

IV ENIUGH Congress „Encounters, Circulations and Conflicts“: Conflicts and War

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The 2014 ENIUGH congress included a large session focused on „Conflicts and War“. Half of the panels were dedicated to the First World War, in commemoration of its centenary this year. Presentations, however, covered a number of wars, each offering scholars a new lens to view conflicts.

The histories of wars and conflicts represent an interesting and fertile research topic in global history. Initially, wartime periods of warfare may seem like moments of increased barriers and of suspended cross-national communication, rather than occasions of cultural transfer and internationalization. Nevertheless, this session's panels have shown how the consideration of conflicts through a transnational perspective lead to a better understanding of how cultural exchanges take place during conflicts and how they differ from transfers that occur in times of peace.

The changes in laws regulating the circulation of goods and people were a particular focus in the panel, „The Mediterranean in Times of War: How did 18th-century Actors maintain Flows of Goods, People and Information and Adjust to Warfare?“, convened by Silvia Marzagalli. It investigated the interconnectivity and patterns of relations between merchants and ship owners in the Mediterranean during the „long eighteenth century“, specifically during the Napoleonic Wars. The mutual influence of economic interests and warfare has emerged in most of the papers, which consider the adjustment of the maritime laws and the lucrative practices of traders in neutral states such as Scandinavian countries (Pierre-Yves Beaurepaire), Denmark (Pierrick Pourchasse), Britain (Katerina Galani, Leos Müller and Steve Murdoch) and the United States (Silvia Marzagalli).

Similarly, the panel „Warfare, Soldiers,

and Military Encounters“ has shown how wars since the mid-18th century spurred the emergence of international humanitarian aid associations, predecessors of contemporary transnational humanitarian non-governmental organizations (Thomas Davies). These wars also provided occasions for lost soldiers of European armies to meet and assimilate remote civilizations, such as those found in the South Pacific (Véronique Larcade). In addition, by studying the encounters that took place during the 15th-century wars of the Ottoman Empire, the opportunity arises to contrast this case with the burden of Eurocentric or Oriental points of view in historiography, which describe these conflicts as technological and economic wars or as religious and cultural conflicts (Elina Gugliuzzo).

Studying war on a more global scale has led to many questions related to historiography. Since historiography is not independent from global history, the strengthening of national identities, which typically accompanies conflicts and wars, allows new nations to write their own history –probably the field where the national perspective of the historian has the most significant weight.

As a number of panels of the congress have shown, and not only in this section, colonial history is probably the topic where the effort to contrast and to overcome national historiography is the most solicited. War-related problems such as the military aspects of decolonization were situated in their political, social and cultural environment in the panel, „The European Armies in the Decolonization, 1943–1974“, convened by Steffen Prauser. Aiming at producing a global historical analysis that is not close in the bilateral horizon between metropolis and colonies, historians looked at many different territories, institutions, and collectivities in order to recognise the complex role of colonial armies after the Second World War. Researchers have played particular attention to the social and cultural role of the soldiers in civil society (Steffen Prauser), to the ideologies of militant independent movements in British and French colonies (Moritz Feichtinger), and to the circulation of military knowledge and practice among nations during the transition

between different empires in Southeast Asia (Elie Tennebaum), in the Portuguese colonial empire (Luis Rodrigues), and in Mauritania (Camille Evrard).

Scholars focusing on colonial history are also reconsidering the question of military recruitment. For example, Katharina Döring and Ulf Engel convened a panel, „Transnational Recruiting Practices: From Colonial Troops to Third Country Nationals“, which presented the concept of recruitment in the *longue durée*. Just as imperial powers recruited the askari (colonial soldiers serving in European armies) through institutional means in the world wars of the 20th century, the United States employed privatized ways of recruiting from third country nations during its invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. The contributions to this panel have shown not only the similarities in the recruitment of African and Asian soldiers, but also linked racial arguments with gender issues in Weimar Germany (Sandra Maß), the conversion of the askari serving in the French decolonization wars (Ruth Ginio), and the labour conditions of Ugandan private security guards in Iraq (Katharina Döring).

The First World War, for example, represents a pivotal conflict in which recruitment practices further developed. For example, Evan Dawley convened the panel, „Japan and the Great War: New Connections, New Opportunities, and New Dangers“, which presented the importance of 1914 for Japan, the year when this country began to rise in its international importance. Aiming to integrate Japan's history into the greater global narrative, papers analysed the rise of East Asian modernity since 1914 (Tze-ki Hon) and Japanese foreign relations, with a specific attention to the Japan diplomatic exchanges and military encounters with Poland and Siberia (Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, Sumiko Otsubo), with the imperialist states of Europe (Evan Dawley), and with the Ottoman Empire (Selçuk Esenbel).

Finally, the panel convened by Caterina Zanfi, „Thinking the War of 1914: Philosophical and Scientific Europe to the Test of Total War“, meant the transferring of concepts from global history to the field of the philosophy. Crossing intellectual history and

the history of philosophy, these papers measured the impact of war on the philosophical landscape of the Old World. For instance, war can be viewed as a new philosophical object in which scholars consider political theory and the philosophy of technology under the thrust of military innovations such as aviation (Thomas Hippler). The nationalist crusade triggered by war also had repercussions on the frequent instrumentalization of philosophical concepts in a „war for the civilization“, as employed by influential German, Austrian, French, and Italian philosophers, such as Eucken, Boutroux (Olivier Agard), Kraus, Sorel and Croce (Matteo Giglioli), and Bergson (Caterina Zanfi). In conclusion, presenters at this section of the ENIUGH congress have tried to present a better understanding of global history and to overcome the fragmentation of historiography of one of the most nationally conditioned issues. Academics studying different wars and their various implications – commercial, diplomatic, intellectual, etc. – have certainly contributed to the defining of new methods and guidelines for future studies.

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