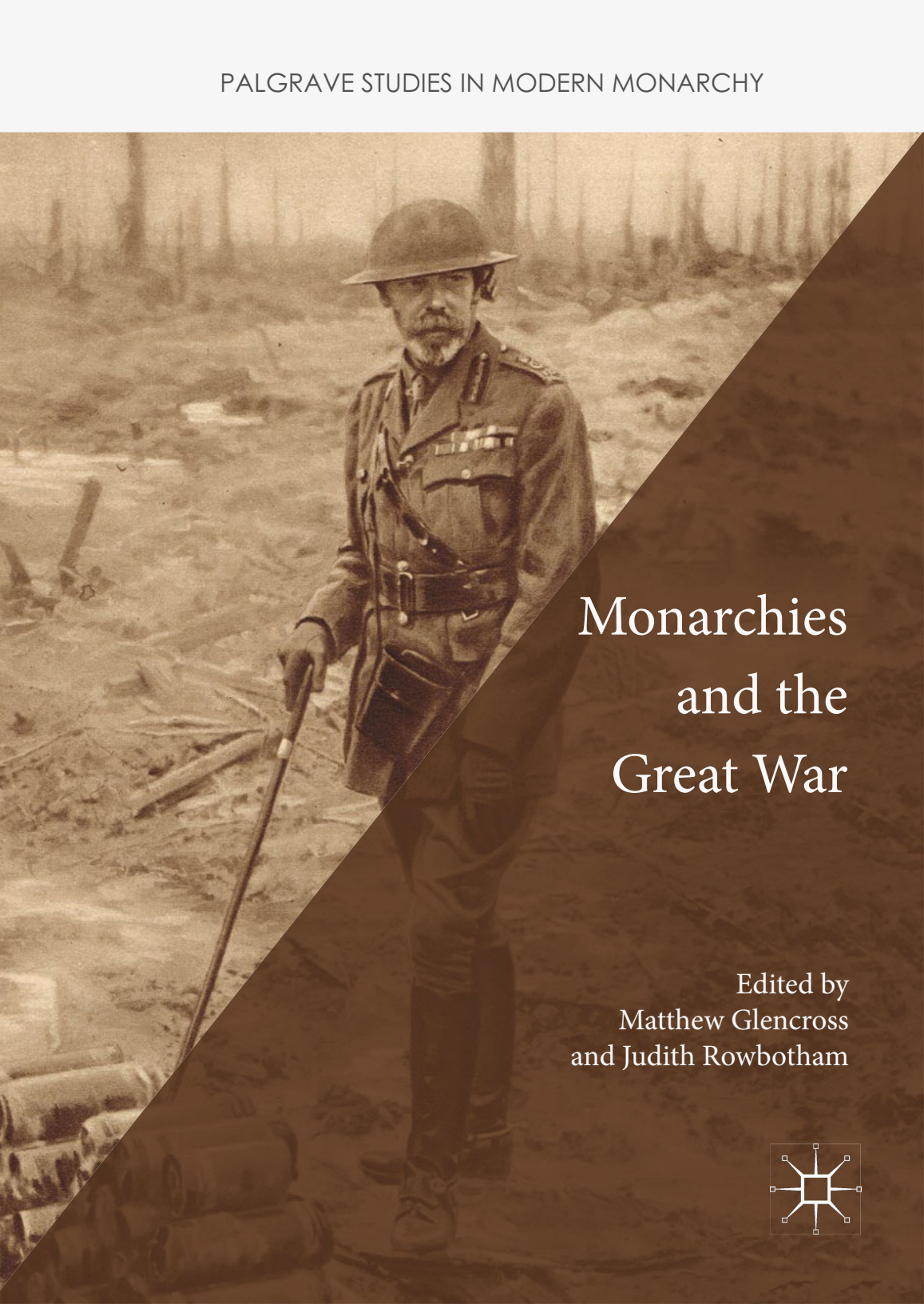


PALGRAVE STUDIES IN MODERN MONARCHY



Monarchies and the Great War

Edited by
Matthew Glencross
and Judith Rowbotham



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The death of Louis XVI on the scaffold in 1793 did not mark the beginning of the end of monarchy. What followed was a Long Nineteenth Century during which monarchical systems continued to be politically and culturally dominant both in Europe and beyond. They shaped political cultures and became a reference point for debates on constitutional government as well as for understandings of political liberalism. Within multinational settings monarchy offered an alternative to centralised national states. Not even the cataclysms of the twentieth century could wipe monarchy completely off the political, mental and emotional maps.

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Editors

Monarchies and the Great War

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many who have no doubted helped them—we are certain that each of our contributors will have long lists of friends and mentors from whom they drew advice and support. The editors would also like to thank our own families, colleagues and friends for putting up with endless talk of the intricacies and nuances of monarchical relationships and courtly etiquette. As we, the editors, know even better than the first time we came together on an edited collection, achieving completion of a collection of this type is, in summary, a tribute to the contributors who have responded to the challenge set for them so magnificently, and to the tolerance of both the editors' and the contributors' various family members, scholars and the wide range of friends who have not given up on us, yet.

February 2018

Matthew Glencross
Judith Rowbotham

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

*Matthew Glencross, Judith Rowbotham
and Christopher Brennan*

Despite the assassination on 28 June 1914 of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, there was no widespread popular expectation amongst contemporaries that this episode would develop into something more significant than another Balkan war (that *was* fairly widely anticipated). As late as 26 July 1914, the British newspapers were speculating on the implications associated with the anticipated arrival on British shores of the German Kaiser's third (and still unmarried) son for Cowes Week, and remaining into September, with his British royal cousins. Some columns hinted that a possible marriage with the popular

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Princess Patricia of Connaught.¹ According to the Court Circular, that same day, 26 July, George V 'was visited by Prince Henry [Heinrich] of Prussia', who was Wilhelm II's well-regarded younger brother.² Heinrich and King George got on well, having had in common the experience of being career naval officers (Heinrich was still serving, having reached the rank of Grand Admiral in 1909).³ The Prince had come across for Cowes Week as per usual. Generally, by late July, the royal families of Europe, and most of the leading European statesmen and diplomats, were winding down their political and diplomatic business for the summer. They were planning summer holidays, which meant for most either flocking to spas like Baden-Baden in Germany or resorts like those in the South of France or returning to their own estates.⁴ The French President, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary were all on a series of European visits, the first named only returning to Paris from Saint Petersburg on 29 July after cutting short plans to visit Norway and Denmark.⁵ What kept many British statesmen in London (on weekdays at least) into late July

¹'Social Gossip', *Daily Mail*, 26 July 1914. Princess Patricia of Connaught was the younger daughter of Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught (third son of Queen Victoria) and his wife, Princess Luise Margarete of Prussia, Duchess of Connaught (known after her marriage as Princess Louise Margaret). Born in 1886, she was 28 in 1914, and considered beautiful and charming. A highly eligible Protestant princess, her possible marriage had been for the previous decade a matter of speculation with a range of royal candidates being mooted. She eventually married a commoner in 1919, at Westminster Abbey. (Admiral) Alexander Ramsay had been her father's aides-de-camp.

²'Court Circular, 26 July', *The Times*, 27 July 1914.

³As Grand Admiral, Prince Heinrich was Commander of the Baltic Fleet from August 1914 until the conclusion of peace with Russia in 1918, after which he retired from active duty, resigning entirely from the German Navy when his brother abdicated. See F. W. Wile (1913) *The Men Around the Kaiser* (London: William Heinemann) p45 in particular. George V's perception of Prince Heinrich as being a fellow naval officer, and so a man he could deal with directly, explains why it was through Prince Heinrich that George V sought to appeal to Wilhelm II as part of the last minute efforts to avoid war. See Marina Soroka (2016) *Britain, Russia and the Road to the First World War: The Fateful Embassy of Count Aleksandr Benkendorff (1903-1916)* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp253-4.

⁴For instance, members of the Greek royal family, including the Crown Prince and the Queen of the Hellenes, were amongst the royal personages in Britain in late July, expecting to enjoy Cowes Week before departing (in their case) to resorts on the South of France. See 'Court Circular, 27 July', *The Times*, 28 July 1914.

⁵Comment was made on the delay Poincaré's absence, along with that of his key ministers, had caused to diplomatic negotiations to resolve the 'crisis', see 'The Prospects of Intervention', *The Times*, 28 July 1914.

was the crisis in Ulster, rather than the one potentially engulfing Europe.⁶ Things changed in the last days of July and early August, as the danger of a pan-European war was finally acknowledged. Consequently, not only Poincaré but other eminent figures, including members of the various European royal families, felt forced to cancel engagements in order to rush home.⁷ The Dowager Empress Marie of Russia had been staying with her sister, Queen Alexandra, at Marlborough House in London, planning to spend August with her at Sandringham in Norfolk. Her last minute return to Russia saw her forced to make a roundabout journey through Denmark and Finland as her usual route via Berlin was blocked.⁸ In August 1914, European royals found themselves on opposing sides to relatives who had been part of their social as well as formal diplomatic circles in peacetime.⁹ This was far from unusual, of course, as an examination of the dynastic wars of the eighteenth century underline. But this time, there was a difference.

THE PERSPECTIVE TAKEN

This is not, though, a volume primarily about war or its origins and causes. Instead it is one which focuses on how the institution of monarchy, in its various modern manifestations, performed (and perhaps more importantly, was *perceived* to perform) in the context of modern warfare. The lens used focuses on the expectations of *contemporaries* in relation to

⁶Most senior figures still took weekend breaks, however. See, typically, ‘Ministers Leave Town’, *Sunday Times*, 26 July 1914.

⁷It is interesting, here, to consider the arguments in Christopher Clark (2012) *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (Harmondsworth: Penguin).

⁸Dowager Empress Marie of Russia left Marlborough House, where she had been staying with the Queen Dowager, Alexandra, on 1 August, to return to Russia by train, departing London Victoria on the afternoon’s boat train—the lateness of the departure underlining the hopes of avoidance of war up to the last minute. See ‘The Empress Marie’s Return’, *The Times*, 3 August 1914.

⁹This split families, as in the example of Sweden, which remained officially neutral in the Great War. Princess Margaret of Connaught had married Prince Gustav Adolf of Sweden in 1905; as Crown Princess of Sweden, Princess Margarete (as she was known in Sweden) was pro-British in her sympathies, while her parents-in-law, King Gustav V and his consort, Queen Viktoria (born Princess Viktoria of Baden) were pro-German, leading to real tensions within Swedish royal circles. See John Gilmour (2011) *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin: The Swedish Experience in the Second World War* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press) p8.

what monarchs should and could do, and the implications of that for the monarchic style of government. Using the First World War as the frame, the case studies in this collection explore the pressure that war placed upon individual monarchies, the public reactions to their performances, and how these do (or do not) relate to the survival or collapse of the belligerent monarchies involved. What was, we believe, different about the events of July to September 1914 was the fact that, as the opening paragraphs to this Introduction underline, there was, as late as the last week of July, no expectation of war on a pan-European (let alone global) scale.

Apart from anything else, this meant that monarchs and their families (including sisters, cousins and aunts who might be married into families who would turn out to be on the opposing side) were, to a considerable extent, taken by surprise by the late summer escalation of tensions. Consequently, rulers and their relations had to react to the rapidly developing crisis on, essentially, a ‘spur-of-the-moment’ basis, including when engaging their subjects in what they felt to be an appropriate reaction to this suddenly looming major conflict. In Britain, for instance, newspapers reported that, according to an announcement by the Prime Minister, George V had been in contact with Tsar Nicholas II and Kaiser Wilhelm II to try to resolve the crisis—but until after the formal declaration of war, the constitutionally conscious King’s main positive public initiative (besides cancelling attendance at Goodwood Races and Cowes Week) was to organise a day of prayer on Sunday 2 August, in which he took the lead.¹⁰ As this volume reveals, the intricacies of monarchical reactions to the imminent conflict depended heavily upon their character and the political framework in which they operated. The majority of case studies included here focus on European examples, but not exclusively—the Ottoman Empire is also considered, as is Japan, as part of the process of exploring the impact and implications of modern warfare for the institution of monarchy throughout the twentieth century, and the extent to which there are common threads across those states possessing a monarchical form of government. In the Ottoman Empire, for example, Palabiyik argues that, as with Britain, it was the politicians (what he describes as the ‘ruling triumvirate’) who made the decision

¹⁰The Archbishop of Canterbury led the public service attended by the King, and it was widely reported that George V had set this national example. See ‘A Nation at Prayer’, *The Times*, 3 August 1914.

that the Empire could not be neutral and had to choose a side.¹¹ Did this make the institution of monarchy substantially irrelevant in either of these two imperial states, foreshadowing a further diminution in the power of the one, and the disappearance of the other as a feature of the post-war political landscape? We argue that, rather than showing that monarchy was no longer a robust institution, unsuitable for the world that emerged from the chaos of the Great War, this volume illustrates the complexity of choices that were made in a post-war world. Further, that a serious consideration of the institution of monarchy, accompanied by positive assessments of its performance within particular states, needs to be intrinsic to both micro, or individual state, histories of the war and the more macro global assessments of its impact.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF WAR AND MODERN MONARCHY

There is a rich literature in other languages, and German in particular, which reflects on aspects of the issues discussed in this volume. Regarding academic texts in English, however, serious academic considerations on the topic of monarchies at war are lacking in both scope and depth. This is evidenced by the contents of the most seminal academic work of recent years, Jay Winter's three-volume edited collection, the *Cambridge History of the First World War*.¹² This provides a survey of the Great War that is, in many ways, all-encompassing. The collection opens up a wide range of new areas for consideration, including contributions to cultural history depicting aspects of the private lives of citizens in participant states, the impact of war on populations in occupied territories and on refugees. However, what the collection does not examine in any serious detail is the role played by monarchies during that war. The different monarchies do feature, of course, especially in the second volume which examines the role of the state.¹³ However, in terms of both the individuals and the institution of monarchy itself, they are reflected upon in a wider context of individual states or are mentioned in passing and consistently in ways that substantially take their subordinate role

¹¹See Chapter 4 this volume.

¹²Jay Winter, ed. (2013–2014) *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

¹³See, for example, Jean-Jacques Becker 'Heads of State and Government'; Stig Forster 'Civil-Military Relations'; Richard Bessel 'Revolution', in *Ibid.*, Vol II: *The State*.

or negative impact for granted. Certainly, in the various chapters reflecting on state policy and individual figures there is, overall, more focus on politicians, especially elected ones, than on monarchs, as representing the way forward for post-1918 states.

Where, in this collection and in other work—notably that by John Röhl and Dominic Lieven—monarchy is discussed, the focus is rarely on the institution as a specific topic for consideration. Instead, the focus is primarily on individual European monarchs in ways which contextualise these characters as practising an essentially European style of monarchy which was outdated by the end of the conflict.¹⁴ As part of this, their commentary is pursued predominantly through the trope of decline and decay, with an emphasis on the ways in which individual rulers contributed, by their conduct and strategies during the Great War period, to the final collapse of the institution in their countries.¹⁵ Lieven makes the point that relations between the Romanov and Habsburg dynasties had broken down so extensively, that during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, which preceded the Great War, the Tsar felt no shared ‘community of fate’ with either the Habsburg Empire, or with the Ottomans. Indeed, he insists that Nicholas II felt that it was desirable and in Russia’s best interests that these ‘polyglot imperial monstrosities’ should collapse and disappear.¹⁶ There is, however, in Lieven’s account no indication that Nicholas II and his advisers saw any dangerous implications for the survival of the Russian monarchical institution should these other empires disappear.

