which social, political and ideological forces come together, sometimes forming a compact, sometimes conflict. Capturing the complexity of these moments requires a blending of social, political and cultural history, but finding the right sources for this enterprise is challenging. The availability of both primary and secondary materials for understanding 'past futures' is uneven across our case-studies. Sources for the hopes and aspirations of ordinary soldiers and civilians

in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars are limited, leading us to concentrate on the writings of politicians and intellectuals. By the mid-nineteenth century, increasing rates of literacy ensured sufficient material for addressing interactions between the aspirations of leaders and the led, but also a reconstruction of how the fortunes of war changed the anticipation of its aftermath.¹⁰ Throughout our case-studies we observe hopes for post-war peace and prosperity alongside fears of post-war disorder—including revolution, racial war and even genocide. The tension between hope and fear about the aftermaths of war appears as a constant, although the ways in which hope and fear play themselves out are context-specific. Such sentiments are often expressed in a language of religion, which never entirely disappears but is supplemented and at times overcome by more secular doctrines of salvation—nationalism, socialism, imperialism or welfarism.

I

While notions of ‘aftermath’ and ‘post-war’ have been widely applied to the two world wars, they are less commonly used for the era of the Atlantic Revolutions between 1770 and 1830.¹¹ Given the limits of our source base, the focus here is on the political-philosophical discussion about how a new Europe should be shaped in the aftermaths of the Napoleonic Wars. Within that context, we put particular emphasis on ideas for the future political reconstruction of Europe, hopes for establishing ‘eternal peace’,¹² and debates about how to fulfil the promises made to soldiers in exchange for their war service—the one field of discourse where we can at least glimpse popular desires regarding the aftermaths in this period.

From 1797 onwards, some European policy-makers, diplomats and intellectuals began grappling with how to achieve peace and stability in Europe, and in the process they started to imagine and conceptualise a (new) European order.¹³ Napoleon’s foreign policy goals were never clear, except to defeat Britain and dominate the Continent in the manner of

10. For an introduction to a history of war ‘from below’, see, for example, W. Wette, ed., *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes: Eine Militärgeschichte von unten* (2nd edn, Munich, 1992).

11. ‘Introduction: War, Demobilization and Memory in the Era of Atlantic Revolutions’, in A. Forrest, K. Hagemann and M. Rowe, eds, *War, Demobilization and Memory: The Legacy of War in the Era of Atlantic Revolutions* (Houndmills, 2016), p. 9.

12. Louis de Bonald, *Réflexions sur l’intérêt général de l’Europe, suivies de quelques considérations sur la noblesse* (Paris, 1815), p. 9.

13. J.M. Sherwig, ‘Lord Grenville’s Plan for a Concert of Europe, 1797–99’, *Journal of Modern History*, xxxiv (1962), pp. 284–93; and E. Kimerling Wirtschafter, ‘Russian Perspectives on European Order: “Review of the Year 1819”’, in J.M. Hartley, ed., *Russia and the Napoleonic Wars* (Houndmills, 2015), p. 58; W.H. Zawadzki, ‘Prince Adam Czartoryski and Napoleonic France, 1801–1805: A Study in Political Attitudes’, *Historical Journal*, xviii (1975), pp. 245–77; J.M. Hartley, *Alexander I* (London, 1994), pp. 65–7, 69–71; P.W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford, 1994).

a new Charlemagne—although at times he mused about some sort of universal monarchy (much as did the Japanese in the twentieth century) as the eventual outcome of the wars, an empire that would represent not just simple hegemony on the Continent, but rather world domination.¹⁴ As for the great powers (Britain, Russia, Austria, Prussia), it was not until Napoleon's defeat seemed inevitable, late in 1813, that they seriously began thinking about what a post-Napoleonic Europe might look like.

But first, Napoleon had to be defeated. The Napoleonic Wars involved the conscription of millions of men across Europe. These mobilisations fundamentally changed the relationship between the subject (or citizen) and the state as political concessions had to be made (or at the very least promised) to placate the people and compensate them for the enormous sacrifices and losses of life they were experiencing. One result was the birth of modern veteran benefit systems; another was political accommodation of 'the masses'. Given the new status attached to the citizen soldier that emerged from these wars, veterans demanded better treatment and it was difficult for states to refuse them. The state was now expected to look after sick and mutilated soldiers, as well as war widows.¹⁵ The principle and practices by which pensions were allocated were radically reformed. The system became more egalitarian and pensions were now calculated according to the seriousness of the disability and the length of service.

As for political concessions, there was no unified approach and each country responded in different ways. Some promised more to ordinary soldiers than others, some reneged on their promises and some refused to make any concessions at all. In Spain, any hope of using the Peninsular Wars to create a new political vision for the country was dashed with the return of Ferdinand VII in 1814.¹⁶ In Russia, Tsar Alexander I did not consider it necessary to offer any political concessions to his people, even as the country was being invaded by the French army in 1812. In the German states, the question of a post-war political order only moved onto the agenda once victory over Napoleon seemed likely. The result was a 'weak compromise' in the German Confederation. In Prussia, the promise of more political rights and the formation of 'popular representation' made by Frederick William III did not materialise until the revolution of 1848–49.¹⁷ The general outpouring of frustration at not being

14. P. Dwyer, 'Napoleon and the Universal Monarchy', *History*, xcvi (2010), pp. 293–307.

15. On veterans, see I. Woloch, "A Sacred Debt": Veterans and the State in Revolutionary and Napoleonic France', in D.A. Gerber, ed., *Disabled Veterans in History* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), pp. 145–62.

16. E. La Parra López, 'The Monarchy at Bayonne and the Constitution of Cadiz', in M. Broers, P. Hicks and A. Guimerá, eds, *The Napoleonic Empire and the New European Political Culture* (Houndmills, 2012), pp. 260–69.

17. On the promises made by Prussia and Austria, see K. Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars against Napoleon: History, Culture, and Memory* (New York, 2015), pp. 55, 70–72, 155–70, 278.

able to participate in the polity eventually led to the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. War was both the engine and the accelerator of social, cultural and political change in Western Europe.¹⁸

Writings about the future after the Napoleonic Wars can be divided into two sorts. The first were the more pragmatic plans statesmen devised to restructure Europe along the lines of a ‘balance of power’. The second were what might be called utopian visions of post-war Europe, which generally advocated for some sort of European federation to secure a lasting peace. Those approaches overlapped with a religious element to the struggle against Napoleon, in the rhetoric adopted both by some of Europe’s political leaders and subsequently among their envoys to the Vienna Congress, in framing public declarations about the new Europe.¹⁹

We can pass over the practical plans of what the sovereigns of Europe, along with many of the political elites, wanted to achieve at the end of the Napoleonic Wars.²⁰ They can be summed up in the phrase ‘a return to order’, usually understood as a return to conservatism, sometimes involving constitutional monarchy and sometimes not. Conservatives viewed the aftermath of war as ‘not only an opportunity to (re)build a stable new European political order but also to regenerate and re-moralise a decayed European civilisation’.²¹ The larger question, however, was about putting in place a system of collective security that was meant to be based on law and reason.²² The decisions taken at the Congress of Vienna were thus hard-headed choices based on the reality of foreign-policy considerations, but some thinkers also had hopes of a post-war federation of European states—a proto-European Union—that was only tenuously connected to practical politics.²³ These ideas found expression in books and pamphlets written in the last years of the Napoleonic Wars, as well as in pamphlets published in the years immediately after the Congress in the hope of yet influencing the general direction of European politics.

The conservative political French theorist Louis Gabriel Ambroise, vicomte de Bonald, for example, was one of those who saw the end of

18. Hagemann, *Revisiting Prussia's Wars against Napoleon*, pp. 279, 281–300, 301–36; M. Kozelsky, *Crimea in War and Transformation* (New York, 2018), p. 205.

19. A. Zorin, ‘“Star of the East”: The Holy Alliance and European Mysticism’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, iv (2003), pp. 313–42, at 331.

20. Relevant studies include G. Sluga, *The Invention of International Order: Remaking Europe after Napoleon* (Princeton, NJ, 2022); B. Vick, *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics after Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA, 2014).

21. M. Lok, ‘The Congress of Vienna as a Missed Opportunity: Conservative Visions of a New European Order after Napoleon’, in B. de Graaf, I. de Haan and B. Vick, eds, *Securing Europe after Napoleon: 1815 and the New European Security Culture* (Cambridge, 2019), p. 59.

22. B. de Graaf, *Fighting Terror after Napoleon: How Europe Became Secure after 1815* (Cambridge, 2020).

23. J.R. Sofka, ‘Metternich’s Theory of European Order: A Political Agenda for “Perpetual Peace”’, *Review of Politics*, lx (1998), pp. 115–49.

the Napoleonic Wars as an opportunity to establish an 'eternal peace'.²⁴ For Bonald, order was the prevention of revolution, upheaval and conquest—where republican France represented chaos and destruction—and was founded on the two great principles of religion and monarchy. Many conservative thinkers shared his views and had high hopes that, out of the destruction wrought by twenty years of warring, a new moral and political order would emerge. Bonald believed the new European order should be Christian and especially Catholic, ideas that resonated with other writers in both France and Germany and were influential in the Romantic movement.²⁵

One of the more influential French thinkers, Claude Henri, comte de Saint-Simon, in October 1814, on the eve of the Vienna Congress, published the treatise *De la réorganisation de la société européenne* (*On the Reorganisation of European Society*), in which he proposed a European Confederation governed by a European parliament.²⁶ The only way to guarantee peace in the long term was completely to reorganise and restructure the political system of Europe. Britain and France would begin by forming a joint parliament. After a while, Germany and then other European countries would follow and join this embryonic federation, eventually creating the desired European parliament. Fundamental to all of this was industry and commerce, which were the links that would unite Europe. Written in haste for publication before the Congress met, copies were sent to the delegates, although there is no indication that any of them actually read it. The treatise was more widely read in France, where it was reprinted in November of that year. The thinking that commerce and industry would lead to peace was popular with some other French intellectuals, including Benjamin Constant, whose *De l'Esprit de conquête* (*On the Spirit of Conquest*), was published in 1814.²⁷ Nevertheless, Saint-Simon's pamphlet has been praised as 'an absolutely new conception' of how to unify Europe.²⁸ Writers from other countries envisaged a new order that would result in the unification of Europe, or at least in some sort of European confederation. Even the Dutch Restoration of King William I contemplated a European-style Diet, which he called an

24. De Bonald, *Réflexions sur l'intérêt général de l'Europe*, p. 9; Lok, 'Congress of Vienna as a Missed Opportunity', p. 56.

