

Leonhard, Jörn: *Bellizismus und Nation. Kriegsdeutung und Nationsbestimmung in Europa und den Vereinigten Staaten 1750-1914*. München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag 2008. ISBN: 978-3-486-58516-2; XIX, 1019 S.

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If, as Charles Tilly once famously wrote, wars made states and states made wars in (early) modern Europe, Freiburg historian Jörn Leonhard suggests the existence of a similarly close relationship between modern notions of the nation and the sphere of war in his brilliant new book on „bellicism“ and the „nation“ in Europe and the United States between 1750 and 1914. Defining „bellicism“ as the „Sinn- und Erziehungslehre des Krieges,“ (p. 6) this monumental study offers an exhaustive analysis of the nexus „zwischen der Wahrnehmung des Krieges, der davon ausgehenden Erfahrungsdeutung und der inhaltlichen Bestimmung des Konzepts der Nation, seiner Ursprünge, seiner diachronen Veränderungen und seiner synchronen Besonderheiten.“ (p. 3) In doing so, Leonhard’s sweeping analysis invokes Carl Schmitt’s concept of the political, with its emphasis on the friend/foe distinction and the foundational quality of war as the ultimate manifestation of enmity.

Bellizismus und Nation is an exercise in what its author calls an „Argumentationsgeschichte“ of the discursive relationship between war and nation (pp. 13, 16, 18). Drawing on the fields of Historical Semantics, Political History, and History of Ideas, this branch of intellectual history focuses on arguments as the „analytisch besonders wichtiger Schnittpunkt von Wahrnehmungen, Deutungsprozessen und ihrer Umsetzung in Handlungsprozessen“ (p. 15); it privileges the exploration of these arguments over a primary emphasis on either particular concepts or entire languages of discourse. The exploration of arguments draws on public discussion, in print media, of the meanings and experience of war in relation to concepts of the nation. Sources include books, pamphlets, sermons, leaflets, and articles in magazines and newspapers. Their authors are intellectual elites and members of „national“ intelligentsias broadly de-

fined.

The book, then, offers a comparative analysis of bellicist discourse and notions of the nation in four countries: France, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States of America. With programmatic ambition, Leonhard, the author of a previous comparative study of the semantics of liberalism in four European countries, offers a systematic and fairly even-handed comparison, with an emphasis on cross-national typology and Braudelian *longue durée*. Throughout his comparison, Leonhard also pays much attention to matters of cross-national mutual perception and willful differentiation; and he emphasizes the important role that observations of the war experiences of other countries could play.

Leonhard deftly grounds his investigation in time by advancing a distinct scheme of periodization. At its center loom two periods of bellicist transformation, „bellizistische Umbruchsphasen,“ (pp. 22-24, 111ff., 517ff.) each of which was characterized by a distinctive dialectics of intensified war experience, bellicist definitions, and nationalist discourse. The first such period proved foundational for the bellicist linkage between war and nation. It stretched from 1750 to 1815, ranging from the Seven Years War to the Wars of American Independence and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The second period of transformation was defined by the wars at mid-nineteenth century, ranging from the Crimean wars to the American Civil War and the Wars of Italian and German National Unification. Leonhard’s analysis ends on the eve of yet another bellicist period of transformation, the era of the two world wars. This period stood at the end of what Leonhard views as a previous European century of wars of nations.

Within these parameters, Leonhard offers a rich and learned analysis of discourses on war and nation, displaying command of vast multinational source material and synthesizing multiple national historiographies. Running over 1000 pages, Leonhard’s study defies any real effort at summary. Throughout, his analysis emphasizes both the multiplicity of bellicist arguments and nationalist formulations and the existence of different discursive centers of gravity in each country. On the one hand, Leonhard stresses the comple-

xities of intra- and cross-national differentiation and convergence while distancing himself from an earlier scholarship on nationalism that had constructed a set of binary oppositions to capture the essence of competing European nationalisms. On the other hand, he argues that in each of his four countries, bellicist discourse and constructions of the nation moved along distinctive axes, which reflected particular sites of experiences and horizons of expectation.

In Leonhard's scheme, both France and Germany came to imagine themselves as bellicist nations and nations-in-arms in hegemonic discourse, yet these imaginings had their own distinctive trajectories. In France, which emerged as the „Modell der auf den Krieg hin imaginierten Nation“ after 1789 (p. 825), the linkage between revolution, war, and nation served as a defining field of gravity. In Germany, where the bellicist imagination of the nation first fully developed in the context of anti-Napoleonic wars, the „Koppelung von innerer Nationsbildung, äusserer Etablierung des Nationalstaates und Kriegserfahrungen“ (p. 829) proved pivotal for most of the bellicist discourse and nationalist imaginations across the nineteenth century. Dominant self-imaginings of Great Britain and the United States as warring nations, in turn, lived off the direct contrast to continental European war-mongering and militarization. In Britain national-bellicist discourse expanded on already existing images of the nation as a Protestant-constitutional and maritime-trading nation. After 1815, the Empire and the civilizing mission of a Christian imperial nation provided the key points of reference before concerns about inter-imperial competitiveness began to restructure the debate by 1900. In the United States, bellicist discourse remained shaped by exceptionalist-destinarian languages that centered on the republican nation, its divine mission, and its spatial separateness. The flourishing of distinctly bellicist notions of the nation remained limited by the existence of a strong Christian-pacifist counter-discourse.

Even a book of this size and scope does not cover everything. Some absences are the product of methodological choices, such as the priority of cross-national comparison over an

analysis of transnational transfer and circulation, or the focus on elite and intelligentsia public discourse in its analysis of war interpretation and „experience.“ More striking is the curious absence of any more substantive discussion of the semantics of „militarism,“ a term that entered the political vocabulary in the 1860s and 1870s, and the important work it did for both bellicist and anti-bellicist discourse and notions of national difference.

The entire period between 1871 and 1914 also receives a cursory treatment, even though Leonhard presents the First World War as the end point of his analysis of the discursive relationship between war and nation in Europe and the United States. Such treatment stands out for another reason: Leonhard identifies a set of important new departures during this time period that call into question his emphasis on the formative importance of mid-nineteenth century configurations and transformations for the subsequent period up to the coming of global war in 1914. These new developments included the radicalization and convergence of bellicist notions of the nation in the context of a new global geopolitics of war and empire and „im Zeichen des Sozialdarwinismus“ that emerged as a „globales Deutungsmuster“ and lent new transnational unity to national discourse in each of the four countries (Quotes: pp. 814, 813).

It is also important to note that Leonhard's framework of analysis contains a strong teleological perspective. Seeking to historicize a long European century of national wars, Leonhard stresses the *longue durée* of bellicist discourse and its imbrication with modern notions of the nation. His is a „Katastrophengeschichte“ (p. 836) in which the two „total wars“ of the twentieth century appear as natural points of culmination of previous bellicist-national discourse, as an overdetermined realization of an inherent condition of possibility. It was only the experience of these two wars, Leonhard suggests, that finally called into question previous „Deutungsmuster von Nation und Nationalstaat“ (p. 836) and undid the nexus between war and the nation that had flourished in Europe since the 18th century.

Regardless of any such issues, Leonhard's study has the making of an instant classic. It

will serve as a foundational text and rich treasure trove for any subsequent scholarship on political discourse about nation and war in Europe and North America in the long nineteenth century. This juggernaut of an erudite book offers intellectual history at the highest level.

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