¹⁴See for example Robert Service (2017) *The Last of the Tsars: Nicholas II and the Russian Revolution* (London: Pan Macmillan); John Van der Kiste (1999) *Kaiser Wilhelm II: Germany’s Last Emperor* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing).

¹⁵Key works in English on this theme include: Dominic Lieven (2016) *Towards the Flame: Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia* (London: Penguin Books); Dominic Lieven (2016) *The End of Tsarist Russia: The March to World War I and Revolution* (London: Penguin Books); Dominic Lieven (1993) *Nicholas II: Emperor of All the Russias* (London: John Murray, 1993); John Röhl (1994) *The Kaiser and His Court: Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); John Röhl (2004) *Wilhelm II: the Kaiser’s Personal Monarchy, 1888–1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); John Röhl (2014) *Wilhelm II: Into Abyss of War and Exile, 1900–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

¹⁶Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, Chapter 5.

John Röhl, in his preface to the German edition of his magisterial volume on the Kaiser's personal monarchy insisted that he was 'concerned with the conditions necessary for the survival of the monarchical form of government in the twentieth century'.¹⁷ For Röhl, the key factor has been the 'pernicious influence' of Wilhelm II's style of personal monarchy, which—working against the 'growing democratic spirit of the time'—meant that predictions about the end of the Hohenzollerns as the ruling German dynasty were made even before the events of 1914–1918 brought matters to a crisis. We would agree with his conclusion that a 'Kaiser who either could not or would not understand what was required of monarchy if it was to survive in a modern pluralist society' was almost inevitably headed for disaster.¹⁸ However, we would also point out that the implications of Röhl's comments are to the effect that Wilhelm II's personal idiosyncrasies brought down the Hohenzollerns, rather than it being that the institution in Germany was so inherently flawed that it was impossible for it to adapt to the challenges he identified. This has ramifications, as Boff's chapter on Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria in this collection underlines. The focus in the chapter is on the gap in scholarship relating to Rupprecht's experience of command of the Sixth Army, and the difficulties he had in interacting successfully with higher ranks of authority within the German army. Here, Boff puts the responsibility for the confusion and uncertainty over where ultimate responsibility lay on the Kaiser, and his personal lack of leadership and authority. But it is also a chapter that is relevant to the theme of this volume, in that it is revealing of Rupprecht's own talents, both personal and military. As is discussed later, Prince Rupprecht was widely appreciated within Germany (including Bavaria) and outside, where he continued to be regarded with respect into the post-1918 world.¹⁹ This, we believe, suggests that hostility to the Kaiser within Germany did not automatically extend to the institution of monarchy within the various German states, and that men like Rupprecht remained respected and popular in ways that showed a continuing appreciation of royalty within the former German empire after 1918.

¹⁷Röhl, *Wilhelm II*, pxxviii.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, ppxviii–xix.

¹⁹There is currently no biography of Prince Rupprecht, though he features in a number of more general works on German history, including most notably Jonathan Petropoulos (2008) *The Royals and the Reich: The Princes von Hessen in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). See also Jonathan Boff (2018) *Haig's Enemy. Crown Prince Rupprecht and Germany's War on the Western Front* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Turning to the Habsburg Empire, when reflecting on the work of Zeman, Roshwald, in his discussion of ethnic nationalism and the fall of empires, asked whether the war so accelerated ‘an anti-imperial animus among the general public’ that a continuation of the Habsburg monarchy was no longer possible.²⁰ The answer has generally been held to be affirmative. But if the argument holds that a Habsburg monarchy was no longer viable in Central Europe, can a logical extrapolation be drawn that monarchy as an institution was equally invalid? That the rise of national feeling amongst post-imperial states ensured the irrelevance of monarchy as an element in the framework for national government? The continuation of the kingdom of Romania, and those of Serbia and Montenegro suggests that the institution was not automatically seen as having lost its viability as a structure for effective government of states. Indeed, the creation of the new Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, emerging as that out of the earlier United Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, further challenges assumptions about the irrelevance of monarchies as an element in governing structures. While the throne of Montenegro became absorbed, that of Serbia survived to lead the new Yugoslav state. Hungary remained technically a kingdom until 1945, though it never had a king. The opportunity of emulating the new republican structure of Austria and Czechoslovakia was not taken, despite the brief appearance of a non-monarchic State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs between 29 October and 1 December 1918 (a state which remained unrecognised, to be replaced by a monarchic solution).²¹

Equally, despite being part of the Central Powers, the Bulgarian throne survived the Great War, collapsing only in 1946, in the context of the rise of Communism and of the Cold War. Spain’s republican experience dates back to the nineteenth century, with a brief republic in 1873–1874, but when Franco assumed power as dictator in the aftermath of the Civil War in 1939, he did so looking to a monarchical

²⁰Aviel Roshwald (2002) *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, the Middle East and Russia, 1914–1923* (Abingdon: Routledge) p73.

²¹In the relatively small amount of scholarship published on this period, the suggestion seems to be that a monarchy was considered the best safeguard against Russian or other possible encroachments from states like Italy. See Jasminka Udovicki and James Ridgeway, eds (2000) *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press) pp49–50.

succession after what could fairly be described as a revolutionary period in Spain, between 1931 and 1939. As this further underlines, nationalist sentiment has not, in contemporary history, been automatically anti-monarchist—both the Young Turk and the Spanish experience during the twentieth century suggest that modern political revolutions cannot be assumed to be inevitably republican in their purpose. Palabıyık's chapter demonstrate this nicely, with the leaders of the unequivocally revolutionary developments that produced modern Turkey out of the old Ottoman Empire choosing to preserve the monarchy until the institution collapsed in the wake of the downfall of the Tanzimât reformers in the face of popular Turkish hostility to the Peace of Sèvres in the early 1920s. But elsewhere in the former Ottoman Empire, post-Great War kingdoms as well as republics, emerged. Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and the various Gulf Arab states headed by Saudi Arabia were all monarchical nationalist states.²² It is, again, easy to point to the post-1945 developments in former kingdoms such as Egypt and Iraq—to say nothing of the older Persian/Iranian throne—in order to highlight the apparently inexorable link between maturing nationalist sentiment and republicanism.²³ But the survival of the Jordanian, Saudi and other monarchies in that region (Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman, the UAE) does suggest to the more dispassionate observer the complexity of the situation and the need to consider local factors and individuals and their impact on monarchy as a suitable institution for any particular contemporary state when making judgments and predictions for the future.

Sadly, the implications of these Central European and Middle Eastern realities for monarchy as an institution in relation to the Great War and its aftermath have not been given as much serious consideration as they deserve, especially in English-language scholarship to

²²See Ma'n Abū Nūwār (1989) *The History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan: The Creation and Development of Transjordan 1920–1929* (Oxford: Blackwell); Mohammad Morsy Abdullah, Muohammad Mursai Abdallaah (2016) *The United Arab Emirates: A Modern History* (Abingdon: Routledge); Madawi al-Rasheed (2010) *A History of Saudi Arabia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Gerald de Gaury (2008) *Three Kings in Baghdad: The Tragedy of Iraq's Monarchy* (London: I.B. Tauris).

²³See, for instance, Gaury, *Three Kings in Baghdad*; also Arthur Goldschmit (2004) *Modern Egypt: The Creation of a Nation-State* (Oxford: Westview Press).

date. Considering the range of chapters across Winter's three volumes of *Cambridge History of the First World War*, it could be said that each one of the different volumes are, paradoxically, typical of both the more recent innovative academic perspectives and yet also of the enduring, well-established standard scholarship exploring the Great War, its origins and impacts. This latter perspective traditionally eschews focus on a consideration of the institution of monarchy in the wartime context, except to explain why the institution fell in a particular state, notably Russia and Germany.²⁴ Jean-Jacques Becker, in the second volume of the *Cambridge History*, does reflect that one of the 'central questions' for historians of the war has been whether 'autocracies or democracies' proved themselves better at waging (and winning) wars. For him, the scale of modern warfare and its need for the mobilisation of the subjects in involved states, to hitherto unprecedented extents, means that 'the consent of the governed' was required for this to be successful.²⁵ His conclusion is that 'in all the nations' (a statement then qualified by the rider 'or almost all') where 'monarchs had retained sufficiently broad powers to "conduct the war", regimes had tottered or collapsed and their sovereigns forced to flee or abdicate'.²⁶ For him, the 'shared characteristic' of those monarchies which survived (he does add that he excludes 'perhaps' the Belgian Monarch) was that their powers were merely symbolic—he then implicitly goes on to dismisses this aspect of monarchical power: the 'victory camp was one of democracy'.²⁷ But in concluding that 'the parliamentary form of political power' was unquestionably strengthened by the Great War, he fails to consider the extent to which monarchical institutions were, at least, an accompaniment to such forms of government, if not actually central to their smooth operation in a post-war world certainly in areas such as soft or cultural diplomacy.²⁸ For instance, interestingly, and we believe tellingly regarding the potential for usefulness of the monarchical or royal dimension to diplomacy, George V lunched with Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria in London in 1934 to discuss the prospects for German rearmament, and Rupprecht is

²⁴Winter, *Cambridge History of the First World War*.

²⁵Jean-Jacques Becker (2016) 'Heads of State and Government', in Winter, ed. *Cambridge History of the First World War*, II: *States*.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

also known to have been in regular contact with the British Ambassador to Germany in 1935.²⁹

This volume takes issue with the use of the qualifier ‘merely’ applied to the concept of symbolism in relation to monarchy—and indeed to the role of any head of state. The importance of symbols and of their agreed public interpretation as a part of the construction of a shared national identity has long been accepted as a vital aspect of nationalism—this is sustained by a wide range of scholarly texts from the 1980s onward, by authors including John Breuilly, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, whose *Imagined Communities* has now been revised in the light of ongoing debates.³⁰ As Anderson has consistently argued, the concept of nationalism has in itself been seen as sovereign, because it was born out of the thought processes associated not just with the Enlightenment but also the Revolutions in America and France, and was connected by many contemporary radicals with republicanism and the downfall of divine-right styles of kingship and of their dynastic realms. In such thinking, the state itself becomes the sovereign entity, and the more traditional sovereign as the provider of legitimacy to the state is discarded.³¹

However, to focus solely on this is to disregard the broader impacts of nationalism, including the nationalist perspective which helped to create the new states of Italy and Germany, states publicly justified by a supposed and unstoppable mass nationalist sentiment, but monarchic rather than republican: sovereign states headed by sovereigns. It also disregards the reality that powerful nationalist symbols can be readily related to monarchies where these successfully identify themselves with the types of powerful mythic images that are endemic to the cultural nationalism which sustains a distinctive state identity.³² Anderson fairly acknowledges that dynasties such as the Bourbons held thrones in adjoining (and not always friendly) states, making it difficult for them to be associated with a

²⁹See Petropoulos, *The Royals and the Reich*, p173.

³⁰John Breuilly (1982) *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); Ernest Gellner (1983) *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press); Benedict Anderson (2006) *Imagined Communities Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso).

³¹Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p7.

³²This is a point strongly made by Kevin Doak in relation to Japan but it is also we argue, more widely applicable. See Kevin Doak (2007) *A History of Nationalism in Modern Japan: Placing the People* (Leiden: Brill) pp83–4.

particular national identity; and that the Habsburgs faced a range of difficulties in associating themselves with so many nationalities in their huge domains.³³ What he terms ‘high dynasticism’ was, he argues, ended by the Great War because it was unable to sustain a role within the emerging imagined communities that replaced them. But despite the collapse of the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman thrones, is that charge fully sustainable?³⁴ Elsewhere, flexibility towards the presentations and interpretations of those symbols with appeals to popular nationalism stood shrewd dynasts and dynasties with considerable pedigree in good stead, notably in Japan.³⁵ George V provides one example of a shrewd dynast who was perfectly conscious of the creation of a newly *English* national sentiment, accompanying the *fin-de-siècle* Celtic nationalisms which intruded on and complicated that older sense of British identity that had emerged during the eighteenth century.³⁶ The symbolism implicit in the choice of name for his new House in 1917 resonated with English or British sentimental national mythology, far more than with Welsh, Scottish or Irish cultural myths.

It is interesting here to look at Gerwarth’s recent volume *The Vanquished*.³⁷ This usefully sets the Great War in a longer chronological context, from 1917 to 1923 (and even before). In so doing, he—as do we in this volume—reflects on the apparent solidity of empires and monarchies on the eve of war, as part of a consideration of the consequences of the war in the subsequent decade. His main focus is on the four empires which collapsed in the aftermath of that conflict (if not, as in the case of the Ottoman Empire, immediately), but even so his focus actually serves to challenge the prevailing wider assumptions about the doom of the monarchic institution as a consequence of the rise of more legitimate states based on a nationalism felt to represent a homogenous ethnicity.

³³Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp86–7, 108–13.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p115.

³⁵Doak, *Nationalism in Modern Japan*, pp84–91; also Takashi Fujitani (1998) *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press).

³⁶For a discussion of this, see (amongst others) Linda Colley (2005) *Britons. Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press); Paul Ward (2004) *Britishness Since 1870* (Basingstoke: Routledge).

³⁷Robert Gerwarth (2016) *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End 1917–1923* (London: Penguin Random House).

Gerwarth's emphasis, however, is rooted in a perspective similar to that of the texts discussed earlier, being one which privileges politicians, diplomats and their actions rather than a substantial discussion of the monarchical institution. Instead, there is a sense of inevitability within the elegiac tones adopted for his discussion of the fall of Russia's tsarist autocracy and Germany's form of constitutional monarchy. He rightly identifies the sense of crisis existing amongst the Russian aristocracy in the decade leading to war in 1914, but while the Romanov dynasty itself can justifiably be seen as doomed, can it be said to have automatically doomed the institution?³⁸ Equally, was monarchy as inexorably doomed as Gerwarth implies in his summary of the collapse of Hohenzollern rule in Germany?³⁹

Here, a wider contextualisation of Prince Rupprecht, taking account of his popularity, and clear leadership abilities, and other personal qualities and abilities, begs the question of whether it was impossible that monarchy in at least part of Germany might have survived as an institution. Rupprecht himself never yielded his claim to the Bavarian throne (nor did his father, Ludwig III). As a representative of the Wittelsbach dynasty, Rupprecht remained a prominent figure both in Germany and outside it until his death.⁴⁰ This links interestingly to Brennan's chapter in this volume. That chapter reveals that the last Habsburg crowned head, Karl I/IV, never gave up on the idea of the restoration of the monarchy in certain core Habsburg territories, notably Hungary (which remained a monarchy with a vacant throne). Can we dismiss the ambitions of Rupprecht (who opposed the setting up of the Weimar Republic) and Karl I/IV as being completely unrealistic in refusing to yield their hopes for a restoration, at least in part, of monarchy within Austria-Hungary and Germany? If, on the evidence of Brennan's chapter, Karl I/IV was not a particularly politically astute individual, the same cannot be said for Prince Rupprecht. Further, as the history of the Spanish monarchy in the twentieth century shows, it has proved possible for the monarchical institution to be restored and revived when it works

³⁸Ibid., pp24–9.

³⁹Ibid., pp61–5.