25. Lok, 'Congress of Vienna as a Missed Opportunity', pp. 57, 61–2.

26. Saint-Simon wrote with the help of his disciple, Augustin Thierry: C.-H. de Saint-Simon and Augustin Thierry, *De la réorganisation de la société européenne* (Paris, 1814). See also R. Swedberg, 'Saint-Simon's Vision of a United Europe', *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, xxxv (1994), pp. 145–69.

27. Benjamin Constant, *De l'Esprit de conquête* (Paris, 1814). According to D. Rougemont, *Vingt-huit siècles d'Europe: La conscience européenne à travers les textes d'Hésiode à nos jours* (Mesnil-sur-l'Estrée, 1990), pp. 200–201, the idea of European unity is implicit in Constant's work.

28. Rougemont, *Vingt-huit siècles d'Europe*, p. 201; Swedberg, 'Saint-Simon's Vision of a United Europe', pp. 166–8.

'Aréopage Européen', based on the principles of Vienna and the spirit of the Holy Alliance.²⁹

These works were very different from many of the politico-philosophical writings that were published in the last years of the Napoleonic Wars in the German-speaking countries, which were conservative or nationalist in nature, and which envisaged a revival of the balance of power. Friedrich Gentz typified this approach.³⁰ In 1813, Johann Gottlieb Fichte published *Draft of a Political Tract in the Spring of 1813*, considered to be one of the most important statements of political thought for the period. Fichte was a German nationalist, but he believed the German people lacked a national consciousness. Ernst Moritz Arndt, another German nationalist, who called for a nation in arms, penned a *Phantasy of a Future Germany* in 1812.³¹ Writing in an Old Testament style, he portrayed God as an avenger, a terrifying 'destroyer who lusts for struggle and war'. Arndt wrote about a new Germany that was not built on the model of a constitutional monarchy.³² Other nationalists, such as Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, sought the creation of a greater Germany (including Switzerland, Denmark, the Low Countries and Austria), so that Germany could fulfil its high humanitarian mission as universal mediator. The new Germany would have a new capital—Teutona—on the Elbe River.

II

While none of the calls for a federated Europe went beyond intellectual circles, the link between the end of war and political change pointed to things to come. If the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars suggest a multi-layered mix of aftermaths fuelled by religion, new visions of the state and the prevention of revolutions, alongside a pining for the past, the American Civil War takes us to mythmaking and considerations of the past, the present and the future.

In popular understanding, the American Civil War ceased when Confederate commander Robert E. Lee surrendered on 9 April 1865. But while President Andrew Johnson officially proclaimed an end to hostilities in August 1866, his words rang hollow for millions. The United States Congress continued to use its war powers to administer the

29. Lok, 'Congress of Vienna as a Missed Opportunity', pp. 66–7, and for an example of Dutch writing on the idea of a perpetual peace, see *ibid.*, p. 65.

30. R. Cahen, *Friedrich Gentz, 1764–1832: Penseur post-Lumières et auteur du nouvel ordre européen* (Oldenbourg, 2017).

31. On Arndt's patriotic writings, see K. Hagemann, 'Of "Manly Valor" and "German Honor": Nation, War, and Masculinity in the Age of the Prussia Uprising against Napoleon', *Central European History*, xxx (1997), pp. 187–220.

32. H. Kohn, *Prelude to Nation-States: The French and German Experience, 1789–1815* (Princeton, NJ, 1967), pp. 261–4, 277.

defeated states.³³ Thousands of Native Americans—fresh from fighting against the Union or the Confederacy—returned home to renewed warfare, this time against United States troops seeking to assert federal control over the western territories. African Americans continued to struggle for equality, creating their own militias and marking the dates of significant end-points that referred not to formal declarations of peace but to unofficial emancipations.³⁴ Countless Confederate veterans took off their uniforms only to join paramilitary forces and launch vicious counter-offensives against such progress towards Black civil rights.³⁵

While the fighting was continuing, the visions that different groups had of its ending played a sizeable role in shaping experiences and determining what peace would mean for them. The most significant outcome of the American Civil War lay in the emancipation of four million enslaved people, yet no official plan had been made to deal with this eventuality, precisely because it formed no part of most White participants' visions of the future. Abolitionists and the enslaved had their own ideas, and decades of anti-slavery activism had helped to propel the war. Within months of the first shots being fired, the trickle of escapees from slavery turned into a flood, as hundreds of thousands of men, women and children headed towards Union lines, forcing United States officials and generals to give up their promises to leave slaveholding intact.³⁶

In a replay of the link between war and political change in the Napoleonic context, in America the enslaved grasped early on that the civil war could be a revolutionary moment. Their dreams for the future were many, but they all understood that the foundation for real change would require a radical redistribution of land and resources. They wanted autonomy from White control, and they anticipated receiving recompense for hundreds of years of stolen labour and suffering.³⁷

One of the main reasons that these dreams remained unrealised is that White Americans on both sides were engaged in a desperate bid to prevent their worst nightmares from materialising. For Confederates, no vision was more terrifying than that of a mass uprising of the enslaved. The Haitian Revolution (1791–1804) served as a potent example of what might happen if pro-slavery advocates let down their guard. Warnings about Northern abolitionists bent on seeing the 'horrors of St Domingo' visited upon the South served as a rallying cry that drove the secession

33. G.P. Downs, *After Appomattox: Military Occupation and the Ends of Wars* (Cambridge, MA, 2015).

34. J.R. Kerr-Ritchie, *Rites of August First: Emancipation Day in the Black Atlantic World* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2007).

35. M. Grimsley, 'Wars for the American South: The First and Second Reconstructions Considered as Insurgencies', *Civil War History*, lviii (2012), pp. 6–36.

36. M. Sinha, *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition* (New Haven, CT, 2016).

37. S. Hahn, *A Nation under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

movement in the 1850s.³⁸ Once the war began, predictions of racial Armageddon framed the way Confederates interpreted emancipation: in the minds of White Southerners, freedom meant a 'fearsome caste of wandering, unaffiliated people' in need of White control. United States officials and White landholders across the South were no less invested in containing the movement of freed people. By characterising Black people who had not signed labour contracts as criminal vagrants—sorting them into the categories of productive workers or lawlessly idle—officials helped to establish new forms of unfree labour that would lead to 'a century's worth of convict camps, chain gangs, and penal farms'.³⁹

At the beginning of the American Civil War, both officials and the northern social elite worried not only about Black dependency after the war, but also about how military mobilisation might reshape the characters of White men. With millions of young enlistees removed from the watchful eyes of their families and brought into camps where swearing, drinking, gambling and illicit sex were commonplace, they imagined catastrophic moral collapse, with soldiers spending their wages on selfish pleasures as their families went hungry, or returning home degraded to become a blight on society. The vast numbers of sick and wounded only compounded the sense that White male dependency would increase exponentially in the years ahead. Examples from past European conflicts helped to sharpen and amplify these concerns, with commentators pointing to the crime waves that supposedly accompanied demobilisation in Britain and Europe earlier in the century, or to the breakdown of families headed by soldiers who failed to support them.⁴⁰

We witness here the emergence of a narrative about the aftermath of war that would return in future conflicts: the nightmarish vision of social *anomie* brought about by soldiers both brutalised and damaged by war. In this conflict, as in later ones, wartime planning to prevent such an outcome started early, with philanthropists setting up a range of voluntary organisations and travelling to Europe to study the way foreign governments dealt with those who experienced wartime suffering. In the case of those afflicted by inflation or dislocation, the free labour ideology that defined the Union war effort—which identified a man's ability to contract for his labour and support his dependants as the antithesis of slavery—ensured that neediness would continue to be seen as a moral failure best cured by self-help and minimal local relief handed out by voluntary organisations rather than officials. The solutions proposed to prevent dependency among Union veterans, however, were different. Calls to keep this group in their homes as much as possible ensured the

38. M. Clavin, *Toussaint Louverture and the American Civil War: The Promise and Peril of a Second Haitian Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA, 2010).

39. J.K. Bardes, 'Redefining Vagrancy: Policing Freedom and Disorder in Reconstruction New Orleans, 1862–1868', *Journal of Southern History*, lxxxiv (2018), pp. 69–112, at 72, 111.

40. E. Abbott, 'The Civil War and the Crime Wave of 1865–1870', *Social Service Review*, i (1927), pp. 212–34.

provision of generous pensions, preferential employment in the civil service, free land and a system of soldiers' homes catering to those without family support. While the formerly enslaved went begging, wartime demands to prevent dependency among Union heroes saw the construction of the most generous veterans' welfare state the world had seen.⁴¹ This development, too, pointed to things to come—veterans' welfare would become a worldwide obsession in the wars of the twentieth century.⁴²

While agonising over the social forces unleashed by war, individuals on both sides imagined they were living in epic times that would determine not just their own future but also that of the wider world. Secessionists envisaged building something genuinely new—'a modern proslavery, antidemocratic state, dedicated to the proposition that all men were not equal'.⁴³ This novel political system would shore up slaveholding on the American continent, while acting as a model and sponsor for coercive labour regimes abroad. Excitement over this prospect gave rise to an outpouring of White Southern songs and literature that were passionately nationalistic, reactionary and future-oriented, much of which imagined White Southerners in terms of a 'fictive ethnicity' that was very different in characteristics, origins and disposition from those of their Yankee enemies.⁴⁴

In the United States, extravagant expectations also clashed with fears of impending catastrophe. In the writings of ordinary people, both soldiers and civilians, the imprint of the Second Great Awakening is everywhere apparent. Millennial optimism was widespread in pre-war America, spurred by the nation's rapid economic ascent and territorial growth, and by new inventions such as chloroform and the telegraph that seemed to augur an end to suffering and a breakdown of boundaries. As Civil War death rates climbed, some took solace in the idea that the bloodshed formed part of God's incomprehensible design, a climactic fight between good and evil that would purge the nation of sin and perhaps even usher in the Second Coming. When an end to the fighting led to continuing tensions rather than a new dawn, disillusionment followed. Unrealised dreams bred scepticism and bitterness that would help to reshape religious belief and fuel social conflict in the years ahead.⁴⁵

Worst-case scenarios proliferated in the writings of both supporters and critics of the Republican-led war effort. For anti-war Democrats, the

41. T. Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 1995).

42. M. Crotty, N.J. Diamant and M. Edele, *The Politics of Veteran Benefits in the Twentieth Century. A Comparative History* (Ithaca, NY, 2020).