⁴⁰This is evident in the general texts on Germany, and again we reiterate our regret there is no good (English language) biography on Rupprecht. The footnotes to Boff's chapter underline this—relying as heavily as they do on primary sources for Rupprecht himself and his views, and indicating the potential for such a work.

within a government format that is acceptable to a majority of a state's population. It is not the place of this volume to do more than raise questions which more specialist historians of Russia and Germany might consider. However, when men of competence and vision such as Prince Rupprecht can be shown to have genuinely believed in the feasibility of a restoration of at least a Bavarian monarchy within Germany as late as the 1940s, it suggests that their reasoning deserves serious investigation and consideration, and that its potential should not be simply dismissed as unworthy of scholarly reflection.⁴¹

It has largely been less academic and popular histories which have sought to present monarchy as a major factor in the Great War, though mainly with respect to the origins of that conflict and as part of an (at least, implicit) criticism of the incumbents of various thrones in the early twentieth century. The consequent downfall of monarchies in Germany and Russia are then depicted as the outcome of the hubris displayed by Nicholas II and Wilhelm II, particularly in escalating diplomatic tensions and making war inevitable—with Edward VII only escaping the full charge of hubris in the relations between these royal cousins by virtue of having died early enough. George V escapes the charge usually because he is dismissed by such authors as irrelevant, being characterised in such histories as the weak and ineffectual cousin, whose 'blame' largely rests in his inability to prevent these rivalries resulting in the Great War.⁴² Such English language texts (and any associated television documentaries) have tended to concentrate attention on the three 'cousin' monarchies (Britain, Germany and Russia).⁴³ In such presentations, the 'constitutional' nature of the British monarchy and its consequent presumed

⁴¹It is worth considering that even in 1945, Prince Rupprecht believed that he had substantial support in Bavaria for the restoration of the monarchy there, though figures like Eisenhower were apparently not prepared to consider this nuance to the post-war settlement of Germany. See Petropoulos (2008) *The Royals and the Reich*, pp172–4; also Chapter 3 in this volume.

⁴²See for instance Catrine Clay, *King, Kaiser, Tsar: Three Royal Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: Walker Books, 2007). George V's supposed 'weakness' as a monarch is taken for granted in the scholarship on both his father and himself, until recent reassessments have challenged this perspective, such as those found in Matthew Glencross, Judith Rowbotham, and Michael Kandiah, eds (2016) *The Windsor Dynasty 1910 to the Present: Long to Reign Over Us?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

⁴³For instance, the BBC2 documentary, *Royal Cousins at War*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p01pw5vk>, accessed 20 November 2016.

'irrelevance' to the development of British politics interwar is somewhat simplistically contrasted with the more autocratic and thus doomed monarchies of Germany and Russia. In so doing, these popular histories mirror the conclusions of the majority of available scholarly texts that monarchy survived where it was irrelevant to the government of a modern state. The underlying message is that where it was a challenge to that, monarchy was replaced.

Thus the centennial of the Great War has inspired a number of retrospectives from a range of different perspectives. What this volume does is add an innovative dimension to these contributions because it has chosen to focus on an institution which has often been considered, as this Introduction's historiographical survey has underlined, to be substantially irrelevant to the wartime experiences of participant states. In arguing for a greater complexity of comprehension of the institution through the event of the Great War, it builds on some points that Gerwarth examines for his four imperial thrones. However, it includes a broader range of thrones, and extends these points by considering the degree to which monarchy remained relevant in a postwar world. In a way that is not otherwise available in English-language academic texts, this volume brings together chapters representing the scholarship of non-English specialists on the topic of monarchy with that which is already part of the English language tradition. It amounts to a perspective that has not often been addressed, and certainly not in this manner, in texts in German, French, Italian, Russian or indeed in English.

Consequently, what this volume provides is a more global dimension to the perspectives on monarchy and war at this period, with implications for an understanding of the phenomenon of monarchy in the modern world. It moves onto what remains, in English-language texts certainly, substantially untapped ground for academic investigation. Both individually and as a whole, the chapters provide an alternative interpretation to assumptions (often found, at least implicitly, in Anglophone literature) that it was the Great War which led to the collapse of monarchies because of the irrelevance of monarchy as an institution to a nation's modern realities.⁴⁴ Many scholars share the broad perspective of Christopher Clark that monarchical structures and individual rulers were an obstacle to the development of the kind of transparent international

⁴⁴A good example being Clark *The Sleepwalkers* particularly Chapters 4 and 12.

diplomacy that might have avoided war.⁴⁵ Empires such as the Russian, German, Ottoman and Habsburg ones are, within such texts, also assumed to have collapsed alongside their monarchies, because of the inexorable rise of nationalism within those empires.⁴⁶ Despite critical commentary, such manifestations of nationalism are still often regarded as being intrinsically associated with, and so deriving their sense of historical legitimacy from, republican sentiment understood as the modern face of popular sovereignty.⁴⁷

We would argue that where monarchies did end in ways that can be ascribed to a broad mix of factors including a belief in advancing popular sovereignty, the downfall of monarchies during or in the short-term aftermath of the Great War is best understood as representing something more Byzantine than the failure of a whole governing system. Superficially that failure may seem, consequently, to have led to the system's replacement with something radically different, as in the case particularly of Russia but also, arguably, of the Ottoman Empire.⁴⁸ However, what is interesting is the continuation of monarchical systems of political control, under new and often autocratic political elites. In Russia, as Boris Kolonitsky has pointed out, is the extent to which a new system superimposed itself on an existing structure which had supported

⁴⁵Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*; Michael Neiberg (2011) *Dance of the Furies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) pp36–9; see also Roderick McLean (2007) *Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe 1890–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); John Maurer (1995) *The Outbreak of the First World War: Strategic Planning, Crisis Decision Making and Deterrence Failure* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing); Manfred Rauchensteiner (2014) *The First World War and the End of the Hapsburg Monarchy 1914–1918* (Vienna: BohlauBöhlau Verlag).

⁴⁶The impact of the American and French Revolutions and the idea that these were seminal manifestations of nationalism and models for nationalist movements elsewhere has been crucial. See, however, the critical commentary on such assumptions in Michael Ignatieff (2004) 'Republicanism, Ethnicity and Nationalism', in Catriona McKinnon and Ian Hampsher-Monk, eds *Demands of Citizenship* (London: A & C Black) pp257–66.

⁴⁷The nature of popular sovereignty and its supposed inherent tendency to republicanism are interestingly discussed in a number of texts. See, for example, Bernard Yack (2012) *Nationalism and the Moral Psychology of Community* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press); Elie Kedourie (1993) *Nationalism* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley).

⁴⁸Sheila Fitzpatrick (2008) *The Russian Revolution*, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Sean McMeekin (2016) *The Ottoman Endgame: War, Revolution and Making of the Modern Middle East 1908–1923* (London: Penguin).

monarchy.⁴⁹ Where post-Great War monarchies—and empires—survived (as in the case of the United Kingdom, Japan and Italy for instance) there could be said to have been more post-1918 change to the governmental formats supporting monarchy than in those where monarchies fell.⁵⁰

Surviving monarchies have, since the start of the twentieth century, faced a number of challenges which have forced them to adapt to changing circumstances as part of a broad change to the acceptable formats for government. In terms of these challenges, war can serve (in an Aristotelian fashion) as an agency for promoting significant social change—something picked up on by the total war scholarship of the last half century.⁵¹ What this volume ponders, from the angle of different monarchical states, is an argument that, while war can act in this way, it does not have to do so. Factors internal and individual to a particular state can be as powerful as war (and nationalism) to the survival of

⁴⁹Boris Kolonitsky (2012) ‘Insulting the Russian Royal Family: Crime, Blame and the Courts’, in Judith Rowbotham, Marianna Muravyeva, and David Nash, eds *Shame, Blame and Culpability: Crime and Violence in the Modern State* (Abingdon: Routledge SOLON). The conclusion to this chapter stresses the extent to which the Soviet state machinery was a replication of that of the Tsarist state, challenging the idea that the monarchical system as a whole was outworn in Russia. The new republican system found it useful and necessary to adopt, with little adaptation, the structure and hierarchy of much machinery of government, locally and nationally.

⁵⁰See, for example, Glencross, Rowbotham, and Kandiah, eds (2016) *Windsor Dynasty*; Takashi Fujitani (1996) *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press); Junji Banno (2014) *Japan’s Modern History, from 1857–1937: A New Political Narrative* (Abingdon: Routledge); Ben-Ami Shillony, ed. (2008) *The Emperors of Modern Japan* (Leiden: Brill); John Whitney Hall (1973) ‘A Monarch for Modern Japan’ in Robert Ward, ed. *Political Development in Modern Japan: Studies in the Modernisation of Japan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press) pp11–64; Herman van Goethem (2010) *Belgium and the Monarchy: From National Independence to National Disintegration* (Brussels: ASP); Gita Deneckere (2006) ‘The Impossible Neutrality of the Speech from the Throne. A Ritual between National Unity and Political Dispute. Belgium, 1831–1918’ in Jeroen Deploige and Gita Deneckere, eds *Mystifying the Monarch: Studies on Discourse, Power and History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press) pp205–21.

⁵¹Aristotle, trans Benjamin Jowett (1981) *Politics*, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.html>, accessed 20 November 2016; Graeme Snooks (2002) *The Laws of History* (London: Routledge), especially pp46–7; Arthur Marwick (2006) *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (London: Palgrave); Arthur Marwick (1988) *Total War and Social Change* (New York: Springer).

thrones, in requiring a monarchical response which accepted substantial change to the way in which a state's monarchy had traditionally operated. The chapters in this collection convince us that such factors included the particular personality and qualities of an individual monarch or at least how these manifestations of monarchy were perceived as operating by a majority of the citizens as well as by powerful political voices.

One of the issues addressed throughout the chapters relates to the association between monarchy and military competence, but also the expectation of a wider political competence and vision on the part of modern royals. Three of the figures discussed here had genuine military careers, notably Prince Rupprecht, the Crown Prince of Bavaria but also George V and Karl I/IV. George, before the death of his older brother, had been a career naval officer, and even during his heirship, Karl had had an active military role. Rupprecht's military competence was one factor assuring the continuation of his personal popularity amidst the post-war chaos in Weimar Germany. However, it should be noted that Rupprecht was far more than an able general; during his period as heir presumptive and then Crown Prince to the Bavarian monarchy, he learned lessons from his father and father's advisors which stood him in good stead. As Petropoulos points out, Rupprecht had the wider comprehension that made him opposed to many policy choices made by the Kaiser and then the German High Command during the Great War, and after it, the wider political vision that made him an ongoing asset to the pro-monarchist elements in Germany throughout the Weimar period, and beyond.⁵² As a naval officer, George V had shown himself to be competent, if not brilliant, as a ship's commander, and his experience ensured that he continued to take a highly informed interest in his forces throughout his reign, but especially during the Great War.⁵³ More usefully, for monarchical survival, from the start of his heirship, following the death of his older brother, George V had diligently and dutifully learned lessons that meant he was acutely aware of the importance of allowing elected politicians to take initiatives, including the precise policy details of the management

⁵²Petropoulos, *Royals and Reich*, pp173–4. For his military competence, see also the assessment in Dennis Showalter (2016) *Instrument of War: The German Army 1914–1918* (London: Bloomsbury) for example.

⁵³Ian F. W. Beckett (2016) 'Royalty and the Army in the Twentieth Century' in Glencross, Rowbotham, and Kandiah, eds *Windsor Dynasty* pp109–34; Matthew Glencross (2016) 'George V and the New Royal House' in *Ibid.*, pp33–56.

of Britain's war effort, simply retaining his symbolic role as commander of his forces.⁵⁴ This meant that when the challenge of the Irish crisis re-emerged post-1918, the discredited Black and Tans campaign to defeat the IRA cast odium upon the British government but not on the British Crown. This insulation of the institution of monarchy and of George V himself from controversy enabled the face-saving compromises of the Anglo-Irish Treaty 1921, leading to the establishment of the Irish Free State as a Dominion in 1922. Yet arguably it also aided the eventual triumph of Irish republicanism within the Irish Free State and the creation of Éire in 1937.⁵⁵ Crucial here was the relinquishment, under the Statute of Westminster 1931,⁵⁶ of the UK Parliament's right to legislate for the Free State. The President of the Executive Council, Éamon De Valera, was able to abolish the Oath of Allegiance under the Constitution (Removal of Oath) Act 1933. This had committed members of both the Dáil and the Senate to swearing allegiance not just to the Free State constitution but also fidelity to George V and his heirs and successors, setting up what amounted to a common citizenship between the UK and the Irish Free State. The British reaction to this development saw hostility to the move and condemnation of both the Irish and the British governments—but not of the King.⁵⁷

By contrast, Karl was seemingly reluctant to learn political lessons, understanding his heirship essentially within the traditional structure of monarchy where military might and prowess were the key factors. Whatever willingness to learn lessons from experience, as Brennan's chapter explains, came too late to enable him to preserve any of his thrones or to revive them in the interwar years. Interestingly, the military reputation built by one monarch examined here was to stand him in good stead in the post-war years. A competent and reasonably informed

⁵⁴Glencross, 'George V'; Heather Jones (2016) 'The Nature of Kingship in First World War Britain', in *Ibid.*, pp195–216.

⁵⁵Laura Cahillane (2016) *Drafting the Irish Free State Constitution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press) pp101–3. See also James Loughlin (2007) *The British Monarchy and Ireland, 1800 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁵⁶The crucial thing about the Statute of Westminster was that it established the Crown as the 'only formal link between the members of the Commonwealth'. See Vernon Bogdanor (1997) *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p248.

⁵⁷See *Hansard* (1933) HL Debate, 11 May, 87, cols854–71; 'Moving Towards a Republic', *Sunday Times*, 7 May 1933.

political actor, the wartime experience of Victor Emmanuel III of Italy, as Villa's chapter reveals, created for him a personal reputation as a war leader. This meant that when Mussolini came to political power as Prime Minister in Italy in 1922, he did not feel strong enough to institute a republican government in line with his personal inclinations. Instead, even when claiming dictatorial powers in 1925, Mussolini chose not to challenge the existence of the constitutional monarchy headed by the 'First Soldier of Italy', with all the implications that had for the loyalty of the army to the King.⁵⁸

Again, one thread which appears in many of these chapters relates to the consciousness of individual monarchs of the political realities of their own situations in their own states. Predating the outbreak of war, the British monarchy, via George V, had already consented to endorse a major constitutional change in the shape of the 1910 reform of the House of Lords. It is interesting to highlight the fact that George V felt he had no choice but to acquiesce in the Liberal Government's demands for this major constitutional shift. Still more, to reflect that it was a position he took substantially thanks to the efforts of his Private Secretary, Knollys, to advise him to this effect by stressing the level of popular support amongst the electorate for such a development.⁵⁹ This leads to a further interesting speculation. Had George V postponed the reform, then almost certainly it would have been impossible for him to have resisted it (had he wanted so to do) in the aftermath of the Great War.

As the chapter on the dynastic politics governing the sultanate of the Ottoman Empire reveals, however, it is not always down to the monarch. The actions and policies of a government could change the landscape negatively for the success of a monarchy even where the monarch was effectively blameless. The situation in which, after his accession in July 1918, Mehmed VI Vahideddin found himself related powerfully to the choice taken in the war by the governing the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) to associate their version of Ottoman or Turkish nationalism with *jihad*. The decision to invoke the Sultan's role as Caliph in characterising Ottoman nationalism as having a Muslim religious orientation, rather than the more complex multi-faith identity of earlier periods, was one taken by the government out of a belief that the

⁵⁸Equally, of course, until 1943, Victor Emmanuel did not choose to challenge Mussolini. See R. J. B. Bosworth (2010) *Mussolini* (London: A & C Black).

⁵⁹Kenneth Rose (2000) *George V* (London: Phoenix Press) pp113–26.

non-Muslim communities in the Empire were, in terms of their loyalties to both the CUP and the Porte, suspect. While short-sighted, it was not a decision for which the Sultan could be personally blamed, given his position involved his support for and consent to the policies decided on by the ruling CUP.⁶⁰ Nor can it be identified as the key contributing factor to the downfall of the dynasty. The ending of the Ottoman dynasty's monarchical role within Turkey's governmental structure had more to do with the negative reactions of the Turkish population to the government's acceptance of the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres in 1920 and its consequences. That had led to the establishment of a new nationalist movement, one led by the war hero of Gallipoli, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). The successful uprising led by Kemal dispensed with the governmental structure set up by the earlier generation of nationalists, the Young Turks, and that included the Caliphate. However, it was almost incidental to the overthrow of the Young Turks that the Ottoman dynasty itself fell. Atatürk could, equally well, have decided to retain the monarchy, possibly with a different member of the dynasty as Sultan as had happened when the Young Turks had taken over government of Turkey in 1908 and as part of that process, had dispensed with Abdülhamid II, replacing him with Mehmed V.⁶¹ Certainly the institution of a Turkish republic was not a foregone conclusion in 1922. In many ways it was Atatürk's choice of promoting a secular Turkish nationalism, rather than a religious one, which sealed the fate of the Ottoman monarchy—and that related more to the choices of the CUP in investing Ottoman nationalism with a religious tinge than to the Sultan's willingness to act as a secular monarch. Neither Mehmed V, nor—crucially—Mehmed VI were given a choice on this point, though they had certainly accepted these developments and in so much may be held to have contributed personally to the collapse of the Ottoman monarchy. But there must be a caveat here in that we have no knowledge, currently,

⁶⁰As Zücher points out, use by the Young Turks of the concept of *jihad* as a unifying factor in early twentieth century conflict involving the Ottoman Empire has its origins in the Balkan Wars, when Christian Balkan states fought against the Empire, promoting a growing suspicion of non-Muslims within the Empire itself. This produced the first call to *jihad* in 1912. The invocation of the concept in 1915, therefore, had precedent. See Erik Zürcher (2014) *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation-Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris).

⁶¹Ibid.

of whether or not either Mehmed V or Mehmed VI were personally unhappy with such a development, which is certainly not impossible given their clear support for secularism elsewhere in the constitution.⁶²

DEVELOPING A FRESH PERSPECTIVE ON MONARCHY

Instead of traversing such traditional paths, this collection seeks to reflect upon the institution of monarchy in relation to war in the modern age and, using a politico-cultural lens, to assess the ability of the institution in its various formats to respond effectively to the challenge of conflict. Consequently, it does not directly revisit those ruling dynasties which clearly failed to respond positively to the challenges for change: notably the Romanovs in Russia, and the Prussian Hohenzollerns in the German Empire. It does, however, include a chapter on the Habsburgs, where the narrative of the fall of that throne is both less familiar and more complex, given the realities of the Dual Monarchy (Karl I of Austria was also Károly IV of Hungary and Karel III of Bohemia). This in turn provides an informative echo of the choices made by Nicholas II of Russia and Wilhelm II of Germany when responding to the challenges of war. Interestingly, as a state, Austria-Hungary met her war aims, remained a fighting force and retained her territorial integrity until the last days of the war, and yet, for reasons Brennan's chapter unravels, the monarchy was not able to endure.

A further reflection on the factors producing the fall of dynasties post-1918 is provided by the chapter on the key contemporary scion of the Bavarian royal family, Prince Rupprecht, because it provides a reminder of the fact that the Hohenzollerns were not the only royal House in Germany. Rupprecht firmly believed that monarchy was not a spent or irrelevant institution in the German context. In providing a reminder of the complexity of monarchy as a concept in Germany, the object is to provide a basis for a more complex consideration of monarchy and the shades of nationalism within Germany. The inclusion in this volume of two chapters on the British monarchy is intended not only to open up

⁶²See, in particular, Chapter 5 in this volume; also Feroz Ahmad (2008) 'Politics and Political Parties in Republican Turkey' in Kate Fleet, Suraiya Faruqi, Resat Kasaba, eds *Cambridge History of Turkey*, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 4: *Turkey in the Modern World*, pp226–8; Bernard Lewis (2002) *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

a fresh perspective on the institution but also to highlight the importance to it, and impact, of the wider royal family. Palabıyık's chapter, for instance, provides a focus on the Ottoman ruling family, not merely the Sultan. Equally, Brennan's research has uncovered the role of with other members of the various European royal Houses. In his chapter he has commented regretfully on the fact that the constraints of space left him unable to consider in detail the role of Empress Zita, born a Bourbon-Parma. Equally, the role played by the female members of the Belgian royal family deserves wider exploration. The aim here is to encourage debates that will challenge and problematise both the idea of the irrelevance of monarchy as institution and thereby promote a more nuanced consideration of the ways in which dynasties seized the opportunities opened up during conflict to reinforce their relevance to the concerns and expectations of their subjects. This can thereby emphasise the capacity of monarchy as an institution to encapsulate a wider cultural dimension to the governing process. This is well illustrated here through the themes pursued in chapters on less familiar dynasties and monarchs, including those of Japan, Italy and Belgium, alongside Austria-Hungary and Turkey.

The major thrust for this volume is the provision of a substantive exploration of monarchy as both institution and phenomenon using the 1914–1918 conflict as our case study, because of the tacit expectation that this was a global turning point in the history of the institution. In stating we do not agree with this stance, we are not attempting to argue that monarchy was an all-important factor governing the outbreak and conduct of the war, or that the retention or not of monarchy was the most significant factor in shaping the fortunes of post-war states. As Gerwarth's sustained perspective on the aftermath of the Great War underlines, nationalism was crucial in the emergence of the post-war landscape in the regions previously dominated by Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire. However, as his work also shows, nationalism was not automatically republican and also, did not automatically provide a solution to the ills and troubles which had afflicted those regions within their former empires.⁶³ The roles of politicians, generals and other key aspects to a state's conduct of war provide the frame through which the different chapters explore the landscapes of monarchy and the actions thereon of individual monarchs. What, uniquely, this collection does is begin a

⁶³Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*.

process of serious assessment of the contribution to the conduct of the Great War made by monarchical institutions through a consideration of the roles played by individual monarchs and their consorts, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of the outcomes for individual states.

Taking a transnational view across various monarchies involved in war also exposes the complexities of the monarchical institution, something too often overlooked. It can be easy, in any compilation, to think of monarchies, particularly the European ones (those who were core members of what Edward VII had labelled the ‘trade union of kings’) as being substantially homogeneous, leading to comparisons between them which are invidious and unhelpful.⁶⁴ While David Cannadine’s comment that aristocracy (and, implicitly, monarchy) is supra-national and cosmopolitan has real validity, there were real nuances and differences which cannot be safely ignored.⁶⁵ We challenge that sense of monarchical homogeneity through the approach taken. Instead, we show that even amongst those individual monarchs who were in an apparently politically similar situation (as constitutional monarchs, say) there is a need to reflect on subtle nuances of difference between the nature of constitutional monarchy by examining the extent and potential for monarchical involvement in war. Both the Italian and British monarchs, for example, were considered by contemporaries and labelled by subsequent scholarship as constitutional monarchs. But the Italian and British monarchs had a different experience of war not just dependent on their dissimilar personalities but also on the dissimilar expectations of an Italian as opposed to a British monarch. This volume has prompted our contributors to reflect on how much the diversities of experience and reaction highlighted here had to do with the core political variations of different forms of monarchy, and how much they concerned both the nature of the nation’s individual wartime experience and the personality of the monarch. Both states, also, were imperial powers, but did it matter to the survivability of the monarchic institution that Britain was a major imperial power, while Italy was not?⁶⁶

⁶⁴Glencross, *State Visits*, p25.

⁶⁵David Cannadine (1994) *Aspects of Aristocracy: Grandeur and Decline in Modern Britain* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press) pp2, 9–36.

⁶⁶Italy’s empire was significantly smaller in size and resources, and confined to Africa in 1914. See Denis Mack-Smith (1992) *Italy and Its Monarchy* (New Haven, CT: Yale

Our key starting point for analysis of monarchies in the context of modern wars is a belief that by itself, warfare need not work to endanger modern monarchical institutions. Through our focus on this example of modern warfare on the global scale, we challenge the notion that wars always produce major political as well as social change. Wars are better understood, we argue, as catalysts which serve simply to exacerbate the impact of existing national problems (political, social, economic) for monarchs. In the case of the Great War, we consider that the evidence is that the war was a catalytic factor that served to headline the potential for the successful operation and actual survival of the institution, or their downfall, within particular states in contemporary history. This latter is demonstrably the case, as the work of scholars like Lieven and Röhl have shown, for Russia and Germany. However, the monarchies which survived post-1918, and especially those which flourished over the longer term, include those where individual monarchs and politicians had identified actual or potential weaknesses in the institution and worked to remedy these—before, during and after—the conflict itself. Conversely, those monarchies that did not survive are best understood, we believe, as those which (for a variety of reasons) failed to solve—or perhaps even to recognise—these issues, allowing them to escalate to dangerous levels.⁶⁷ It was not, however, to do with the level of actual involvement of individual monarchs in the war effort of their nations. This differed widely, with some such as Nicholas II of Russia and Victor-Emmanuel III of Italy playing very active military roles and others, such as Albert of Belgium and Mehmed V and his successor Mehmed VI, being only indirectly involved in their country's military efforts as their respective chapters show.

University Press); Marian Kent, ed. (2005) *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire* (London: Routledge) for a fuller discussion of Italy and its imperial dimensions, including its disappointment at not receiving more imperial territory in the aftermath of the Great War.

⁶⁷We make this comment because it is applicable not just to several of the monarchies (notably the Habsburgs and the Ottomans) studied in this volume, but also those not highlighted here (including the Hohenzollerns and the Romanovs).

THE TRADITIONAL MILITARY ASSOCIATIONS OF MONARCHY

Some mention of this aspect has already been made within this Introduction. When reflecting with hindsight on the experience of war post-1918, most scholarship accessible in English has highlighted an idea that the Great War had exposed to public scrutiny the lack of any important contributions made by monarchs and other royal figures in the belligerent states which were quintessentially monarchical.⁶⁸ The links between monarchy and military leadership at times of war have been particularly closely scrutinised for those European monarchies which failed. The poor leadership of Nicholas II of Russia, when he assumed command of the Russian military effort, is frequently blamed for its failure between 1915 and 1917.⁶⁹ Equally, Wilhelm II's poor performance as war leader has almost always been highlighted.⁷⁰ The impression is given in the literature that since the majority of these twentieth-century monarchs either did not successfully lead their troops into battle nor were they actively involved in battle planning, their subjects in and out of the armed forces gave them little respect. It is therefore implied that the history of monarchy had arrived at a point where the brutalities of mass modern warfare exposed the realities that monarchies no longer had any useful military relevance—that, as Becker has insisted—the job previously the perquisite of monarchy was now best suited to popular democratic governments.⁷¹

Yet the links between monarchy and military have, since the eighteenth century at least, been complex and are not easily headlined simply in this way.⁷² Certainly within European history, there is a long-standing tradition according to which the validity of a sovereign's claim to rule over a state and its people was substantially rooted in the military abilities

⁶⁸Their actions and relationships have been regarded as facilitating the outbreak of war, but thereafter, their contribution has not been considered seriously. See, for instance, Clay, *King, Kaiser, Tsar*.

⁶⁹For instance, Lieven, *Towards the Flame*.

⁷⁰For instance, Matthew Seligmann and Roderick McLean (2000) *Germany from Reich to Republic, 1871–1918* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), especially the section: 'Wilhelmine Germany at War'.

⁷¹Becker, 'Heads of State and Government'.

⁷²See, for instance, Ian Beckett (2016) 'Royalty and the Army in the Twentieth Century', in Glencross, Rowbotham, and Kandiah, eds *Windsor Dynasty*.

of the individual with that sovereign title.⁷³ The only important sovereign of the early modern period who did not feel personally impelled to take to the field at times of conflict was the Sun King, Louis XIV.⁷⁴ Elsewhere in Europe, however, the reputation of kings and princes was based on regular demonstrations of their military abilities. The Dukes of Prussia (Brandenburg was a margravate and the rulers were Imperial Electors/Margraves of Brandenburg and Dukes of Prussia) won the right to call themselves Kings *in* Prussia and thereafter Kings *of* Prussia as a result of the military successes of a series of Hohenzollern rulers, starting with Frederick I and reaching an apogee under Frederick the Great, who ruled between 1740 and 1786. Even into the late eighteenth century, a reputation for individual military ability still helped to sustain the authority of those men who claimed sovereignty over the various European states.⁷⁵ At the start of the nineteenth century, one reason why Napoleon Bonaparte felt justified in claiming the title of emperor was because of his effective leadership of France's armies—tellingly, he chose that title because of the military connotations it conveyed to the classically-educated European elites of the day.⁷⁶

However, in reality, Napoleon was the last European leader genuinely to achieve his position as a result of demonstration of military prowess. His nephew, Louis-Napoléon (later Napoleon III), attempted to emulate his uncle but in fact, came to power through political machinations rather than military ability.⁷⁷ This is a telling indication of how sovereignty in modern Europe had changed by the nineteenth century. Winning it by force was no longer seen as the key legitimate path to sovereignty, though the success on the battlefield of the Prussian

⁷³Zmora, *Monarchy*, see also Marcus Cowper (2010) *Henry V: Leadership, Strategy, Conflict* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing).

⁷⁴Peter Campbell (2013) *Louis XIV* (Abingdon: Routledge); William Young (2004) *International Politics and Warfare in the Age of Louis XIV and Peter the Great* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse Publishing), especially Chapters 2 and 3.

⁷⁵As mentioned above, an interesting exception was Louis XIV of France, the Sun King. See Campbell, *Louis XIV*; Young, *International Politics and Warfare*.

⁷⁶F. C. Sneyd (2005) *Napoleon's Conquest of Europe: The War of the Third Coalition* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing). Augustus, the first Emperor of Rome, was awarded that title because of his military successes over his rival Mark Antony, and it was a term which conveyed a right to command because of such successes. See Russell Foster (2014) *Mapping European Empire* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp34–5.

⁷⁷Fenton Bresler (1999) *Napoleon III: A Life* (London: HarperCollins).

Hohenzollerns in the process popularly known as the unification of Germany suggests that this route was not entirely irrelevant. However, while the processes of Italian and German unification, for instance, did involve rulers taking to the field of battle (with more or less success, as the capture of Napoleon III at the Battle of Sedan underlines), the ultimate success of these processes was dependent upon internal politics and international diplomacy, not war.⁷⁸ Domestically, by the end of the nineteenth century, most European rulers had to share their sovereign power with political and diplomatic figures who were themselves at least partially dependent upon political processes involving a wider population.