43. S. McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA, 2012), p. 1.

44. C. Hutchinson, *Apples and Ashes: Literature, Nationalism, and the Confederate States of America* (Athens, GA, 2012), p. 10.

45. T.D. Aamodt, *Righteous Armies, Holy Cause: Apocalyptic Imagery and the Civil War* (Macon, GA, 2002).

expanded powers granted to President Lincoln were a clear sign that democracy was imperilled. Drawing on historical parallels, the editors of one anti-war publication argued that Lincoln was setting himself up as a despot, just like Julius Caesar, 'the great usurper of Rome'. Heading a war of 'subjugation', they claimed he would 'destroy the very form of our government and substitute a centralised despotism in its place'.⁴⁶ In response, the war's defenders generated copious writing speculating on the dire consequences of a Confederate victory: 'Let us not be like the Byzantines ... who quarrelled about contemptible party refinements ... while the truculent Mussulman was steadily drawing nearer', pleaded Francis Lieber; 'It is the very thing your foreign enemies have long desired'. Lieber spoke here not just about Confederates but also their European supporters. Imagining foreign powers gleefully watching as the United States tore itself apart, he warned readers that Great Britain would be the real victor should the Confederacy succeed.⁴⁷

Others placed different inflections on the consequences of national dismemberment. Charles P. Kirkland was one of many to claim that secession would destroy the republic's 'constitutional structure' and breed 'anarchy' as each state went its own way. Less worried about foreign powers rushing into the breach than about the threat to the country's status as an exemplary democracy, he asked readers to trust that God would not let the United States be destroyed. He would instead shepherd the war through to a 'successful and a glorious end', proving the ability of a democratic republic to govern itself, allowing the United States to take its rightful place among the world's leading nations.⁴⁸

III

The notion of the 'rightful place' of the United States as a leading nation would play its role in bringing the country into the First and—more consequentially and more deeply—the Second World War. At first, however, the United States stood apart, while France, Britain and Russia bore the brunt of the fighting against the central powers in 1914. With the outbreak of war, predictions immediately began to circulate about its aftermath. Once it was apparent that the conflict would not be over by Christmas, a proliferation of pamphlets, books and newspaper articles emerged in Britain, discussing what the end of the war would and should deliver, and what the post-war world might look like. Titles such as *After the War*, or the more demanding and emphatic *After the War—What?*, were among hundreds of writings expressing a diverse array of perspectives and opinions.

⁴⁶. 'Military Coercion', *The Old Guard*, i (Apr. 1863), pp. 1–11.

⁴⁷. Francis Lieber, *Address Read at the Inaugural Meeting of the Loyal National League, April, 1863* (New York, 1864).

⁴⁸. Charles P. Kirkland, *The Destiny of Our Country* (New York, 1864).

A publishing market for such works emerged very rapidly. As the war dragged on, the enthusiasm for them intensified rather than subsided. No one could be proven wrong about what the future held. For this reason, it appears, there was an insatiable desire and sense of urgency among an anxious and nervous public to read, talk about and listen to all the theories that abounded about the aftermaths of war. Predictably, those who were directly engaged in decision-making about the war itself, such as the military command, politicians, economists and civil servants whose monumental task it was to plan post-war reconstruction, were quick on the case. But this line of inquiry also generated lively and animated debates which exercised the minds of men and women: poets, activists, educationists, spiritualists, theosophists, clergy, futurists and many others. Many responses during the war were framed around the notion that the conflict was about a clash of civilisations, a notion which had wide currency. Taken collectively, this body of material can be seen as a genre that emerged in a distinctive form up to this time, given the duration, intensity and global scale of the Great War.

While during the war there were as many styles and approaches as there were perspectives on writing about ‘after the war’, a survey of such texts—those written in English within liberal democracies at least—reveals three common themes. The first is that, even from the early stages of the war, writers believed that the world had changed forever, and the aftermath of war would not, and should not, resemble the pre-war world. Secondly, given the utter chaos and state of flux of society and the world, those who felt moved to discuss the future could only do so at the level of speculation. In other words, because no one could answer the ‘What’ in the question, *After the War—What?*, writings on the subject took the form of advocacy of what *should* happen. Thirdly, writers conceived of a world without war in such a variety of ways—from the sentimental, utopian and imaginative to the apocalyptic, and everything else in between—in order to predict a peace at a time when it was elusive and distant.

Britain’s experience of the First World War created a particular genre of writing conditioned by the country’s liberal democracy. Paradoxically, this did not bring about a sense of stability or security in what lay ahead after the conflict. Rather, for those who began to envisage it, peace was conceived as highly unstable and contested.⁴⁹ Much of the literature generated on the theme of the aftermath of war in Britain, written by well-known authors, reflected this experience and some texts have become iconic commentaries on the war itself. The leading British economist, anti-war and anti-imperialist theorist John A. Hobson was one such writer. His 1917 book, *Democracy after the War*, was steeped in

49. See N. Lambert, *Planning Armageddon: British Economic Warfare and the First World War* (Cambridge, MA, 2012); A. Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2008).

the traditions of the European anti-war movement of the post-Napoleonic period.⁵⁰ It rehearsed anxieties about the corrosive effects of war on civil (and civilian) society similar to those expressed during the American Civil War. He warned against ongoing militarism and the severe limits militarism placed on democracy in the aftermath of war. He examined how democracy could be realised in the future. The post-war transition was not to be assumed, nor should it be imagined that it would be a seamless process: 'The circle of reaction which confronts democracy will be quite as vicious and more complex in its arrangement'.⁵¹ How would a state that had controlled people's liberties and restricted their freedoms during wartime relinquish this power? A reluctance to do so, Hobson contended, posed a great threat to reinstating democratic powers.⁵² The civil unrest and disorder that he believed would usher in the aftermath of war would also be used to retain emergency powers to contain the 'precarious peace' that awaited the world.⁵³ The 'lazy assumption of many so-called democrats', he wrote disapprovingly, 'that democracy needs no striving for, because it is inevitable, has played into the hands of despotism and oligarchy'.⁵⁴

In a similar vein, the socialist Sidney Webb, in his 1916 discussion of the state in *Great Britain after the War*, expressed concerns about the control of the state and its uses and abuses. Webb was alarmed at the weakening of trade unionism and the reduction in its powers. Written for the Workers' Educational Association, Webb's book pointed to the vital need for education in the post-war era: 'Through education alone can we find a way to the beauty and order, the freedom and fellowship, the culture and joy ... the Vindication of Democracy'.⁵⁵ He lamented that during the war there had been a 'shameful mishandling of our education system', promoting the 'lazy ignorance of the poor' and the 'short-sighted class-selfishness of the rich'. After the war, he wrote, 'securing a civilisation' could only be achieved by promoting, expanding and developing the education system.⁵⁶

If Hobson and Webb expressed concern in 1916 and 1917 about how much effort would be needed to overcome the militarist state after the war, H.G. Wells chose a more existential approach in his 1916 book, *What Is Coming? A Forecast of Things after the War*. He lamented that peace seemed distant and argued that, while everyone wished for peace, there was nowhere 'one could look for initiatives'. As far as he could ascertain,

50. J.A. Hobson, *Democracy after the War* (London, [2017]). On Hobson's role in the peace movement before the war, see S. Kaiga, *Britain and the Intellectual Origins of the League of Nations, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 20–21.

51. Hobson, *Democracy after the War*, p. 146.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid., p. 147

54. Ibid., p. 6.

55. S. Webb and A. Freeman, *Great Britain after the War* (London, 1916), p. 10.

56. Ibid., p. 11.

there were a few 'special secretaries employed by philanthropic Americans, and that is about all'.⁵⁷ Would there be any post-war co-operation? He believed the 'Allied Powers are too various in their nature, too biased, too feeble intellectually and imaginatively, to hold together and maintain any institution for co-operation'.⁵⁸ Wells had not, however, given up a belief in striving for world peace. It would, he believed, 'be a Roman world peace, made in Germany'.⁵⁹

While the views of Hobson, Webb and Wells are well known, there were many less canonical authors who brought specific perspectives to the post-war world. Taking the issue of women in industry, the Fabian and social activist Betty Leigh Hutchins wrote *Women in Industry after the War* in 1917 with the assumption, she said, that the Allies would be victorious. In that case, she asked, how would the post-war world look for women? There was a real danger of widespread unemployment, she opined, because this was in fact what had happened at the outbreak of war in 1914: 'Dressmakers, milliners, typists, secretaries ... were ... thrown completely out of employment and suffered considerable distress for some months', until the war itself created employment opportunities.⁶⁰ Like American commentators during the Civil War, she worried about the inevitable, in her opinion, wartime and post-war dislocation. Women would become wives of soldiers, and these women might drop the work they had been undertaking before the war. Others, who had been involved in munitions work, would also leave this employment. The transition, she predicted, would be 'long and at first very difficult', and if unemployment did not occur immediately, it would very likely occur after peace.⁶¹

While the issue of women's labour after the war attracted considerable attention, given the mobilisation of British women in the armament factories, others argued for more creative ways of mobilising labour after the war. In 1915 Thomas Sedgewick, who before the war had been involved in sending British children to colonies throughout the Empire—largely to Australia and New Zealand—to alleviate the shortage of farm labourers, thought similar programmes could be deployed after the war to resolve any labour shortages. His first plan was for 'every two Australian farmers [to] take an ex-soldier boy during the two years after the War is over, some seventy-five thousand could come out, and after they have repaid their fares they could nominate their sisters (and other boys' sisters) as well' to migrate. Echoing concerns about veterans, which had been expressed in the context of both the Napoleonic Wars and the American Civil War, he believed that if these soldiers were to remain in

57. H.G. Wells, *What Is Coming? A Forecast of Things after the War* (London, 1916), p. 6.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

59. *Ibid.*

60. B.L. Hutchins, *Women in Industry after the War* (London, 1917), p. 6.

61. *Ibid.*

Britain, 'they will decline and deteriorate ... and Australia will be kept back in her development'.⁶²

In her 1917 pamphlet, *After the War—What?*, Adela Pankhurst wrote instead with revolutionary fervour. Pankhurst, the daughter of the suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst and sister of Christabel and Sylvia, travelled to Australia in 1914 after she became estranged from her mother and Christabel, who both supported the war. In the opening paragraph of her pamphlet, Adela spoke to future generations:

It will, no doubt, be a cause of wonderment to future generations that the people of our age, highly developed as they were in some directions, tolerated so meekly the shameless robbery of the masses by persons who appeared to have no qualities of mind or body which might account for the mesmerism they exercised over the millions of their fellow-men.⁶³

Pankhurst painted a dystopian image of the future post-war society reminiscent of some of the nightmares from the American Civil War. She believed, as a socialist, that the future could not bring prosperity within existing economic structures: 'We dare not look into the future and try to picture the world when the carnage is over'.⁶⁴ But sooner or later it would end, and materially, she believed, the conditions would 'be terrible'.⁶⁵ She painted a sorrowful sight: 'Thousands of men will flock back from the battlefields to find their places in industry filled by women or children at lower wages ... in human terms they mean homeless families driven to the workhouse'.⁶⁶ Prostitution and White slavery would prosper amid grinding poverty.⁶⁷

At the same time, however, Pankhurst also discussed the link between war and social change which had occupied commentators ever since the Napoleonic Wars. She believed in a socialist future of equality and the redistribution of wealth, which held the key to a liberated post-war society. There was a moral battle to be fought to create freedom, liberty and justice for all, though her writing in 1917 indicates that it remained unclear how these could be attained, or whether in fact they could be realised at all.

IV

For many Europeans, then, socialist visions and the promise of new utopias provided the foundations for the societies they imagined would

62. Canberra, National Archives of Australia, Series A2, 1916/184, 'Immigration after the War—Suggestions by T.E. Sedgwick'.

63. A. Pankhurst, *After the War—What?* (Melbourne, 1917), p. 5.

64. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

65. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

66. *Ibid.*, pp. 22–3.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

emerge from war. The anti-war activism of Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Germany pushed revolutionary ends. The Russian Revolution of 1917 put such aims into reality with the overthrow of Tsarism, a seismic shift in world politics which was itself deeply entangled with the ongoing war. During the long period of war, imperial collapse, civil wars and Bolshevik reconquest between 1914 and 1922, a huge variety of hopes for the post-war era circulated among the multitude of peoples and the many social and political groups of the disintegrated Russian Empire. Many among those dreaming up such post-war scenarios faced a rude awakening as the Bolsheviks built the Soviet Union by force as a new, nominally 'anti-imperial' incarnation of the Russian Empire.

In the Middle East, wartime dreams of the post-war future encompassed two extremes: liberation from Ottoman rule and new democratic social contracts, on the one hand, and ultranationalist imperial expansion driven by pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism on the other. The latter was conceived by politicians and ideologues in the centre of power, the Ottoman capital Istanbul, until the summer of 1918. The First World War in the Ottoman world was a total war, both internally and externally; it carried extreme violence into a society whose fabric was transformed by the war, and it affected the way the aftermath of war was imagined or could no longer be imagined. Ottoman Christian survivors of genocide could no longer think of Turkish-Muslim hegemony.⁶⁸

During the First World War, while persecuted groups in Turkey sought simply to survive, their representatives in exile lobbied for retributive justice and a collective renaissance. Accordingly, they imagined—alongside Arabs who had defected from the Young Turk party-state—self-determined futures and autonomous territories supported by 'universal (liberal) public opinion'. They believed in an insightful, powerful West, in President Wilson's promises and the principles of a new, democracy-oriented League of Nations. In contrast, imperial Turkey's war regime, allied with that of the German Kaiser Wilhelm II, and its ideologues and sympathisers projected grandiose utopias that would restore and expand the Ottoman Empire and compensate Muslim victimhood in modern history. These utopias proved dystopias for excluded minority groups.⁶⁹

When Turkey officially entered the war in November 1914, the Allies—Britain, France, Russia, Italy and Greece—nurtured conflicting designs for the Ottoman Empire's future, including a declared will to punish the Turkish regime for crimes against humanity and to make special commitments to Jewish and Armenian autonomies (a Jewish

68. Y. Akin, *When the War Came Home: The Ottomans' Great War and the Devastation of an Empire* (Stanford, CA, 2018); H.-L. Kieser, K. Oktem, and M. Reinkowski, eds, *World War I and the End of the Ottomans* (London, 2015).

69. E. Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity: Literature in Turkey during World War I* (London, 2007); E.F. Thompson, *How the West Stole Democracy from the Arabs: The Syrian Arab Congress of 1920 and the Destruction of Its Liberal-Islamic Alliance* (New York, 2020).

national home in Palestine and an Armenian home in an eastern corner of Anatolia), but they also started to plan the division of the Ottoman Empire and the exploitation of its resources (the object of the secret Sykes–Picot–Sazonov agreements, 1915–16). Zionist wartime planning for the future was two-tiered until July 1918, allowing for the victory of either the Central Powers or the Allies—a plan that was comparatively clear and targeted, and finally successful. Many Palestinian Jews, nevertheless, feared they would suffer a similar fate to the Armenians. The predominant German Zionist leadership in Turkey supported the German–Ottoman war effort and enjoyed support from the German and United States embassies in Istanbul, but they achieved little more than protection in wartime and vague promises from the government of a cultural centre in Palestine in the future. The expulsion of Zionist leaders, including Ben Gurion, led Zionists in 1915 to seek a parallel Western path, contributing to the Balfour Declaration of 1917.⁷⁰ At the same time, numerous third parties—including Pope Benedict XV, the Zimmerwald Socialist International and representatives of neutral countries—tried to promote a general peace or separate peace treaties to bring a speedy end to the bloodshed. These actors never achieved significant momentum, especially not in the Ottoman Empire where wartime leaders could not and would not balance the expected outcomes of war and required compromises for peace.

Among members of the Young Turk Party (Committee of Union and Progress) [hereafter CUP], the intense imagining of new futures culminated with the beginning of the First World War, when the future was envisioned as a thoroughly new and radically national imperial era. One of the leading ideologues of the CUP, the mentor and ‘prophet’ Ziya Gökalp, used catchwords such as ‘new Turkey’, ‘new life’, ‘new [Western-style] family’, ‘new law’ and ‘new national [Turkish-Muslim] economy’. The CUP labelled the imagined far-reaching transformation of society a ‘[national] social revolution’ (*içtimâî inkılâb*). The best-known early writer proselytising in this vein was Halide Edip, author of the pan-Turkish novel, *The New Turan*, published in 1912 and translated into German in 1916. It celebrated a strong ‘emancipated woman’ committed to the construction of a new and powerful Turkish nation side-by-side with men. Halide Edip was inspired by Ziya Gökalp, whose friend she remained until the genocide of 1915.⁷¹

Gökalp’s poetry, printed in newspapers from early August 1914, promised a rightful, vengeful, restorative and expansive Ottoman–Islamic conquest, together with the emergence of a modern ‘Turan’. Led from Istanbul, this Great Turkey would reach from the Balkans to Central Asia and a radically transformed Greater Europe:

70. H.-L. Kieser, *Talaat Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide* (Princeton, NJ, 2018), pp. 285–314.

71. H. Edip (Adivar), *Das neue Turan: Ein türkisches Frauenschicksal* (Weimar, 1916).

The lands of the enemy will be ruined!
Turkey will grow and become Turan!

God's will
sprang from the people
We proclaimed the *jihad*
God is great.

Russia will collapse and be ruined
Turkey will expand and be Turan!⁷²

Ziya Gökalp's poem, 'Red Epic', published on 8 August 1914, celebrated anti-European *Schadenfreude*: 'The land of civilisation will be red blood! / Each of its regions will be a new Balkan!'⁷³ While his essays addressed an educated readership, the pamphlets and poems published in newspapers reached a broader, largely illiterate, public. In particular, his poems addressed the 'ordinary Muslim' and the 'ordinary soldier' by using martial religious terms, such as *jihad* (holy war) and *müjahid* (holy warrior). On 11 November 1914 a circular from the Central Committee to all Committee branches declared that:

the national ideal of our people and country spurs us on the one side to annihilate the Muskovite enemy, to achieve a natural imperial frontier that includes all our [Turkic] co-nationals. Religion on the other side incites us to liberate the Muslim world from the rule of the infidels and to give the adherents of Muhammad independence.⁷⁴

A late 1914 military campaign catastrophically failed in its attempt to push into the Caucasus and Central Asia 'toward Turan'.

By mid-1917, with imperial Russia's collapse, a new mood of expansive expectation emerged, and by the autumn of 1917 Gökalp was again 'pre-occupied with the conquest of the Caucasus and the road to take toward Turan'.⁷⁵ The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 opened a door to the Caucasus, and the expansion of 'Turan' again carried with it an exterminatory threat—this time for Armenians, who had fled the genocide in Anatolia in 1915. A series of articles in early 1918 emphasised the cultural, racial, religious and economic unity of a Turan composed of '40 million

72. Quoted in E. Koroğlu, 'Propaganda or Culture War: Jihad, Islam, and Nationalism in Turkish Literature during World War I', in E.-J. Zürcher, ed., *Jihad and Islam in World War I: Studies on the Ottoman Jihad on the Centenary of Snouck Hurgronje's 'Holy War Made in Germany'* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 137 and 147; M. Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de on sene: İttihat ve Terakki neydi?* (Istanbul, 2006), p. 382.

73. See Zürcher, *Jihad and Islam in World War I*, p. 138; J. van Ess, *Dschihad gestern und heute* (Berlin, 2012), pp. 26–47.

74. Circular, 11 Nov. 1915, cited in T. Alp (Moiz Kohen Tekinalp), *Türkismus und Pantürkismus* (Weimar, 1915), p. 53.

75. As reported by Muhittin Birgen, a disciple of Gökalp, from his meetings with Talaat, Gökalp and other CUP luminaries around September 1917: Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de on sene*, p. 401.