The developing concepts of nationalism saw the establishment of new justifications for the existence of sovereign nations. It was no longer simply enough to provide a state with a legitimate monarchy, as with the early nineteenth century creations of Belgium and Greece.⁷⁹ Both inside and outside Europe, the reality of monarchy by the start of the twentieth century was that the independent authority of sovereign rulers was constrained insofar as they needed—in practice if not in theory—to take account of political power structures within their states in order to retain their individual hold on their thrones.

MODERNISING MILITARY LINKS WITH MONARCHIES

However, these modern political constraints on monarchical power in everyday reality did not mean that monarchs were not, still, powerfully associated with war. All royal males had a form of military training, as well as a literary diet which taught them about great military heroes from Julius Caesar and Scipio through to more recent heroic individuals in their own national histories. For British monarchs, the emphasis would be on Arthur and Richard the Lionheart; for German royals it was figures like Charlemagne and Barbarossa as well as Frederick the Great; for Russians, their noble Christian warriors included Peter the Great and Alexander Nevsky; for the Ottoman sultans, the models were men such as Osman I, Mehmed II and Suleiman the Magnificent. It was likely that some of the tutors to which young princes, heirs or not, were exposed

⁷⁸John Breuilly (1994) *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press); also J. Sperber (1994) *The European Revolutions 1848–1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

⁷⁹Ibid.

would have been successful military men who could also inculcate an ardent military spirit in their charges.

Pictures of young male royals in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries frequently showed them in some kind of uniform, especially on formal occasions—often in some emulation of former conquering heroes in order to create echoes of past glories as a way of encapsulating these in the young hopefuls. In the British experience certainly, many officers in the regiments graced with these royal scions would describe them as ‘playing’ at being a soldier.⁸⁰ The British theory was that the noble presence of an heir to the throne, for instance, would make them role models for their peers, restraining any potential Flashmans from excesses which would damage the reputation of the army.⁸¹ In reality, as heirs to the throne, they could not be exposed to real fighting and danger undermined any serious consideration of them as military assets to the nation. It was not uncommon for officers to ask to be transferred out of regiments as a result of a royal presence within a battalion, because there was always the fear that a royal presence would mean that the chances for distinguishing oneself in battle would be lessened either by the focus on the royal personage or by the will of governments and commanders to ensure that there was no real danger to a royal officer.⁸²

The circumstances surrounding the death in 1879 of the French Prince Imperial during the Anglo-Zulu War illustrate this very clearly. A talented soldier, the young Louis-Napoléon had been frustrated by not being allowed to join the British army formally, but he seized the chance to volunteer for service in South Africa. Once there, with a British government at home distinctly unhappy with his presence there and generals well aware of this, he was seconded to scouting duties as a way of keeping him safe. Unfortunately, as a result of the Prince Imperial’s own recklessness, this did not work and he ended up getting himself killed rather ignominiously, causing something of a rise in tension in Anglo-French

⁸⁰Frank Muller and Heidi Mehrkens, eds (2015) *Sons and Heirs: Succession and Political Culture in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

⁸¹Flashman was the ‘villain’ in Thomas Arnold, *Tom Brown’s Schooldays*, and was an eponymous Victorian cad, later re-invented through the series of Flashman novels by George MacDonald Fraser.

⁸²Saul David (2006) *Victoria’s Wars: The Rise of Empire* (London: Penguin).

relations.⁸³ It proved to be a powerful reminder of the dangers of putting royals into battle, even in ‘safe’ conditions. But, the publicity value and the apparent morale-boosting effect of including royals in a nation’s armed forces—of showing the willingness of a ruling dynasty to participate in the process of protecting the nation, including in the ‘dangers’ of conflict, has ensured that modern dynasties have tended to encourage any military ambitions amongst their heirs and the lesser scions of a royal family. The younger sons and the sons-in-law of Queen Victoria all had military roles.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as they grew to teenage years, actual military training, in company with professional soldiers and sailors, replaced the other educational diets of the majority of young male royals. Given honorary senior ranks in both the armies and navies of their nations, they were expected also to show individual talent in some aspect at least of soldiering or military sailing. Some of them were notable in demonstrating peacetime military prowess which promised real things in time of actual conflict. When Prince George of Wales, the later George V, was a junior naval officer in training, he held the naval gunnery record—and was very proud that this was an actual achievement, and not a paper exercise.⁸⁴ Victoria and Albert’s seventh child, Prince Arthur—later the Duke of Connaught—carved out a military career based on genuine achievements, and he was at his nephew’s side during World War I, performing real military duties even in his retirement from active service.⁸⁵ Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, the heir to the Wittelsbach throne, did experience active military training as well as some service; so did Karl I/IV (both explored in chapters in this volume) and this became increasingly characteristic of the younger princes of the Ottoman dynasty. As such, these men were probably more typical of male European royals (if not necessarily heirs) than a figure such as

⁸³Saul David (2005) *Zulu: The Tragedy and Heroism of the Anglo-Zulu War* (London: Penguin).

⁸⁴Matthew Glencross (2014) ‘The Influence of Royal Tours on the Conduct of British Diplomacy 1901–1918’, Unpublished PhD, King’s College, London.

⁸⁵Sir George Grey Aston and Evelyn Graham (1929) *His Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn: A Life and Intimate Study* (London, Harrap).

Nicholas II of Russia, whose military training, like his political training, was at best perfunctory and theoretical.⁸⁶

Even those royals distanced from participating in active service could find other ways to demonstrate quasi-military skills. The Cowes sailing week in Britain, for instance, was attended not just by the British royal family but also, regularly, by large numbers of European royals. As a result, it became an increasingly competitive event for the various royal sailors involved—as much, in fact, as for the ordinary competitors. Whilst the yachts used by the royals were originally built for comfort, this changed. When still Prince of Wales, the later Edward VII complained that the younger generation of his family had ruined the event for him by making the vessels genuinely competitive.⁸⁷ Wilhelm II was so cross to have been defeated by the later George V's yacht (built explicitly for speed, unlike his cousin's boat, which was deliberately built to dwarf the other boats but failed—Armada-like—to win the battle) that he actually stopped attending the event, though his brother and sons continued to go.⁸⁸

In the context of war, what had become the regular peacetime activity of sovereigns in relation to their armed forces could be thought to be irrelevant. This involved reviewing troops, and taking naval salutes from their assembled ships, at regular intervals at the culmination of various warlike exercises of troops or vessels. However, as this volume demonstrates, an understanding of the nature of the involvement of monarchs in modern warfare requires a more complex vista of the role of monarchy than is currently recognised in the scholarship of modern warfare. The survival of monarchies after 1918 was affected by a number of wider (and at times long-standing) factors. It was not, we argue, merely an almost inevitable development emanating from popular disappointment or disillusion over the expectations of the doings of individual

⁸⁶However, other Romanov princes did serve actively within Russia's armed forces. See Lieven, *Tsar of All the Russias*. It is worth making the point that in many ways, the Ottoman dynasty measured itself in many ways against European standards of monarchy, as part of the closely 'entangled' relationship between the Ottoman Empire and Europe since the sixteenth century at least. See Pascal Firges, Tobias Graf, Christian Roth, and Guray Turasoglu, eds (2014) *Well-Connected Domains: Towards an Entangled Ottoman History* (Leiden: Brill).

⁸⁷Clay, *King, Kaiser, Tsar*.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

monarchs in wartime interpreted through a surge in a desire for popular sovereignty.

While this volume accepts that the active military roles of monarchs in this conflict were generally more minimal than in previous centuries, this does not mean that monarchs did not find an alternative wartime role which did, in fact, substantially satisfy their subjects' expectations, including those of the men (and women) serving in the armed forces in the names of their sovereigns. If it was easier for queens and princesses to continue in the supportive and caring roles which were part of a well-established female royal duty, it does not mean that—as this volume underlines—modern male royals could not make an active contribution to the war machinery of their nations. Defeat, of course, had always been dangerous to the survival of individual dynasties, but as this volume underlines, it would be a mistake to assume that there is a direct causal link between the downfall of defeated individual monarchs and the downfall of the monarchical system in their countries. The final downfall of the Ottoman dynasty, for instance, was a consequence not of defeat itself but rather of the acceptance by the governing CUP of the terms of the Treaty of Sèvres, and the popular reaction against it within Turkey. This produced a new leader, in the shape of the war hero Kemal Atatürk, who decided to espouse a secular approach to government as the best way to creating a collective national identity.⁸⁹ This then included dispensing with the Sultanate as a way of dispensing with its religious dimension in the shape of the Caliphate.⁹⁰

MONARCHICAL VISIBILITY AND IMPACT IN MODERN WAR

The nature and speed of communications had, by 1914, had an important impact on monarchy because it had raised expectations of personal monarchical visibility on a far more regular basis than had been achievable in earlier eras. Royal visibility was no longer simply dependent on

⁸⁹Atatürk was certainly aware that the non-Christian elements in the new Turkish state were not supportive of the Sultan, given the use of *jihad* in the Great War, which had helped to polarise Ottoman identity into something that had religious identity at its core. The legacy of the Armenian genocide in particular on the thinking of a new generation of nationalists was considerable. Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy*, Chapter 15 in particular.

⁹⁰Zürcher certainly questions the inevitability of the collapse of the Sultanate throughout his important volume. See *ibid*; see also Gerwarth, *The Vanquished*.

coins engraved with the head of a ruling monarch and statues in public spaces in important regional urban centres. By 1914, the global phenomenon of a modern mass media was already in existence.⁹¹ This led to a popular expectation that individual monarchs would manifest themselves in reportage and other accessible cultural ephemera that featured in the daily lives of their subjects, including photography (at first still and, by 1914, moving) and sound.⁹² All the monarchs included in this collection had to take account of this reality, albeit to varying extents—including the Ottoman and Japanese rulers.⁹³ Interestingly, particularly in the light of the arguments in this collection, Worringer has identified a previously little-thought-of cultural link between the Ottoman and Japanese Empires in the early twentieth century particularly, which operated via the Ottoman newspaper press.⁹⁴

The extent to which this was the case is also tested, and thus underlined, by the Russian experience. The Russian monarchy is often described as, or assumed to have been, relatively invisible to ordinary Russians in the early twentieth century. Contemporary monarchs such as Edward VII were surprised by the lack of regular interaction between monarchs and people in Russia and by the nature of the visible relationship between Tsar and people. This relative invisibility, in the shape of minimal levels of mass public interactions between monarch and people, had begun to disappear in Britain in the late eighteenth century, during the rule of George III in particular—something underlined by the

⁹¹For a consideration of the impact of the phenomenon on society, see (amongst others) Shannon Martin and David Copeland (2003) *The Function of Newspapers in Society: A Global Perspective* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing); W. D. Sloan (2013) *Perspectives on Mass Communication History* (Basingstoke: Routledge).

⁹²The identification of Queen Victoria as the ‘first’ media monarch might be challenged, but Plunkett’s work remains a crucial study of the reality that the mass media and monarchy found each other extremely useful mutually. See John Plunkett (2003) *Queen Victoria: First Media Monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁹³See, for instance, R. J. Goldstein and A. M. Nedd, eds (2015) *Political Censorship of the Visual Arts in Nineteenth Century Europe: Arresting Images* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

⁹⁴See R. D. Worringer (2014) *Ottomans Imagining Japan: East, Middle East and Non-Western Modernity at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Springer). See also James Huffman (1997) *Creating a Public: People and Press in Meiji Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press).

explosion of caricatures featuring members of the royal family.⁹⁵ In Russia, though, it was still unusual for the ordinary subjects to have any interaction with their rulers via the kinds of mass public events which had become commonplace with other European monarchs.⁹⁶

But in those states where a modern media was rapidly developing, public monarchical profiles took care, amongst other things, to stress the importance of the diplomatic contribution made by individual monarchs. As a testament to both this factor and the durability of the monarchical institution, the volume opens by providing an observation on the importance of monarchy to the cultural diplomacy of one of the emerging republican great powers of the early twentieth century. Through an exploration of Anglo-American relations, with some side reflections on other European monarchies, Goldstein's survey underlines the important point that political and diplomatic leaders in modern republics were not automatically hostile or convinced of the irrelevance of monarchy as a political and diplomatic institution. Where there was hostility, it was more to do with personal taste than with accepted American political wisdom about a preference for republics as opposed to monarchies. This is something of particular significance given many popular histories imply that President Wilson, for instance, in negotiating the peace treaties at the end of the Great War, was opposed to the continuation of monarchies and used the opportunity to dispose of them where he could. In fact, as is well known amongst European historians, at least, Wilson's key Fourteen Points did not touch on the institution of monarchy as a factor in the post-war settlement.⁹⁷ The chapter closes with a post-conflict perspective addressing the national lessons learned, through the lens of the courtly gestures made by the British and Japanese royal families. Goldstein's survey focuses on the way in which the British monarchy, unlike potential European royal rivals, effectively bolstered and strengthened the links between the former British colony and the United Kingdom. It highlights the different ways in which it can be shown that

⁹⁵Tamara Hunt (2017) *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and Identity in Late Georgian England* (London: Routledge).

⁹⁶For a discussion of the relatively substantially lower literacy rates in pre-1917 Russia, see Charles E. Clarke (2000) *Uprooting Otherness: The Literacy Campaign in NEP-Era Russia* (Selinsgrove, PENN: Susquehanna University Press) pp15–17.

⁹⁷See, for example, P. F. Sugar, P. Hanák, and T. Frank (1994) *A History of Hungary* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press) p293.

monarchy was not automatically deemed by republican governments to be anachronistic. Equally, Best's closing chapter for this volume provides an extended chronology looking to the consequences for monarchy and inter-monarchical relations in a post-Great War world. What is telling in this chapter, and in his wider work, is underlying reliance of politicians in both states on the robustness of monarchical institution in them. This frames his survey on the impact in Japan and on relations with the UK of the country's disappointment over the rewards for Japan of participating in the Great War, something then followed the collapse of formal treaties between the British and the Japanese states. His crucial conclusion testifies further to the use made by governments of monarchy and the symbols associated with it—that Anglo-Japanese relations were significantly sustained and eventually repaired by the on-going relationship between the royal families, which enabled an avoidance of embarrassment in the diplomacy between the two powers.

ORDERING OF CHAPTERS

Between the opening and closing chapters outlined above, the second, third and fourth chapters move to explore aspects of three of the monarchies usually deemed to be 'casualties' of the Great War. However, the assessments made by Jonathan Boff, taking a bottom-up perspective on Wilhelm II's abilities as supremo of the German armies, along with Christopher Brennan's assessment of Karl I/IV as the 'right man at the wrong time' and Serdar Palabiyik's conclusions about the flexibility and modernity of the Ottoman monarchy, demonstrate that no easy conclusions can be drawn about the agency of the Great War in the collapse of those dynasties. Boff underlines the impact of a perceived lack of leadership within the German army itself. Palabiyik highlights the importance of the symbolic leadership provided by the Ottoman empire—but also of the necessity of a successful relationship enduring between a politically elected government and a constitutional monarchy. Both of these are shown by the chapters' authors to represent challenges of a long-standing nature within these states to the nature and scope of the monarchic institution. By contrast, Brennan points to the importance of short-term factors and individual imperial/royal choices in determining Austria-Hungary's fortunes in war: for despite the securing of Hapsburg war aims by late 1917, the dynasty's external diplomatic failures combined with a weary powerlessness resulting from their internal political failures proved fatal.