Turks and Muslims', and envisaged political unification following cultural-religious unity. Gökalp's comparison of Anatolian Turkey's role with that of nineteenth-century Prussia made this goal of Turanian unification unequivocal.⁷⁶

In articles published in the first half of 1918, Ziya Gökalp expressed his desire to see the 'unity of [Turan's] Turks' form a 'great Turkish nation' with a common 'Turkish-Muslim ideal', because 'this age only grants nations that are big in number the right to live'. Once 'saved', Turan would be a great 'organism' of all Turks, their sub-states, and their strong joint armies in Asia Minor, the Caucasus, Central Asia and beyond. All would be Muslim, use the Turkish language of Istanbul, and be led by one charismatic leader-commander. All Turks would be 'organised top-down like an army' and form obedient members of one state and one solidary society. Dissent would be severely repressed and divergent opinions or ideals 'killed' outright—only the 'Turkish-Muslim Ideal' (*Türk-Müslüman Mefkûresi*) would prevail. By early 1918, readers easily understood that the 'killing' would not remain metaphorical, but would target dissenters, dissenting groups and even non-Turks and non-Muslims in general.⁷⁷

After defeat in the First World War, and in Gökalp's case, arrest and later release by the British, he and his former CUP circle adapted to the new situation. Over the twelve years of the last Ottoman wars, we can discern a striking continuity of both wartime visions and wartime cadres, the latter moulded by the CUP. These cadres initially fought to preserve an empire and then apply their ultranationalist vision of state and society to a reduced imperial territory, while benefiting from the spoils of genocide and demographic engineering in the total war of 1914–18.⁷⁸

For Turkey, the aftermath of war meant several new wars, including the struggle to establish Turkish rule over Anatolia, ending in the defeat of the region's Armenians, Alevi and Kurds, as well as the invading Greeks, including many local Rûm, in 1922. These wars brought the multiplication of visions re-informed by war and coercion, a style of politics that proceeded at the cost of the possibility of new social contracts. A protracted war mentality destroyed the seeds of constitutional democracy, federalism and a belief in political liberties. It was not negotiation or compromise but force that promised undivided power in Anatolia to a ruling elite that was rooted in the former Young Turk party-state.

⁷⁶ Ziya Gökalp in *Yeni Mecmua*, 4 July 1918, referred to in J. Deny, 'Zia Goek Alp', *Revue du monde musulman*, lxi (1925), pp. 1–39, at 14.

⁷⁷ Z. Gökalp, *Rusya'daki Türkler ne yapmalı?* (Istanbul, 1918); id., 'İçtimaiyat "Turan" Nedir?', *Yeni Mecmua*, xxxi (8 Feb. 1918), pp. 82–4; N. Sadık, 'İrtica aleyine...', *Yeni Mecmua*, xxxiv (7 Mar. 1918), p. 141; R. Safvet, 'Kafkas etekleri Türk ticaret yolları', *Yeni Mecmua*, xliii (9 May 1918), p. 325.

⁷⁸ Ü.Ü. Üngör and M. Polatel, *Confiscation and Destruction: The Young Turk Seizure of Armenian Property* (London, 2013); Ü. Kurt, *The Armenians of Aintab: The Economics of Genocide in an Ottoman Province* (Cambridge, MA, 2021).

These cadres reorganised in Ankara under Kemal Pasha (Atatürk) and, supported by the Bolsheviks, won the post-1918 wars in Anatolia. In line with Gökalp and the CUP, Ankara rejected a social contract among all native groups, claiming the superiority of Turkish-Islamic identity. The Conference of Lausanne made the early Kemalists openly turn to a secular version of their ultranationalism. In the Treaty of Lausanne, they achieved a minimal variant of what, since 1912, CUP thinkers had envisaged as the aftermath of war: a sovereign Turkish-Muslim 'national home' (*Türk yurdu*) in Anatolia without the empire and Turan, but nonetheless ready for a modernist revolution—which was to follow with the so-called Turkish or Kemalist Revolution of the 1920s.⁷⁹

V

German nationalists, and the Nazis in particular, greatly admired Turkey's successful ultranationalism, revisionism and violent removal of minorities.⁸⁰ Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union constitute case-studies of visions of the aftermath of war in three particularly futurist regimes. The Soviet Union rejected the past for the future, while for Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan the past authorised the future. Yet planning, thinking or talking about the war's aftermath was highly sensitive for the three regimes: uncertainty about the aftermath could reveal weakness, and a multiplicity of visions suggested disunity. A close examination of key moments during which visions of aftermath were articulated in these three countries during the Second World War reveals the centrality of empire in forging—and undoing—a 'compact' between the leaders and the led. There are clear parallels here with the allied powers during the Napoleonic Wars, with the Ottoman case in the First World War and, to a lesser degree, with the British example. Articulations of the war's aftermath during the years preceding and the early years of the war (1930s–1943/44) show that both Germans and Japanese found momentary unison around an imperial aftermath. Once the war appeared unwinnable, however, in each case the demise of the empire threatened national destruction, a prospect that led these societies to end the Second World War more divided than when they entered the war. Conversely, the Soviet Union entered a phase of internal crisis in 1941, which was resolved when the fortunes of war turned in 1943–44. In an inversion of aftermaths, imperial collapse among Axis countries raised the spectre of national collapse, but military strength in the Soviet case foreshadowed

79. H. Bozarslan, *Histoire de la Turquie: De l'Empire à nos jours* (Paris, 2013), pp. 295–321; Kieser, *Talaat*, pp. 381–411.

80. S. Ihrig, *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), pp. 108–208; S. Ihrig, *Justifying Genocide: Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler* (Cambridge, MA, 2016), pp. 299–358.

an imperial future, which gave this reincarnation of the Russian empire a new lease of life.⁸¹

Visions of a new empire excited both the leaders and the led in Germany and Japan. But if a loose consensus linked the rulers and the ruled, the leadership, buoyed by an excess of enthusiasm and radicalisation, was not always united in articulating a coherent vision of an imperial future. Once the Second World War had begun, there was an overall consensus that the aftermath would be imperial, but the nature of this empire—and the means of creating it—remained the subject of debate, often acrimonious, among both the German and Japanese leaders. As Joseph Goebbels pointed out in April 1940: ‘National Socialism never had a doctrine in the sense which would discuss details or work out details. Sure, we have some kind of an idea about it (*eine Vorstellung*)’, but it remained vague. Time would tell, he concluded, ‘What we want, we shall know when the time is ripe’.⁸²

As time progressed, two main visions emerged, one, more centralised, that emphasised direct rule from Berlin and Tokyo, the other, more federalist, that envisaged a reorganisation through new ‘international’ institutions and principles. In the Japanese military leadership, an internecine struggle persisted between the army and the navy over whether to strike south against Britain and the United States or north against the Soviet Union.⁸³ Disagreement over strategy did not rule out common ground over the war’s aftermath, however. The unspoken assumption in the Japanese army and navy, and in all other centres of power in Germany and Japan, was that the Second World War was an imperial war that would create a new order in Europe and Asia. In the Japanese case, centralist visions were typically promoted by the army. Prone to impose harsh occupations and top-down directives, army ideologues and planners were reluctant to grant autonomy to the territories they conquered, especially before 1943–44.⁸⁴

A particularly radical vision of the war’s aftermath was formulated by Ishiwara Kanji. An army general educated in Nichiren Buddhism, Ishiwara combined a religious sense of mission and rabid nationalism with German military strategy, which he had learned while studying in

81. On the Nazi empire, see M. Mazower, *Hitler’s Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (London, 2009). The imperial aspect of Soviet war-making is explored in M. Edele, *Stalinism at War. The Soviet Union in World War II* (London, 2021). On the Japanese empire and war, see K. Kōsuke, *Teikoku Nihon no kakuchō to hōkai: ‘Dairōa kyōeiken’ e no rekishiteki tenkai* (Tokyo, 2012); J.A. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War* (Ithaca, NY, 2019). For a comparative approach, see R. Hofmann, ‘The Fascist New-Old Order’, *Journal of Global History*, xii (2017), pp. 166–83.

82. ‘Geheime Erklärung des Reichsministers Dr Goebbels am 5. April 1940 vor geladenen Vertretern der deutschen Presse’, repr. in H.-A. Jacobsen, ed., *Der Zweite Weltkrieg: Grundzüge der Politik und Strategie in Dokumenten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1965), pp. 180–81 (tr. Mark Edele).

83. See, for example, M. Masao, ‘Thought and Behaviour Patterns of Japan’s Wartime Leaders’, in I. Morris, ed., *Thought and Behaviour in Modern Japanese Politics* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 84–134.

84. See Yellen, *Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*.

Germany in the 1920s. In Ishiwara's understanding of history, the Second World War was the 'final war' that would lead to the ultimate defeat of the West, which he believed had been in decline since the 1920s. He envisioned a Far East Alliance, led by Japan and China, that would defeat the West. The world had entered an age of new blocs, and he predicted that the final war would pitch East Asia against the United States, and eventually, the Japanese emperor would become the emperor of the world.⁸⁵

Likewise, Hitler and many other leading Nazis envisioned 'a centralist National Socialist European empire as a preliminary stage towards ruling the world'. This 'imperialist' vision of the aftermath was promoted more confidently while the Germany army seemed to be winning the war. Once the tide of war turned, the alternative "Germanic" approach of the SS was promoted more frequently, a 'federally structured Europe of "Germanic" nature' with Germany at its core, surrounded by concentric rings of countries whose citizens would have fewer and fewer rights, depending on both their physical and their 'racial' distance from the Aryan metropole—part of a more inclusive 'fascist utopia' which many other Europeans could buy into.⁸⁶

The federalist argument was more pronounced in Japan, where long-standing debates about Japan's role in 'liberating' Asia from Western colonial rule competed in shaping the government's policy of setting up a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. Members of the Kyoto School of philosophy produced the most sophisticated outlines for Japan's new order in Asia. For Miki Kiyoshi, Kōyama Iwao and Nishitani Keiji, for example, the war was a moment in which Japan took on a mission to 'overcome the modern'. They debated the moral principles of Japan's undertaking on the basis of what they considered a new understanding of an Asian (but Japan-centred) 'community' or 'communitarianism' (*kyōdōshugi*). Community, as understood in Asia, and most prominently in Japan, allowed for a third way between the divisive Western ideologies.⁸⁷ A co-operative approach to the aftermath of war was also sketched in Japan's Pacific Charter. Modelled on the Atlantic Charter, this document envisaged various degrees of autonomy and independence for countries in Southeast Asia in exchange for co-operation with Tokyo.⁸⁸

Despite disagreements among the leadership there was broad support from the population. By the early 1940s, each new aggressive move launched by the state generated popular enthusiasm. The vast scholarship

85. I. Kanji, *Saishū sensō-ron* (Tokyo, 1993), pp. 22, 33, 35.

86. J. Elvert, 'The "New European Order" of National Socialism. Some Remarks on its Sources, Genesis and Nature', in D. Gosewinkel, ed., *Anti-Liberal Europe: A Neglected Story of Europeanization* (New York, 2015), pp. 116–17.

87. H. Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan* (Princeton, NJ, 2000).

88. M. Masaki, *Konoe shintaisei no shisō to seiji: Jiyūshugi kokufuku no jidai* (Tokyo, 2009); Yellen, *Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*.

on Japan's empire in Manchuria has shown that the military invasion (1931) and the subsequent establishment of Manchukuo (1933) were welcomed by many in Japan. People agreed with the official view that it constituted a first step towards a new Japanese order in Asia; many also welcomed the prospect of migration to the continent and the government's promises of vast stretches of farmland. The press had still not been fully brought to heel, but ordinary people expressed their support for the coming imperial El Dorado.⁸⁹ There was also strong popular support when the prime minister, Konoe Fumimaro, launched an all-out war against China in 1937. Many Japanese thought that, having taken Manchuria, Japan would easily subjugate the rest of China and eventually bring about the much-vaunted new order in East Asia. Popular sentiment was often aligned with the New Order Movement, even urging the government to take more resolute actions in China: 'For a successful finish to the holy war, we need to get the nation's power in order first', as one hardware vendor put it.⁹⁰ In December 1941 news of the attack on Pearl Harbor caused 'wild enthusiasm', as did the occupation of Singapore on 15 February 1942. The writer Itō Sei spoke for many when he recorded that 'today everyone is cheerful, with a pleased look ... the gloominess of the period just before the Greater East Asia War is also gone. This war is truly good. It's cheerful'.⁹¹ Optimism about the aftermath was often palpable, as in the case of a soldier dreaming of becoming 'the master of some island in the south Pacific'.⁹²

Like ordinary Japanese, rank-and-file Germans responded to the post-war visions offered by their political leaders, while also developing their own hopes and fears. At first, few supported the war. 'There is no enthusiasm at all', reported an informant for German social democrats in exile in late 1939. The increasing shortages of food and consumer goods had led to a 'desperate and hopeless mood'. Other reports also supported the conclusion that 'the German people in their vast majority did not want war'.⁹³ People remembered the sufferings of the First World War and its aftermath; they were apprehensive of another potential defeat. The idea circulated that 'this war will not last as long as the [First World War], as there is already nothing to eat right now'. Some feared that, unless the war were short, the aftermath would again be revolution, as in 1918. Others, however, celebrated, convinced 'that the war will be won'.⁹⁴ Apprehension was mixed with the hope that there would soon

89. On popular enthusiasm over Manchuria, see, especially, L. Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley, CA, 1999).

90. Y. Yoshimi, *Grassroots Fascism: The War Experience of the Japanese People*, ed. and tr. E. Mark (New York, 2015), p. 92.

91. Itō Sei, as quoted in Yoshimi, *Grassroots Fascism*, pp. 95–6.

92. Yoshimi, *Grassroots Fascism*, p. 50.

93. *Deutschland-Berichte der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschlands (Sopade). Sechster Jahrgang, 1939* (7th edn, Frankfurt am Main, 1989) [hereafter *SOPADE 1939*], pp. 978, 979, 980.

94. Report on the mood of the population, 17 Sept. 1939, repr. in *Meldungen aus Münster, 1924–1944: Geheime und vertrauliche Berichte von Polizei, Gestapo, NSDAP und ihren Gliederungen*,

be a return to peace, maybe in an enlarged, victorious Germany. This remained an underlying sentiment throughout the war: that the latest campaign would be the last, that victory or later, peace, would be achieved soon, that the soldiers would soon return.⁹⁵

While there was widespread hope for peace, the share of the German population embracing the war as an opportunity began to grow with the rapid victories in Poland, France and elsewhere. By the summer of 1940, this strain of popular opinion had established itself firmly,⁹⁶ and expectations of the post-war period changed. Like their Japanese counterparts, many Germans found visions of empire attractive, and hopes for a better life as part of the master race became more common, even among those who were otherwise critical of Nazism. The Catholic soldier Heinrich Böll, who would become one of the most important intellectuals of post-war democratic Germany, wrote to his parents, also anti-Nazis, in 1943: 'I very much long for the Rhine, for Germany. And yet, I often think of the possibility of a colonial existence here in the East after the war has been won'.⁹⁷

Thus, the social contract emerged, which has been described as 'Hitler's welfare state' (*Hitlers Volksstaat*). It promised improving living conditions for 'Aryans' as a result of foreign conquest, and the expropriation, exile and eventually murder of the Jews.⁹⁸ Similar to some of the more toxic Ottoman phantasies, the aftermath of war was increasingly imagined as one of German imperial greatness, where ordinary Germans could lord it over others, in particular over eastern European 'sub-humans'. This vision did not need to decide between the two versions of the future developed by Nazi intellectuals and politicians—it was inherent in both. Such hopes were surprisingly long-lasting. SS officers reporting on the popular mood reported as late as October 1942 that Hitler's 'discussion of the expansion and the development of the conquered eastern space' fed hopes for improved food supplies and a victorious end to the war.⁹⁹ Heinrich Böll's letter was penned in December 1943.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Eastern front, the majority of the population had been victimised by the Soviet regime in one way or another. Most wavered between a wait-and-see attitude and outright

staatlicher Verwaltung, Gerichtsbarkeit und Wehrmacht über die politische und gesellschaftliche Situation in Münster, ed. J. Kurooka (Münster, 1992), p. 617; *SOPADE 1939*, p. 983.

95. This is a recurrent theme in the SS Security Service reports on the mood of the population; see *Meldungen aus dem Reich: Auswahl aus den geheimen Lageberichten des Sicherheitsdienstes der SS, 1939–1944*, ed. H. Boberach (Berlin, 1965).

96. For example, Shelton, *To Lose a War*, p. 32.

97. Quoted in G. Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat: Raub, Rassenkrieg und nationaler Sozialismus* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006), pp. 29–30.

98. Aly, *Hitlers Volksstaat*.

99. They had in mind Hitler's address at the opening of the Winter Relief Campaign, 30 September 1942. An English translation is available via *Jewish Virtual Library*, at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/adolf-hitler-address-at-the-opening-of-the-winter-relief-campaign-september-1942> (accessed 4 Aug. 2025).

100. *Meldungen ... Auswahl*, ed. Boberach, p. 303.

support for the German invaders. Many hoped the war would come to a quick end and lead to the breakdown of the Stalinist regime. Peasants hoped the hated collective farms would disappear, so that they could work the land without interference from city folk. Such dreams turned into nightmares when it became clear what the German occupiers stood for. The dreamt-of post-war became increasingly unimaginable. Those who witnessed the destruction of the Jews soon began to worry that they would be next.¹⁰¹ Once the Red Army began liberating occupied territories, such anxieties were joined by fears of what the Soviets would do to the populations now returned to their control—trepidation about a future in the gulags, or at the gallows, which also circulated among displaced persons in the West at war's end.¹⁰²

Other visions of the future also changed in lockstep with the fortunes of war. The early expectation that the Germans would disband the hated collective farms turned into the conviction that, after victory, the existing regime would reward the people by dissolving the collective farms—a dream that lasted well into the post-war years. The intelligentsia wished for liberalisation in the cultural sphere, and soldiers envisaged an elevated post-war status for veterans. Many longed for the good life, and some even demanded democratisation. When all of these hopes were disappointed, the old phantasy of the post-war as a continuation of war returned. Only this time it would not be the Poles, the Japanese or the Germans who would bring liberation from Stalinism, but the Americans or 'the English'.¹⁰³

The significant differences that emerged among the Soviet, Nazi and Japanese regimes in the first half of the war can be accounted for in terms of both ideology and the relationship of the regimes to their populations. The Nazis discriminated largely against minorities. The Soviet regime, by contrast, victimised much larger groups, including the largest social group—the peasantry. Japan stood somewhere in between. The regime had demanded large sacrifices from the population since its invasion of Manchuria in 1931, but it was also able to mobilise the citizenry behind its wars through promises of a better life in the many parts of the empire. These differences had an impact on the relationship between the population and the regime: the regimes of Germany and Japan were more popular than Stalinism, at least at the start of the war.

¹⁰¹. On the fears of bystanders to the Holocaust that they would be next, see A. Wylegała, 'Entangled Bystanders: Multidimensional Trauma of Ethnic Cleansing and Mass Violence in Eastern Galicia', in Kivimäki and Leese, eds, *Trauma, Experience and Narrative*, pp. 119–48.

¹⁰². In reality, the policies turned out to be harsh, but more differentiated than might have been expected from Stalin's dictatorship: K. Boeckh, *Stalinismus in der Ukraine: Die Rekonstruktion des sowjetischen Systems nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Wiesbaden, 2007), pp. 291–327.

¹⁰³. E. Zubkova, *Russia after the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957* (Armonk, NY, 1998); M. Edele, 'More than just Stalinists: The Political Sentiments of Victors, 1945–1953', in J. Fürst, ed., *Late Stalinism: Society between Reinvention and Reconstruction* (London, 2006), pp. 167–92.