The following two chapters, by Glencross and Rowbotham, explore the ability of the British monarchy as a whole to adapt itself to the expectations associated with royal leadership in times of conflict. Both suggest that this ability was practically sustained by the involvement of key members of the royal family, notably George V himself and his consort, Queen Mary. These accounts of the survival of the British throne suggest that the reputation of British monarchy was enhanced, rather than diminished and made less relevant, by the Great War in ways that have endured, to the long-term benefit of the institution in the UK. But they also suggest that this was not the result of a simple or straightforward process: indeed as these chapters show, both the king and his consort provided a leadership which at times potentially put them at odds with elected politicians. It certainly ensured that those politicians felt obliged to listen to monarchic representations as they were identified as being ‘in tune’ with the popular mood. The importance of popular and political perceptions of successful leadership in both war and peace are underlined by the chapters from Villa and Philpott on Belgium and Italy. The Belgian monarch was one who was ‘defeated’ at the start of war—his state was effectively occupied by foreign armies for the duration of the conflict. Yet his reputation stood high at the beginning and the end of the Great War, and the Belgian monarchy still exists and retains its popularity. The Italian monarchy also survived the war, apparently strengthened by popular admiration for the victorious monarch Victor Emmanuel III, who was so strongly associated with its military successes. Yet in the longer term—returning to the issues also raised by Palabiyik and Brennan—the perceived ‘failure’ of the King to achieve a reward for his state commensurate with the advertised effort was to prove problematic. It enabled the rise to power of a political figure like Mussolini, and while it is true that Mussolini did not feel powerful enough to dispense with the Italian monarchy, equally, the King did not feel able (or willing) to challenge his Prime Minister. The latter’s practical assumption of dictatorial powers enabled him to choose Italy’s destiny in the Second World War, and that—alongside the lacklustre performance of monarchic duties during the interwar years—was fatal to the long-standing survival of the monarchy as a valuable asset to Italy’s post-1945 government.⁹⁸ Overall, then, this volume challenges

⁹⁸The choice of a republic was made in 1946, in a constitutional referendum.

the easy assumption that monarchical institutions in modern times are ready casualties of conflict. At most, the Great War can be described as a catalyst—but not automatically as a game-changer when considering the relevance and robustness of monarchical institutions, both generally and within particular states.

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CHAPTER 2

The British Royal Family and the Making of the War-Time Anglo-American Relationship

Erik Goldstein

INTRODUCTION

History has witnessed a number of ‘diplomatic revolutions’ and one of the most significant of these was the shift in Anglo-American relations that occurred on the cusp of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It was a relationship that went from wary, and at times almost belligerent, to become the most powerful alliance of the twentieth century. On 4 July 1776 the United States of America had declared its independence, with a foundation document that was a stinging indictment of the government of a British King, George III. At the end of the Great War the American President, Woodrow Wilson, was the guest of honour at a glittering dinner at Buckingham Palace, the seat of that King’s great-great-grandson and namesake—George V. How the two countries made such a remarkable journey between the reigns of these two

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Georges, from countries at war to comrades-in-arms, involved many factors. During the long nineteenth century such a journey had to involve the monarchy. The changing relationship of the United States and the British monarchy was an important component in altering the ‘atmospherics’ between the countries which in turn made their ultimate alliance possible.

THE BACKGROUND CONTEXT TO MODERN ANGLO-AMERICAN DIPLOMACY

Relations between states are often marked by meetings of their heads of state, in international congresses, conferences, bi-lateral visits or in such colourful events as state visits. Although such meetings increased in frequency in Europe during the nineteenth century, the logistics of travel made them impractical between North America and Europe. No meetings occurred between a serving American president and a British monarch in the period from American independence until after the Great War.¹ Relations were handled through normal diplomatic channels, except the brief period of war during 1812–1814, with diplomatic missions being established in each other’s capitals. These contacts, though, dealt only with the needs of day-to-day international relations and not with the wider and complex nature of the trans-Atlantic relationship between imperial metropole and its former colonies. The positive shift in attitude between the two countries did not occur entirely in government circles but also in a wider and more public arena. Brian Vick has used the term ‘influence politics’ to encompass the diplomatic importance of music, images, material culture, literature, theatre, and spectacle within the increasing amount of cultural exchanges of the two states.² As part of such exchanges and what may also be called ‘cultural’ diplomacy, the rarity value of royal contacts gave them particularly prominent public impact.³ British royalty, both living and past, are shown in this chapter

¹Equally, no such meeting took place between an American President and a British Prime Minister in that period.

²Brian Vick (2014) *The Congress of Vienna: Power and Politics After Napoleon* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) pp1–20, especially p7.

³For discussion of this concept, see Matthew Glencross (2015) *The State Visits of Edward VII* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

to play varied significant parts in the cultivation of a trans-Atlantic *rapprochement*.

The Anglo-American monarchical relationship went through several stages. The first was what may be labelled the Hanoverian Phase 1782–1837. It would be an understatement to say that things did not start well between the two countries and this was a characteristic of much of this first phase. National feelings, as opposed to interests, were negatively charged from the very beginning. Peace had been concluded with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, with an exchange of ratifications the following year. As a result normal diplomatic relations were formally established, and the newly-created United States of America chose as its first Minister to London John Adams (1785–1788), one of the principal architects of the American Revolution. Adams was one of the Committee that had drafted the Declaration of Independence, which had indicted George III as ‘a Tyrant ...unfit to be the ruler of a free people.’ Just a month short of nine years after this was written, George III had to receive John Adams as the United States Minister to his court.

In receiving Adams on his arrival, George III had expressed his hope for good relations stating, ‘let the Circumstances of Language; Religion and Blood have their natural and full Effect.’⁴ A dynastic diplomatic link between the two countries came from the American side through an ongoing ‘Adams factor’ in Anglo-American relations. In the first 83 years after London recognised American independence, an Adams would represent the United States in London for almost thirteen of those years. John Quincy Adams replicated his father’s experience being accredited to London in the wake of a second Anglo-American war and peace (1814–1817), while his own son Charles Francis Adams would play a significant part in avoiding a third such conflict during his mission (1861–1868).

Anglo-American relations evolved in the years that followed the establishment of diplomatic relations, as the United States constructed a national identity, which in part utilised the juxtaposition of crown and republic. In real political terms though the monarchical dimension was not significant, as in Britain the Hanoverian monarchy slid into a gradual decline in terms of exercising direct political power. Memories

⁴Letter, John Adams to John Jay, Secretary of State, reporting on his audience with the King, 2 June 1785 in Charles Francis Adams, ed. (1856) *The Works of John Adams*, 10 vols (Boston: Little Brown) 8: *Letters and State Papers 1782–1799* at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/adams-the-works-of-john-adams-vol-8-letters-and-state-papers-1782-1799>.

though were long-lasting. James Bryce, the British politician, diplomat, historian, and advocate of transatlantic harmony, recalled upon being appointed as Ambassador to Washington in 1907, that when he had first visited the United States in 1870, there had still been a good deal of bitter feeling towards Britain, and that there had been men yet living then who recalled the War of 1812.⁵

Victoria's accession to the throne not only transformed the monarchy's position in British political life but also America's perception of Britain. It marked a new, or second, phase in Anglo-American relations. In the early years of the Republic it had not proved possible to move past the old Hanoverian worlds of George III, George IV, and William IV. In their looks, character and temperaments, they had too glaringly represented the order against which America had set its destiny. Feelings though were about to change with the accession of the young Queen in 1837. It attracted positive journalistic and public interest in America, just as in Britain. The arrival of Prince Albert as the Queen's consort in 1840, and his impact on the public understanding of the institution, moved the monarchy from a passive to an active participant in many new arenas, the trans-Atlantic among them. As events transpired, one of the last things which Albert ever wrote was a draft of a note aimed at defusing the threat of Anglo-American belligerency over the *Trent* affair.⁶

Prince Albert clearly saw developing good relations with the emerging North American power as a prudent policy, both for Britain and for the monarchy. He thoroughly understood that the royal family's role was symbolic, but in a way that had the power to move the sentiments of people. In 1858 Queen Victoria and President Buchanan exchanged the first official trans-Atlantic telegraph message, marking a new era in communication for the English-speaking world. Building on this, in 1860 Prince Albert helped to orchestrate the visit of the Prince of Wales, heir to the throne, to Canada and the United States. The visit to Canada of the later Edward VII was an important step in imperial policy, but it also provided a useful opportunity to improve relations with the United States. The President, James Buchanan, had

⁵'Mr. Bryce on America: Pilgrims' Farewell Dinner', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 February 1907, p7.

⁶Stanley Weintraub (1997) *Uncrowned King: The Life of Prince Albert* (New York: Free Press) pp488–9.

previously served as United States Minister in London (1853–1856). Consequently, he knew the royal family, and got on well with them. *The Times* noted of the correspondence inviting the Prince of Wales to visit the United States that it was ‘a novelty in its way for simplicity, good sense, and the entire absence of all that ceremonious diction and fulsome verbiage which ordinarily pertain to the communications between the rulers of great empires.’⁷ These two English-speaking countries were beginning to develop their own, less formal, diplomatic language.

ROYAL INTERACTIONS WITH THE USA

The Prince of Wales’ visit was the first to North America by a British heir to the throne.⁸ In important ways it helped to establish the representational role he would fulfil so ably during his long apprenticeship and short reign.⁹ For the Prince’s travels in the United States, it was decided to signal that it was a personal rather than official visit. This was achieved by having him use one of his subsidiary titles, Lord Renfrew, as he had done previously on some private European visits.¹⁰ It was a nuance the American public ignored, not surprisingly as he had been invited to visit by the President! The visit was a public diplomacy triumph, and possibly a happy distraction for a country on the brink of Civil War. The Prince entered the country at Detroit on 20 September

⁷ ‘The President of the United States and the Queen’, *The Times*, 18 August 1869, p10.

⁸ Ian Radforth (2004) *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) especially pp313–63. Accounts of the visit are also in Philip Magnus (1964) *King Edward the Seventh* (New York: E. P. Dutton) pp37–41; Jane Ridley (2013) *The Heir Apparent: A Life of Edward VII, the Playboy Prince* (New York, Random House) pp58–9; William Baker (1972) ‘Anglo-American Relations in Miniature: The Prince of Wales in Portland, Maine, 1860’, *New England Quarterly* 45(4), pp559–68.

⁹ See Glencross, *State Visits*, for more discussion of this aspect.

¹⁰ President Buchanan wrote formally to Queen Victoria on 4 June 1860, inviting the prince to extend his North American visit to the United States. Her reply is dated 22 June. This correspondence was soon reprinted in American newspapers: ‘The Visit of the Prince of Wales’, *Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH) 18 July 1860. On aspects of the visit see Thomas Keiser (1990) ‘The Prince of Wales in the United States: a harbinger of English opinion of the Civil War’, *Illinois Historical Journal* 83(4), pp235–46.

1860, to be greeted by 30,000 people.¹¹ In New York City, he was greeted by a crowd of 300,000. The ball held in his honour was the social event of the Season there. So memorable was the 1860 visit that a 'survivors' reception was held for the veterans of that ball during the 1919 visit of the then Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII). Invited to visit Washington, the Prince was met at the station by Secretary of State Lewis Cass. He was then driven to the White House in the President's carriage. During a 'state dinner' in his honour the capital was illuminated by fireworks. After dinner, Buchanan, for the only time in his presidency, allowed card playing. However, when the President decided to retire for the evening he found all the beds occupied and had to resort to sleeping on a settee.

The Prince of Wales dutifully paid a visit to the home of the successful leader of the American revolt, George Washington, at Mount Vernon and planted a chestnut sapling near the tomb of the first president.¹² The symbolism of the heir to the throne of the British Empire paying this tribute was powerful, and the image of conciliation thereby conveyed was widely disseminated in a print of an oil painting commemorating the event.¹³ Queen Victoria, in writing to President Buchanan about the visit to Mount Vernon, observed 'The interesting and touching scene at the grave of General Washington...may be fitly taken as the type of

¹¹Magnus, *King Edward*, p37.

¹²Christopher Hibbert (2007) *Edward VII: The Last Victorian King* (New York, Palgrave) p33. The bachelor President's official hostess was his niece Harriet Lane who tried to arrange a Mount Vernon visit for all visiting foreign dignitaries, Lloyd C. Taylor Jr. (1963) 'Harriet Lane—Mirror of an Age', *Pennsylvania History* 30(2), pp212–25. There is also an interesting echo in that when accompanying his parents on their 1855 state visit to Britain's old enemy, France, he had been taken by them to view the tomb of Napoleon, where he had been instructed by his mother to pay his respects to the 'great Napoleon'. See Glencross, *State Visits*, p25.

¹³'Visit of the Prince of Wales, President Buchanan, and Dignitaries to the Tomb of Washington at Mount Vernon, October 1860' oil on canvas 1861 by Thomas P. Rossiter (1818–1871). Smithsonian American Art Museum (bequest in 1906 of Harriet Lane Johnston, the niece of President Buchanan). The Prince also later sent now former President Buchanan a portrait of himself by Sir John Watson Gordon, which formed part of the same bequest, Albert Edward (Jaffa) to Buchanan, 29 March 1862, reprinted in George Ticknor Curtis (1883) *Life of James Buchanan*, 2 vols (New York: Harper) II, p590.

our present feeling, and I trust our future relations.’¹⁴ In 1890, when the Prince of Wales learnt the tree had died, he sent an oak sapling as a replacement, which was presented by the British Minister of the day, Sir Julian Pauncefote. On the death of Edward VII in 1910, Mount Vernon sent a wreath made of oak leaves from this tree.¹⁵

On visiting Boston, the birthplace of the American Revolution, people ‘flocked in from all parts of New England, anxious to catch a sight of the Prince.’ The flags of both countries were on display throughout the city. Here the Prince met both Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Ralph Waldo Emerson, and was treated to an ode penned by Oliver Wendell Holmes, and sung to the tune of *God save the Queen*, which included the stanza, ‘God bless our fathers’ land, Keep her in heart and hand, One with our own. From all her foes defend, Be her brave people’s friend, On all her realms descend, Protect her throne!’¹⁶ Buchanan’s biographer commented about the visit that ‘The occasion seemed to symbolise an end to the traditional hatreds of Revolutionary days and marked the beginning of stronger Anglo-American friendship.’¹⁷ On the return of the Prince to Britain, *The Times* observed of Anglo-American relations that ‘For near a century the gulf of bloody schism’ had ‘gaped between them’ but that now, because of the Prince’s trip, ‘there is something new here’. Given this new relationship was being established between ‘two of the greatest Empires in the world’, it added that ‘The work to be done was one beyond the power of either soldier or diplomatist.’¹⁸ As events proved, Victoria’s family were to make effective ‘goodwill ambassadors’ in the years ahead.

The doings of the British royal family were common fare in the American press, aided by the regular presence of members of the royal family in Canada. In the story of royal relations with the United States,

¹⁴Quoted, Curtis, *James Buchanan*, II, p233. For an account of the visit see Homer Rosenberger (1966–1968) ‘Harriet Lane, First Lady: Hostess Extraordinary in Difficult Times’, *Records of the Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C.*, 74 vols, 46: pp102–53.

¹⁵Harrison Howell Dodge (1932) *Mount Vernon: Its Owner and Its Story* (Philadelphia: Lippincott) pp99–101.

¹⁶‘The Cabinet’ *Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, NH) 24 October 1860, p2.

¹⁷Philip Shriver Klein (1970) *President James Buchanan* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press) p350.