When the tides of the war turned, a double inversion took place. It was now the Soviet Union's turn to develop an alliance between the leaders and the led, based on visions of a good life after the war, while among the Axis powers the imperial consent forged in the early part of the war unravelled. Dreams of a good post-war life had sustained Red Army soldiers from the start of the war. In their letters home in the dark months of 1941–42, soldiers offered their family members 'visions of sunshine, peace, and children, of beauty and completion'. More materialistically minded letter-writers dreamt of 'thick, rich noodle soup', 'gardens, fountains, orchards, and flowerbeds', or a 'Dutch cottage with a porch and Italian windows', which the returned soldier would share with his wife and child.¹⁰⁴ As they marched through the apocalyptic landscapes of war, such hopes for a good post-war life turned increasingly into rage. Confronted with both the nightmarish destruction at home and the comparative prosperity of eastern Prussia, Soviet soldiers wondered how these people, who lived so well, could have started a war against the impoverished Soviet Union. As they marched towards Berlin, driven by an anger fuelled by relentless hate propaganda, they turned the German vision of a Nazi welfare state built on the plunder of the rest of Europe on its head. The victorious Red Army's soldiers plundered what they could and destroyed the rest. The Soviet state, just like the Nazi state earlier, encouraged this behaviour by organising a regular parcel service for loot from the occupied territories back home. As the victors returned in the summer of 1945, they brought watches and boots, dresses and accordions, bicycles and motorbikes with them on the demobilisation trains—material artefacts of their dreams of post-war normalcy. Officers and generals, who had better access to transportation than the rank-and-file, brought grand pianos, cars and paintings.¹⁰⁵ It seems that in this, at least, everybody in this war agreed: the victors should live well and the vanquished should pay.¹⁰⁶

As the Red Army marched onto Berlin and, later in 1945, invaded Japan-controlled Manchuria, Axis fantasies turned into nightmares. While Germany and Japan confronted an alliance of multiple great powers, the Soviet Union occupied a particular place in the visions of the Axis leadership. Since the 1920s, the Soviet Union had represented the ultimate foe, first an ideological one as the home of international communism, then as a military one. For such militarist regimes as Germany and Japan, any defeat in war was difficult to contemplate. But, after years

¹⁰⁴ M. Lenoe, 'Emotions and Psychological Survival in the Red Army, 1941–42', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, xxii (2021), pp. 313–44, at 336.

¹⁰⁵ Edele, *Soviet Veterans*, pp. 30–33; M. Edele, 'Learning from the Enemy? Entangling Histories of the German-Soviet War, 1941–1945', in D. Baratieri, M. Edele and G. Finaldi, eds, *Totalitarian Dictatorship: New Histories* (New York, 2014), pp. 190–211.

¹⁰⁶ On visions of the good life in post-war Soviet popular literature, see V.S. Dunham, *In Stalin's Time: Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction* (1976; new edn, Durham, NC, 1990).

of patriotic and anti-communist propaganda, the prospect of losing to the Soviets could only signal one thing: total defeat.

That they might be among the vanquished, and might have to pay dearly for pursuing their dreams of empire, started to dawn on more and more Germans after the attack on the Soviet Union was launched on 22 June 1941. An apocalyptic undertone began creeping into conversations about the war, a parallel discourse to the continued 'excessive optimism' of others.¹⁰⁷ Already on 13 September 1941, the conservative theologian Konrad Jarausch wrote home from the Soviet front, mixing a German version of *mission civilisatrice* ('How much one would have to build and to educate, so that the people [here] can live decently and properly!') with anxious fears of retribution ('I often get frightened by the thought, that all these peoples, whom we had to hit so hard and had to humiliate so much, could one day come together in revenge'). The aftermath of war became its continuation—the radical inversion of the hope for a quick end to the fighting, which Jarausch's letters also expressed. Even his newborn son, he now mused, might have to put on uniform and carry on his father's bloody deeds.¹⁰⁸

This apocalyptic turn became increasingly dominant in the final months of the war, amplifying a theme the leadership had begun to stress since 1942. As Hitler himself put it in late September of that year, the Germans knew 'very well that either all must survive victoriously together or be destined for extermination together'.¹⁰⁹ The growing recognition that the war was lost and the widespread knowledge of German crimes in the east conspired to turn the dreams of the imperial post-war into nightmares of annihilation. With the defeat by the Red Army at Stalin-grad in 1943, the Nazi regime developed the idea of 'Fortress Europe', a bastion against 'Jewish Bolshevism' that could also enrol Ukrainians and even Russians, hitherto seen as unworthy of bearing arms.¹¹⁰ Many began to worry that the German dreams of a post-genocidal aftermath of war would indeed now become the future of Germany: the victors would, at best, take revenge and might even destroy the German race. This nightmare became increasingly widespread both because Goebbels's atrocity propaganda fuelled hysteria about what the Red Army would do, and because refugees from the east brought with them accounts of Red Army brutality. It was at least in part this vision of the aftermath that kept the German army fighting so doggedly against the Soviets.¹¹¹

Increasingly, too, only one hope seemed possible: that the United States and Britain would come to their senses, remember their

107. *Meldungen ... Auswahl*, ed. Boberach, pp. 167–69, 184 (SS reports of 4 Aug. and 27 Oct. 1941).

108. Jarausch and Arnold, 'Das stille Sterben', pp. 308–9.

109. 'Address at the Opening of the Winter Relief Campaign', 30 Sept. 1942.

110. Elvert, "'New European Order' of National Socialism", pp. 116–17.

111. For a very clear example, see Dieter Borkowski's diary entry of 15 April 1945, published as D. Borkowski, *Wer weiß, ob wir uns wiedersehen: Erinnerungen an eine Berliner Jugend* (Frankfurt am Main, 1980), pp. 189–90.

anti-Bolshevism, and align themselves with the German army, turning the Second World War into the Third World War against Bolshevism.¹¹² Russian refugees and nationalists in eastern Europe also hoped that the United States and Britain would begin a war against the Soviet Union, which kept many of the Baltic and Ukrainian resisters fighting long after they had lost the battle with the Soviet security forces.¹¹³

Japan also fought on long after the war had turned against it. With the United States advance in the Pacific in 1942–43, victory appeared increasingly unlikely. Visions of the aftermath were adjusted, without giving up on the war: new strategies were devised to draw the rest of Asia into Japan's war aims through promises of independence within a new Asian order.¹¹⁴ But while the rhetoric of a united Asia was maintained in public, in private, and in policy and intellectual circles, more sober—and sombre—assessments were made. Some die-hards, both military and civilian, were determined to fight American tanks with bamboo spears, yet those with more calculating minds schemed to replace the inept military leadership and negotiate a favourable peace.¹¹⁵

It is difficult to overstate the extent to which, in Japan, the prospect of defeat was entangled with the loss of empire. By the 1940s, imperial consciousness had percolated into all realms and 'empire' had an array of meanings: it could refer, for instance, to a colonial empire stretching from Singapore to Sakhalin, built over half a century at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives. Empire also signified the imperial 'state'—the machinery erected to organise and control the new order at home and in Asia including, crucially, the lives and careers of the elites who had thrown in their lot with the imperial project. Moreover, the empire included the nation in whose name the war was fought and whose moral fortitude was therefore at stake. Not least, empire meant the emperor. What would become of Hirohito himself, the imperial family and the polity that they embodied? Almost too painful to contemplate, one potential post-imperial aftermath was the foremost concern of the Japanese elites: would it mean the triumph of party politics, democracy and the tensions that Japan had been able to stave off in 1920s?

Reviving the time-honoured link between war and the fear of revolution, the greatest cause of concern for the elites was the prospect that imperial loss would give way to communism. Since the 1920s, the Japanese state had fought communism in politics, academia and culture, and integrated anti-communism into its vision of the Co-Prosperity Sphere in Asia. But as the war unfolded communism did not seem to wane.

^{112.} Hopes for an alliance with the West against the Soviets were reported as early as November 1943, from the German South: *Meldungen ... Auswahl*, ed. Boberach, p. 459.

^{113.} Edele, *Stalinism at War*, p. 155.

^{114.} A. Iriye, *Power and Culture: The Japanese-American War, 1941–1945* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), pp. 96–8; Yellen, *Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, p. 157.

^{115.} A. Levidis, 'Desolation Goes before Us: Kishi Nobusuke and the National Defense Brotherhood, 1944–45', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, xlix (2023), pp. 1–30.

It reappeared in October 1941 at the very heart of the empire with the arrest for treason of Richard Sorge and Ozaki Hotsumi, who had spied for the Soviets (they were executed in 1944).¹¹⁶ The case fuelled fear of institutional and political conspiracies.¹¹⁷ Authorities were also keenly aware of the Japanese revolutionaries led by Kaji Wataru who were stationed in China and allied to Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party.¹¹⁸

Fear of political and social revolution was reflected in the obsession with saving the sacred national polity, the *kokutai*, centred on the emperor. Articulated widely among the Japanese ruling classes, concern about the *kokutai* was perhaps expressed most forcefully in February 1945 by Konoe Fumimaro, who was close to the monarch and still an influential voice in politics, in the 'Konoe Memorial' addressed to the Emperor. Konoe represented a faction of the Japanese leadership that opposed the army's determination to pursue the war at all costs, fearing that the inevitable defeat would lead to a communist takeover and the abolition of the *kokutai*. In his 'Memorial', Konoe stated that the Second World War was really a war against communism. He claimed Japanese and international communist leaders had 'guided' Japan into the war in order to spark social chaos. Konoe warned the sovereign that it was imperative to negotiate with the British and the Americans, who would, he believed, maintain the political status quo.¹¹⁹

Whatever Konoe's motives, it is difficult to deny the increasingly apocalyptic visions of the ruling classes as the Allies prepared to land on Japan's main islands. The Soviet entry into the war against Japan in August 1945 was the last straw: as Tokyo watched the Red Army race through Manchuria, Japan's leaders contemplated the nightmarish vision of a Soviet invasion of the Japanese mainland. Confronted with this scenario in the aftermath of two atomic bombs, they finally surrendered.¹²⁰

VI

Unconditional surrender clearly separated the war from the post-war. Notwithstanding pockets of resistance in some far-flung regions of the collapsed Japanese empire, Japanese and Germans in 1945 had little choice but to 'embrace defeat' and build a post-war life, however improvised. Some of the wartime visions of the aftermath, such as anti-communism and ideas of a Third World War, however, survived in the context of both nations' integration into the Cold War (in the case

¹¹⁶ C. Johnson, *An Instance of Treason: Ozaki Hotsumi and the Sorge Spy Ring* (Stanford, CA, 1990).

¹¹⁷ A. Takashi, *Shūsen to Konoe josōbun: Ajia-Taiheiyō sensō to kyōsanshugi inbōsetsu* (Tokyo, 2016).