¹⁸*The Times*, 16 November 1860.

the part played by the Dominion of Canada is often a forgotten dimension to this narrative. Canadian confederation occurred in 1867, creating the post of Governor General. In 1878, the Marquess of Lorne (heir to the Dukedom of Argyll) assumed that post, holding it until 1883. His wife was Queen Victoria's daughter, Princess Louise, and her presence in North America attracted a great deal of press attention in the United States media. In June 1880, on a visit to Niagara Falls, she crossed to the American side. Niagara Falls was a useful natural wonder conveniently located on the British Imperial/Canadian-American border. It had already become a frequent pivot point in North American diplomacy as distinguished visitors on the Canadian side were able, having travelled as far as Niagara, to suggest that it would have seemed impolite not to continue across the Falls to the American side, thereby facilitating Anglo-American contacts. In June 1882, Princess Louise then travelled on to Chicago and Milwaukee, accompanied by her younger brother Prince Leopold. In total in 1882, the Lornes made two visits to the United States.

Previously, another of Princess Louise's brothers, Prince Arthur, had been stationed in Canada between 1869 and 1870. His posting to Canada had appeared in the American press as a brief news item ahead of his arrival. It was a tense period in Anglo-American relations, with cross-border Fenian raids in support of Irish independence and a movement in the United States calling for the annexation of Canada.¹⁹ However, utilising a visit to Niagara Falls in September 1869, the Prince made a brief foray of a few hours to nearby Buffalo, one of the acknowledged centres of Fenian activity in the United States, in defiance of threats to his safety. It had been from Buffalo that the Fenian raids of 1866 and 1867 had been launched.²⁰ Prince Arthur toured the city, and lunched with former President Millard Fillmore, who lived in Buffalo, and who had dined with Queen Victoria at Buckingham Palace in 1855.²¹

While that visit to the United States lasted only a few hours, it was followed by a more formal one in January 1870. On that occasion, the

¹⁹ 'Foreign Gleanings', *The Independent: ...Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts*, 2. 5 March 1869.

²⁰ David Wilson (2009) *Irish Nationalism in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press) p155.

²¹ 'Movements of Prince Arthur', *The Albion* (New York), 2 October 1869.

Prince Arthur's New York hotel room was decorated with portraits of his parents, as well as a bust of Richard Cobden. In Washington, dinners were held in the Prince's honour by President Grant, Secretary of State Hamilton Fish, and General William Tecumseh Sherman. Sherman, on bidding farewell to him, expressed the hope that the prince would become a link between two countries which were committed to 'the high duty of spreading their peculiar civilisation to the whole world.'²² Prince Arthur later returned to Canada as Governor General between 1911 and 1916, having been created Duke of Connaught and Strathearn. In 1912 he visited the United States and met with President Taft.²³ In 1914, Taft (by then an ex-President) paid a convivial visit to the Duke in Ottawa, during which he met most of the Canadian government. Connaught's activities in developing and sustaining links with the American political elites helped to improve the tenor of American-Canadian relations on the eve of the Great War.²⁴ This was particularly significant as it would fall to Connaught to serve as the public face of Canada during the first two years of that war, when the United States was not yet formally part of the conflict.

ROYAL ASSOCIATIONS TO CULTURAL SYMBOLS IN ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

The Queen's Golden Jubilee in 1887 led to various commemorations in Britain which were also extended to include an interested United States. Arthur Stanley, Dean of Westminster Abbey, was (as was his wife) close to the royal family. He thought one way to promote good Anglo-American relations was through commonly shared public monuments, 'to strengthen the belief that was surely growing up among their leaders of thought in the reality of their mutual feeling of fraternity and fellowship'.²⁵ Albeit after Stanley's death, the Jubilee did produce one such monument. A drinking fountain funded by American philanthropist George Child was unveiled at Shakespeare's birthplace, Stratford-upon-Avon, as 'evidence of the goodwill of the two nations who have the fame

²²Noble Frankland (1993) *Witness of a Century: The Life and Times of Prince Arthur Duke of Connaught, 1850–1942* (London: Shephard-Walwyn) pp34–5.

²³*Ibid.*, pp279–83.

²⁴*Ibid.*, p307.

²⁵A. P. Stanley (1883) *Addresses & Sermons: Delivered During a Visit to the United States and Canada in 1878* (London: Macmillan) p6.

and works of the poet as their common heritage.²⁶ Shakespeare was a safe common figure, popular on both sides of the Atlantic, whose plays had done much to make familiar to a vast audience the doings of several early English kings. The inauguration of what became known as ‘the American Fountain’ attracted hundreds of American tourists and garnered extraordinary press coverage throughout Britain and the United States. Queen Victoria highlighted its significance by sending her first celebratory telegram for thirty-five years.

Language was one of the bonds in this warming relationship. While the United States had no royalty to send on reciprocal visits, it had the advantage of contemporary shared common cultural figures. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was among the first American authors to gain wide recognition in Britain, visiting the country four times.²⁷ His 1868–1869 tour, described by *American National Biography* as ‘virtually a triumphant procession,’ shared characteristics with an extraordinary, rather than plenipotentiary, diplomatic mission, similar to that of royalty. Longfellow projected a positive image of America and American values and culture, progressing round the country, meeting with senior figures, and speaking to public assemblies. Longfellow did not arrive as an ordinary tourist, and coming with his family after the tragic death of his wife had a resonance with the Queen’s bereavement. Longfellow’s popularity ensured huge receptions at railway stations, and audiences with the Prince of Wales, and the widowed Queen Victoria who afterwards told Sir Theodore Martin, ‘I noticed an unusual interest among the attendants and servants. ... many of his poems are familiar to them. No other distinguished person has come here who has excited so peculiar an interest. Such poets wear a crown that is imperishable.’²⁸ Longfellow’s royal acceptance in Britain was also duly noted in the American press.

To this day one of the most visible symbols of the British royal family’s connection with the United States is the desk used by most presidents since the 1880s, known as the *Resolute* desk. Made of English oak

²⁶George W. Childs, from Philadelphia, was mentioned as the donor in the local press, something confirmed in the Court Circular. ‘Court Circular: The Queen’s Jubilee’, *The Times*, 22 December 1886.

²⁷Amy Cruse (1935) *The Victorians and Their Books* (London: Allen and Unwin) pp238–43.

²⁸Queen Victoria to Sir Theodore Martin, cited, Cruse, *The Victorians*, pp242–3.

timbers from *HMS Resolute*, a Royal Navy vessel that was part of a disastrous Arctic expedition in 1852 and later salvaged by an American whaler, it had been refitted and sent as a goodwill gift to Queen Victoria on behalf of the President and People of the United States. When the ship was eventually broken up the desk was made from some of its timbers on the orders of the Queen and sent as a gift to President Hayes in 1880.²⁹

Anglo-American relations improved only in fits and starts, always in danger of being derailed by some sudden diplomatic crisis. The Venezuela Crisis of 1895 proved to be the last incident that threatened a major confrontation between Britain and the United States. As it developed the publisher Joseph Pulitzer of the *New York World* asked the Prince of Wales for his views. Edward drafted a reply, but the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury, reminded him that he was to be silent on such a political issue. Edward, however, felt strongly and cabled his reply to Pulitzer, 'I thank you for your telegram. I earnestly trust, and cannot but believe, present crisis will be arranged in a manner satisfactory to both countries, and will be succeeded by some warm feeling of friendship which has existed between them for so many years'. It was published on Christmas Day to positive effect.³⁰ After this relations generally continued to gently improve.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 would prove the turning point in Anglo-American relations. During this brief war the American public was moved by strong British popular support for its cause. There was a general outpouring of support for the United State cause across Britain, unlike much of the rest of Europe where there was a fear of the potential for instability in Spain. The goodwill of Britain was widely reciprocated in the United States. At Tampa, Florida, United States troops celebrated the Queen's birthday (24 May), with their commander General William Shafter sitting under the crossed flags of the United States and Great Britain.³¹ In London there was a spontaneously organised

²⁹The desk was later modified by President Franklin Roosevelt who ordered a knee-hole panel displaying the presidential seal, so that his leg braces could not be seen (it did not arrive until after his death). All Presidents since Hayes have used the desk, with the exception of Presidents Johnson, Nixon, and Ford. It was certainly a substantial gift, as it reportedly weighed 1300 pounds, 'A Royal Gift to the President', *New York Times*, 24 November 1880.

³⁰'Peace and Good Will: The Prince of Wales and the Duke of York Send a Cordial Message to the American People', *The World* (New York), 25 December 1895.

³¹'An Anglo-Saxon Union', *The Christian World*, 26 May 1898; see also *Manchester Guardian*, 25 May 1898.

Anglo-American dinner, to which the Duke of Fife, who was married to eldest daughter of the Prince of Wales, lent his name, thereby giving the event a semi-royal imprimatur.³² The dinner was attended by around 500 of the most prominent figures of the day. The Bishop of Ripon in addressing the diners told a parable of Anglo-American relations, 'which compared the early condition of the home to an absolute monarchy, giving place to a limited constitutional monarchy, then, when the sons and daughters had grown up, to a republic, with the father as president.'³³

Dead monarchs also played a supporting role in building Anglo-American relations, none more so than Alfred the Great. At the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries there was a wave of 'Alfredian' enthusiasm across the English-speaking world.³⁴ As it transpired, just as the Spanish-American War was about to occur the popular author Frederic Harrison suggested a broad commemoration of his approaching millenary. Harrison saw Alfred as, 'of all Englishmen most fitted to be national hero.'³⁵ Alfred was seen as having initiated the idea of a country governed by law, and here the common Anglo-American legal tradition could be brought to bear. Letters were sent to eminent Englishmen and Americans, and received a good response. James Bryce at the same meeting to organise the celebrations commented that 'the nearest analogues to Alfred the Great are George Washington and Abraham Lincoln'.³⁶ United States Presidents were now being placed on the same level as the greatest monarchs by senior British politicians. The centre-piece of the commemoration effort was to be the unveiling of a statue of Alfred at Winchester, the historic capital of Wessex, together with a service of remembrance at Winchester cathedral.³⁷ A significant portion of the funds for the statue were raised in the United States through the assistance of the American Ambassador to Britain, Joseph Hodges Choate.

³²At the dinner Lord Coleridge presided. See 'Anglo-American Dinner', *Morning Post*, 4 June 1898.

³³'Anglo-American Dinner in London', *Daily News*, 4 June 1898.

³⁴Erik Goldstein (2017) 'America and the King Alfred Millenary Commemorations' in T. G. Otte, ed. *The Age of Anniversaries: The Cult of Commemoration 1895–1925* (London: Routledge) pp36–60.

³⁵'King Alfred', *The Christian World*, 24 March 1898.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷Barbara Yorke (1999) *The King Alfred Millenary in Winchester, 1901*, Hampshire Papers 17 (Winchester: Hampshire County Council). The sculptor was Hamo Thornycroft.

Unfortunately the 1901 Alfred celebrations coincided with the assassination of President McKinley. Many of the participants ended up traveling directly from the memorial service for the late President at Westminster Abbey to the celebrations at Winchester, where the flags flew at half-mast. The American Ambassador's place at Winchester was taken by Charles Francis Adams Jr., the heir of that dynasty of American representatives to the Court of St. James's.³⁸ Adams took the opportunity to mark Americans' appreciation for the 'deep, spontaneous, all-pervasive, sincere sympathy manifested by Great Britain at the time of America's National bereavement.'³⁹ It also provided a moment for the expression of mutual friendship in the wake of a tragic event. There was a sense of parallel loss, with Queen Victoria having died in January 1901 and then President McKinley in September.

The deaths of the Queen and the President saw two new heads of state being recognised in the same year, and much would be made in the succeeding period of the duality of King Edward VII and President Theodore Roosevelt, which even decades later continues to attract attention, most recently in David Fromkin's *The King and the Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and Edward VII, Secret Partners*.⁴⁰ The imagery of their working together is all the more fascinating as in reality the two never met. But they both signified the beginning of what was hoped to be a new dynamic era, and they were both indeed inclined to closer amity. Edward was always careful to work within his constitutional role, but he had clear views on foreign policy which he often tried quietly to move forward. During a visit of American naval officers to Britain in 1903, the officers were received by the King, and while judicious with his choice of words they were reported in the United States, 'as an emphatic declaration in favor of closer relations' and that it was 'clear from his remarks that he desired the two nations move together in the interests of the peace of the world.'⁴¹ Ambassador Whitelaw Reid, at a Pilgrims' Dinner send-off to Bryce in 1907, observed that as ambassador, Bryce's primary task was to safeguard the interests of his own

³⁸This Charles Francis Adams (1835–1915) never served in an official diplomatic capacity, but was a frequent visitor to Britain.

³⁹'Statue of King Alfred Unveiled', *New York Times*, 21 September 1901.

⁴⁰David Fromkin (2008) *The King and the Cowboy: Theodore Roosevelt and Edward VII, Secret Partners* (New York: Penguin).

⁴¹'King Honors Americans', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 July 1903.

country, adding that Bryce knew that the best interests of both countries lay in promoting peace. After referring to President Roosevelt and Edward VII as unsurpassed peacemakers, Reid went on to comment that, 'There never was there a time when the two peoples were so glad to be friends, or when they looked with such impatience on the idea of permitting anything to prevent it.'⁴² The Edward VII-Roosevelt story was brought full circle when the, by now former, President was due to come to London in 1910 upon his return from Africa, and Edward planned an elaborate dinner in his honour. The King, however, died on the eve of the planned event, and Roosevelt in turn became the American representative at the funeral, sitting amongst the glittering mourners from all of Europe's royal families.⁴³

This was a time when the sub-diplomatic institutional framework of the relationship was beginning to take shape. One of the by-products of the 1902 coronation of Edward VII, originally planned for 26 June but delayed by the King's health until 9 August, was the establishment of the Pilgrims. As various influential Americans who had come to London for the coronation waited, the opportunity for extended conversations with their British counterparts occurred. The idea of a society for promoting Anglo-American understanding crystallised at a dinner in July at the Carlton Hotel. A similar, but ultimately abortive, effort had been attempted in 1898 with a proposed Anglo-American League. This time the effort was successful and both London and New York branches were established. The Duke of Connaught would serve as the President of the Pilgrims of Great Britain after his return from Canada until his death in 1942. The Pilgrims, with membership by invitation only, became one of the pillars of the Anglo-American 'special relationship' and it remains the norm that an American Ambassador to London and a British Ambassador to Washington make their first speeches at a Pilgrims' Dinner. Their dinners include the single toast, 'His/Her Majesty the King/Queen and the President of the United States'.

During the decades in which the United States emerged as a major international actor, other Great Powers tried to make use of royal

⁴²'Mr. Bryce on America: Pilgrims' Farewell Dinner', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 February 1907.