¹¹⁸ E. Michielsen, 'Fighting Fascism with "Verbal Bullets": Kaji Wataru and the Antifascist Struggle in Wartime East Asia', *Fascism: Journal of Comparative Fascist Studies*, ix (2020), pp. 9–33.

¹¹⁹ Konoe, as quoted in Araya, *Shūsen to Konoe josōbun*, p. 10.

¹²⁰ T. Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

of Germany, with east and west on different sides; in the case of Japan as a staunch ally of the United States in Asia). The wartime visions of 'the good life' that would come with empire were recalibrated by the experience of thirty years of post-war growth, incorporation into world markets, and, in the case of Germany, European integration.¹²¹

Such an abrupt rift between war and post-war, and with it the sudden end of the aftermath, was far from universal, as we have already seen in the cases of the Napoleonic Empire, the American Civil War, or the Ottoman and Russian empires after the First World War. In China in 1945–49, in Greece in 1946–49, in India in 1947 and in Palestine in 1947–48, likewise, the war continued as a civil war. In Vietnam from 1946 and in Indonesia in 1945–49, the world war gave way to a war of independence from colonial control.

In the western borderlands of the Soviet Union—Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—the years 1944–49 also saw a continuation of violence. Vicious armed resistance against Soviet occupation (and against those deemed 'collaborators' among the civilian population) was broken by a brutal counter-insurgency and mass deportations. Participants linked their actions back to the 1914–22 period: years of independence struggle for Ukrainians and Balts, years of recovering the Tsarist lands for the Soviets. But the imaginaries of the war also persisted, with the resistance in the western borderlands hoping for intervention by the United States and a Third World War, while the Soviets saw the local resistance primarily as murderous fascists and Nazi collaborators.¹²²

The ghosts of these years still haunt Eurasia. After 1991, Ukrainians began to embrace the legacy of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, not as the fascists they were but as precursors of their own independence struggles. The Russian state, in its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, drew on tropes of 'liberation' and 'denazification' to justify its war of conquest. And the German public struggled with understanding which side to pick: so thoroughly had the spirits of the Second World War been exorcised that the mere thought that Germany should send tanks to Ukraine to defeat Russia seemed perverse to many Germans.¹²³

Ghosts of the past also still haunt the countries which emerged from the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War. Although the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 created a clear dividing line between war and post-war, some of the visions of the aftermath which had animated participants in the ugly fighting between 1911 and 1922 lived on in the minds of those who experienced it. The Lausanne Treaty made light of democratic social contracts, constitutional rule,

121. J. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York, 1999); K.H. Jarausch, *After Hitler: Recivilizing Germans, 1945–1995* (Oxford, 2006).

122. A. Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands* (Cambridge, 2010); Edele, *Stalinism at War*, pp. 151–73.

123. M. Edele, *Russia's War against Ukraine: The Whole Story* (Melbourne, 2023), pp. 96–8, 142–6.

accountability for pre-1923 mass crimes and native self-determination. Its outcome allowed for a triumphalist Lausanne Conference narrative by Turkish nationalists and British imperialists.¹²⁴ For non-Turkish peoples on post-Ottoman territory, Lausanne was a deal struck over their heads; for all Christian survivors of genocide and for brutally repressed post-Ottoman Kurds, it was a 'peace' for the victors, rulers and perpetrators. This made many of them restless and relentless seekers of truth and justice and, at times, of revenge. For pan-Turkists and Islamists, Lausanne was a fatal debacle (*hezimet*) provoked by an international conspiracy of Zionists, Kemalists and imperialists.¹²⁵ Though in very different ways, non-Turkish people, including Kurds and Armenians, as well as pan-Turkists and Islamists all still carry unfulfilled post-Great War visions with them. Turkey's President Erdogan, a partisan of expansive Islamist neo-Ottomanism, is the most prominent recent proponent of revised Lausanne borders.¹²⁶

In Britain the warfare state was dismantled successfully after 1918 and the welfare of veterans was handed over to a significant degree to private charity rather than, as in defeated Germany, the tender care of state bureaucrats. However, after 1939, both the hopes for and fears of a strong state reappeared when Britain again built a state-directed war machine.¹²⁷ It prosecuted the war effort so successfully that mainstream opinion saw a chance of transferring the powers of the state from warfare to welfare. This idea materialised in the post-war welfare state—a delayed institutionalisation of some of the hopes raised during the First World War.¹²⁸ However, the fears others had expressed about the dangers of a powerful state also continued to haunt British intellectuals. One such dissident was Friedrich Hayek. Appalled by the British warfare state, Hayek argued in his 1944 polemic, *The Road to Serfdom*, that any kind of state planning led inevitably and catastrophically to totalitarianism. During the next thirty years of unprecedented economic growth, few outside the economics department at the University of Chicago paid much attention to such hyperbole. But once advanced economies started to slow down in the 1970s Hayek became the patron saint of neoliberal economic reform—another delayed impact of the imagined aftermaths of the First World War.¹²⁹

124. The omnipresent Kemalist narrative of diplomatic triumph in Lausanne is based on Kemal Atatürk's 'ego-history', a bible of Kemalism, in G.M. Kemal (Atatürk), *Nutuk* (1927; repr. Istanbul, 2015). For British triumphalism, see, for example, 'Lausanne: The Final Triumph', in H.G. Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919–1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy* (London, 1934), pp. 314–50.

125. K. Mısıroğlu, *Lozan: Zafer mi, hezimet mi?* (Istanbul, 1992).

126. S. Khalil, 'Can Turkey Renovate its Empire by the End of the Treaty of Lausanne 2023', Rawabet Centre for Research and Strategic Studies, Amman, 18 June 2017, available at <http://rawabetcenter.com/en/?p=2571> (accessed 5 Aug. 2025).

127. D. Cohen, *The War Come Home: Disabled Veterans in Britain and Germany, 1914–1939* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).

128. N. Timmins, *The Five Giants: A Biography of the Welfare State* (3rd edn, London, 2017).

129. F. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London, 1944).

Some of the ghosts of the American Civil War are also still with us, framing United States politics to this day. One side sees the Unionist victory as a realisation of the founders' design and as an endorsement of American exceptionalism; the other side continues to pine for an alternative America, where racial hierarchies were clear and immutable, and everybody knew their place. This afterlife has been remarkably persistent; to this day, many Americans locate the Civil War's aftermath in the present rather than the past.¹³⁰ This is not just a fight about monuments or flags. While freed people's near universal belief in the simple justice of reparation and government protection was ignored by the government in 1865, that belief never went away. Instead, their demands form part of a continuous call for a reckoning with the outcome of the Civil War, which saw land and property largely restored to former Confederates and the implementation of racially discriminatory policies and practices nationwide.¹³¹

The White Southern dream of an independent, modern slaveholding republic proudly serving as a global exemplar, by contrast, died in 1865, although its offshoot, Jim Crow, deeply impressed the Nazis.¹³² 'The population of North America consists for the most part of Germanic elements who mixed very little with lower coloured peoples', wrote Adolf Hitler; 'The Germanic of the American continent, who has remained pure ... has risen to become the lord of it; he will remain so until he too falls victim to racial disgrace (*Blutschande*)'.¹³³ Equally consequentially, within the United States, the belief in White Southern difference lived on, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy that informed everything from religious faith and political affiliation to patterns of violence and remembrance.¹³⁴

Even some visions of the aftermath developed during the Napoleonic Wars have an afterlife that reaches into the present. The invention of veteran privileges as mass politics left a profound legacy for the nineteenth, twentieth and even twenty-first centuries.¹³⁵ In the 1920s such veteran politics were symbolically and practically appropriated by fascist movements, with the well-known results in Italy and Germany in particular.¹³⁶ On the other side of the political spectrum, the notion of

¹³⁰ W.A. Blair, 'Finding the Ending of America's Civil War', *American Historical Review*, cxx (2015), pp. 1753–66.

¹³¹ M.T. Martin and M. Yaquinto, *Redress for Historical Injustices in the United States* (Durham, NC, 2007).

¹³² J.Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (Princeton, NJ, 2017).

¹³³ *Hitler. Mein Kampf: Eine kritische Edition*, ed. C. Hartmann et al. (2 vols, Berlin, 2016), i, p. 743.

¹³⁴ T.W. Rice, W.P. McLean and A.J. Larsen, 'Southern Distinctiveness over Time, 1972–2000', *American Review of Politics*, xxiii (2002), pp. 193–220.

¹³⁵ Crotty, Diamant and Edele, *Politics of Veteran Benefits in the Twentieth Century*, pp. 162–71.

¹³⁶ Á. Alcalde, *War Veterans and Fascism in Interwar Europe* (Cambridge, 2017).

universal peace as either the desirable or the inevitable end-point of history, not as part of Christian theology but as a secular utopia, lived on well beyond the international anti-war movement. This hope was part of a messianic moment at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, which turned out to be far from unique. There are parallels in this respect between 1815, 1918 and 1945 in terms of the spiritual regeneration of a corrupt old Europe that some hoped to bring about.¹³⁷ In each case, conservatives viewed the possible aftermath of war as ‘not only an opportunity to (re) build a stable new European political order, but also to regenerate and re-moralise a decayed European civilisation’.¹³⁸

The history of the dreams and nightmares of contemporaries about the aftermath of the wars they lived through still has real-world consequences. In this essay, we have seen how unfulfilled dreams of one war either fuelled another or reappeared and adapted to new circumstances. Some lived on, subterraneously, in subcultures or on library shelves, until their time was ripe again. Others became part of the mainstream of international political thought. We thus live in a world of overlapping aftermaths: in our desire for world peace and a rules-based international order, we are children of the Napoleonic Wars; today’s culture wars over monuments and struggles over the legacies of slavery in the United States descend from the dreams of the American Civil War. In the politico-ideological and armed struggles in both the Middle East and Eurasia today, and more broadly in our hopes and fears about the powers of the state, we live in the aftermath of the First World War; and in the way in which we conceive of military and political confrontations in both Asia and the former Soviet space, we still dream nightmares from the Second World War.

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¹³⁷ B. Stråth, *Europe's Utopias of Peace: 1815, 1919, 1951* (London, 2016).

¹³⁸ Lok, ‘Congress of Vienna as a Missed Opportunity’, p. 59.