⁴³Roosevelt wrote a wonderful Mark Twain style commentary on royalty at the funeral, Theodore Roosevelt to David Gray, 5 October 1911, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. by Elting E. Morison et al., 8 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1951–1954) 7: pp409–13.

diplomacy to forge links with the United States, but with only limited effect. Louis Philippe of France (ruled 1830–1848), who had lived as an exile in the United States between 1796 and 1797, sent his third son, the Prince de Joinville, on two visits. The Prince was received in 1838 by President Van Buren and subsequently in 1841 by President Tyler, and was the first European royal family member to be a guest at the Executive Mansion.⁴⁴ However, while the Orléans family were well inclined towards the United States, these visits were not followed up diplomatically before their overthrow in 1848. The Prince de Joinville did return to the United States on several subsequent occasions, being received by Presidents Lincoln and Buchanan. He offered his services to the Federal cause during the Civil War, as did his nephews the Comte de Paris and the Duc de Chartres, and they all served in the army, while his son Prince Pierre (who had attended the United States Naval Academy, 1861–1862) served in the United States Navy during the Civil War.⁴⁵

After the Civil War, the Romanovs also made diplomatic gestures. Russia sent the Grand Duke Alexis, younger son of Tsar Alexander II, on a goodwill visit with the Russian fleet in 1872, building on the linked stories of the Tsar having freed the serfs near the time of the end of slavery in the United States.⁴⁶ The visit attracted particular media attention thanks to the Grand Duke's buffalo hunting expedition with General Philip Sheridan and Lieutenant Colonel George Custer.⁴⁷ Again, though, there were no significant long-term diplomatic outcomes resulting from this royal visit. Subsequently, Prince Heinrich of Prussia made a well-received visit in 1902. This came in the wake of a downturn in German-American relations during the Spanish-American War when there was a widespread view that Germany had supported Spain in the Philippines, with an eye to acquiring the colony

⁴⁴Prince de Joinville (1895) *Memoirs of the Prince de Joinville*, trans. Lady Mary Lloyd (New York: Macmillan) pp83–8; Esther Singleton (1907) *The Story of the White House* (New York: Mclure Company) pp281–2. Personally, the Prince had liked the USA and been much liked there on his visits.

⁴⁵Daniel Carroll (2015) *Henri Mercier and the American Civil War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press) pp93–7.

⁴⁶See Lee Farrow (2014) *Alexis in America: A Russian Grand Duke's Tour, 1871–1872* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press).

⁴⁷The visit particularly fascinated Boston businessman William Warren Tucker who produced a privately printed collection of newspaper accounts of the visit, reprinted as Jeff Dykes, introduced and ed. (1972) *The Grand Duke Alexis in the United States of America*, Custeriana Series (New York: Interland).

for itself. Prince Heinrich was a career naval officer who was unquestionably better at public diplomacy than his older brother, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and he enjoyed a warm reception throughout his visit. The mounting Great Power tensions in Europe were reflected in the American press, with the newspapers most critical of his visit also being those that were most Anglophile.⁴⁸ Prince Heinrich himself, though, received the accolade of an honorary doctorate from Harvard University, being the first member of a European royal family so recognised.⁴⁹ This largely successful exercise in royal public diplomacy was followed, however, by a far unhappier one.

Kaiser Wilhelm II decided to build on the momentum, as he perceived, that had been created by the visit, and monumentalise this improved German-American relationship with the gift of a statue. Wilhelm was a skilled publicist, and no doubt aware of the nineteenth century rise of statuary diplomacy. He was prompted by the example of the French Republic, which had also had strained relations with the United States during the Spanish-American War. The French had proposed that a copy of a recent statue of General Rochambeau, commander of the French forces during the American Revolution, be erected in Washington.⁵⁰ The Kaiser now offered as a counterpoise to this to give a statue of his famous ancestor, Frederick the Great. Some members of Congress expressed concern that Washington would become a proxy battleground of competing European powers, its squares and available open spaces populated by their martial statues. One paper, pointing to America's longstanding policy of aloofness from European affairs, suggested that in return the United States should send Germany a statue of the promulgator of that doctrine, President Monroe.⁵¹ In 1904 the statue of Frederick the Great was unveiled in the presence of President Roosevelt, who had decided to place it in the secure and relatively inaccessible grounds of the new Army War College in Washington. Later removed during the First World War, the statue reappeared in the late

⁴⁸A useful view of German-American relations written in the wake of the Great War is Clara Eve Schieber (1921) 'The Transformation of American Sentiment towards Germany, 1870-1914', *Journal of International Relations* 12(1), pp50-74.

⁴⁹Even more unusually he was awarded the degree outside normal university celebrations, an honour previously accorded only by Presidents Washington, Monroe, and Jackson, and the Marquis de Lafayette.

⁵⁰'General Comte de Rochambeau', sculpted by Fernand Hamar (1902), located in Lafayette Park, Washington.

⁵¹*Evening Star* (Washington), 24 May 1902.

1920s and remained in place during the Second World War but was again sent to store in 1946. Eventually Frederick the Great re-emerged when the Army War College relocated to Carlisle, Pennsylvania.⁵²

By the later nineteenth century France could not make use of royal diplomacy. Having started positively under the July Monarchy, the Second Empire had soured diplomatic relations by imposing an imperial regime on Mexico. Subsequently as a republic, France had to turn to other forms of soft diplomatic representation. This perhaps explains the largest diplomatic gift in history—the Statue of Liberty, which at least does sport a crown that can be visited. Of the other European Great Powers, Austria-Hungary had little need to focus on American relations. In any case, the experience of the long-reigning Emperor Franz Joseph's younger brother Maximilian and his ill-fated imperial career in Mexico, limited the potential value of its royal diplomacy in Washington.

The only member of the Italian royal family to gain attention in the United States was the mountain climbing Prince Luigi Amedeo, Duke of the Abruzzi, who in 1897 succeeded in reaching the summit of Mount Saint Elias in Alaska, an event that attracted much favourable publicity. In 1907 the Prince was chosen by his royal cousin, Victor Emmanuel III, to represent Italy at the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement. During his visit he enjoyed a private luncheon with fellow outdoorsman, President Roosevelt at the White House.⁵³ The Duke of the Abruzzi also made the now almost expected pilgrimage to Mount Vernon, where he planted a tree. Unfortunately, on this leg of his journey he fell in love with the daughter of an American senator. For the next six years it was thought the prince would seek to marry an American, a commoner, and a Protestant.⁵⁴ This was the only Italian use of royal representation in the United States before the First World War.

⁵²It is a replica of a marble statue sculpted by Joseph Uphues (1899) that formed part of the monumental statuary on the Siegesallee in Berlin's Tiergarten. A copy of the statue is at the Sanssouci Palace's Lustgarten, Potsdam. The bronze replica was unveiled 19 November 1904 at the Army War College. It was removed 15 April 1918 and returned 29 November 1927.

⁵³Peter Bridges (2000) 'A Prince of Climbers', *Virginia Quarterly Review* 76(1), pp38–51.

⁵⁴She was Katherine Elkins, daughter of Senator Stephen Elkins of West Virginia. Victor Emmanuel III consistently refused to grant permission to his cousin to marry a commoner. After serving in the Italian navy in the Great War, Luigi Amedeo became involved in Mussolini's diplomatic gestures towards Ethiopian Emperor, Haile Selassie, during the 1920s. Luigi Amedeo died in 1933, by which time he was living on his own plantation in the Italian colony of Somalia, and had married a local Somali woman, Faduma Ali.

The Jamestown Tercentenary in 1907 was one of the last major events in the United States for international efforts at royal (and other) diplomatic representation before the outbreak of the First World War, and provided another opportunity to reinforce Anglo-American links. It was after all the anniversary of the planting of the first permanent English settlement in the Americas, and it provided an opportunity to move the focus of such commemorations away from the north-east. It was also usefully close to the capital. Nearby Bruton parish church became a focal point of the celebrations. It was conveniently Anglican in confession, and had been a place of worship for five American presidents.⁵⁵ The rector of the church, William Goodwin, wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury about his efforts at preserving and restoring the building, and observed that given the close association of the church and England, 'we would like to give to the work an inter-national character.' He noted that as a service of consecration had been omitted in 1715, he hoped to have the church consecrated in 1907 to coincide with the Jamestown festivities. Goodwin was hoping to secure some Royal memorial of the past to commemorate 'the establishment of our Church, and English Civilization in America.' Goodwin made it clear that it was not money that he was looking for but something to symbolise the link. Edward VII agreed to donate a Bible, after it was learnt that President Roosevelt had agreed to donate the lectern on which it would stand.⁵⁶ The suitably inscribed Bible was duly presented on the King's behalf by the Bishop of London, though the American bishop making the introductory remarks stated it was a gift from Henry VIII.⁵⁷ The Bishop of London took the opportunity of the event for some trans-Atlantic flattery, claiming 'All England congratulates you of America on the splendid act of Theodore Roosevelt in taking the lead toward peace between Russia and Japan, when they were engaged in an inhuman war. We look upon King Edward as a

⁵⁵W. A. R. Goodwin (1903) *Historical Sketch of Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg, Virginia* (privately printed). This book indicates that there is a chalice with a George III mark, which forms part of what the church referred to as 'The King George Service' but not that it was a gift of the King, p70.

⁵⁶Lambeth Palace, Davidson Papers, f285, Goodwin to Davidson, September 1905; 13 March 1906.

⁵⁷Dennis Montgomery (1998) *A Link Among the Days: The Life and Times of the Reverend Doctor W. A. R. Goodwin, The Father of Colonial Williamsburg* (Richmond, VA: Dietz) p78. 'The King And The American Church', *The Times*, 3 June 1907.

peacemaker. Could there be more appropriate gifts from the two great peacemakers, who are at this moment at the head of the two great English-speaking nations?’⁵⁸

The culmination of this series of Anglo-American commemorations was meant to be the celebration of a hundred years of peace between the two countries in 1914, an event overtaken by the outbreak of the Great War. In London a committee to organise the British festivities was established, with the Duke of Teck, the brother of Queen Mary, as its honorary president.⁵⁹ The outbreak of war in August 1914 led to the abandonment of most of the planned activities but it did lead to the saving of the ancestral Washington family home, Sulgrave Manor in Northamptonshire, as a symbol of Anglo-American friendship.⁶⁰

The decades of various Anglo-American commemorations had helped to build up a network of ‘soft’ or cultural diplomatic ties. With the outbreak of war in 1914, the United States was hardly aloof from it, with Canada and much of the Caribbean engaged in the conflict on the side of the British Empire. As the war dragged on, these previous ties helped Britain build an effective propaganda machine targeted at the United States (as part of its wider propaganda enterprise) which benefitted from the complex trans-Atlantic ties that had developed since the late nineteenth century, and which included a positive view of the British monarchy. While public opinion was generally glad the United States was not initially caught up in the conflict, there was clearly a great deal of sympathy for the Allied side. By 1915 there were a whole series of committees dedicated to gathering funds for those suffering on the Allied side. Among these funds was The Prince of Wales Fund in the United States.⁶¹ As for the Central Powers, the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, was central to perceptions of Germany. As Jörg Nagler has observed, ‘Since

⁵⁸ ‘Their Gifts to Church’, *The Washington Post*, 6 October 1907.

⁵⁹ TNA, FO115/1813, John A. Stewart to Cecil Spring-Rice, ‘British Committee for the Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of Peace Among English Speaking Peoples’, 7 February 1914.

⁶⁰ On Sulgrave, see Thomas Otte (2011) ‘“The Shrine at Sulgrave”: The Preservation of the Washington Ancestral Home as an “English Mount Vernon” and Transatlantic Relations’ in Melanie Hall, ed. *Towards World Heritage: International Origins of the Preservation Movement, 1870–1930* (Aldershot: Ashgate) pp109–35.

⁶¹ ‘War Aid Gifts Grow with Host of Givers: Extent of American Sympathy for Suffering Indicated by Length of Lists’, *New York Times*, 24 October 1915.

Wilhelm II's accession to the throne in 1888, the American perception of German culture had tended to focus on the person of the kaiser'.⁶² While, before the war, he had his admirers in the United States, 'his inordinate love of uniforms and his penchant for sabre-rattling speeches strengthened the impression of German militarism'.⁶³ This legacy, combined with the ongoing British propaganda efforts, were factors that helped turn American popular opinion in the direction of the Allies.

On 6 April 1917 the United States entered the Great War, and for the first time the two great English-speaking powers were allied in military conflict. George V's message welcoming America as an ally received wide coverage in American newspapers.⁶⁴ The 1860 visit of the Prince of Wales to Mount Vernon was explicitly recalled and used to symbolise the relationship between the two powers. On 29 April a ceremony to symbolise the unity of these new allies was held at Mount Vernon, and among the guests of honour was Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary. Balfour, in laying a wreath at Washington's tomb, paid homage to the immortal memory of Washington 'who would have rejoiced to see the country of which he was by birth a citizen and the country his genius called into existence fighting side by side to save mankind from a military despotism'.⁶⁵ The *New York Times* reminded readers that this was the second time the founder of the republic had been so honoured by Britain, the first on the occasion of the 1860 visit of the Prince of Wales. It also observed that this 1917 visit was remarkable for being the first time a British flag had ever been raised over Washington's tomb.⁶⁶ The memory of the 1860 visit was undoubtedly a useful recollection, as given the war a royal visit of any sort was unlikely, and was ultimately ruled out by George V until after peace was restored. It was planned that once that had occurred, the current Prince of Wales would make a global tour.⁶⁷

⁶²Jörg Nagler (1997) 'From culture to Kultur: changing American perceptions of imperial Germany, 1870–1914' in David E. Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt, eds *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and America since 1776* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) p146.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p147.

⁶⁴'King George's Welcome to America as an Ally', *New York Times*, 19 April. 1917, p1.

⁶⁵'Pilgrimage to Mount Vernon', *New York Times*, 30 April 1917.

⁶⁶*Ibid.* Other guests included René Viviani, the French Foreign Minister, and Marshal of France Joffre.

⁶⁷Marquise de Fontenoy, 'Prince of Wales' Visit to U.S. Postponed until After War', *Washington Post*, 20 August 1917.

Within weeks of the United States entry into the conflict, Americans began arriving in London, both military and non-military, in support of the joint war effort. The royal family was publicly active in receiving them, something which received positive press coverage in the United States.⁶⁸ When General John Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force, arrived he was presented to the King. George V took the opportunity to comment that 'It has been the dream of my life to see the two great English-speaking nations more closely united.'⁶⁹ The King also greeted the first American forces to arrive. Their arrival was kept secret from the public until they marched through London, where spontaneous crowds turned out to greet them. News of this welcome received warm coverage in the United States, as did the fact that the largest crowds converged on Buckingham Palace. It was there that each American unit was saluted by the King who had come out to stand at the Palace gates, rather than simply acknowledging them from the balcony.⁷⁰ This was a role the King had already played for his own forces, and now he was adding this personal style of recognition of the American military to his duties.⁷¹ All this, however, was done without undue public ceremonial—it was very much a personal gesture by the King. The first time ceremonial punctilio was observed was just after the Armistice. The sailor King visited the American flagship *New York*, where the Anglo-American alliance was publicly symbolised when the Royal Standard flew above the Stars and Stripes.⁷² Certainly the King's solicitude towards his American ally received due respect in the United States, while his German cousin, the Kaiser, was sometimes referred to in American publications as Bill Hohenzollern.⁷³

While America and Britain shared many things—a common language, literature, legal philosophy, and much shared history, they had diverged in the arena of sport. The United States had opted for baseball rather than cricket as the national game. The British were well aware that the

⁶⁸'King and Queen of England Greet U.S. Army Surgeons and Nurses', *Washington Post*, 24 May 1917.

⁶⁹'Life's Dream Realized, King Tells Pershing', *New York Times*, 10 June 1917.

⁷⁰'London Millions Cheer our Troops', *New York Times*, 16 August 1917.

⁷¹'King Reviews Americans', *New York Times*, 12 May 1918.

⁷²'King George Suggests Joint Maneuvers of British and U.S. Fleets', *Washington Post*, 23 November 1918.

⁷³Porter Emerson Browne (1917) 'Plain Bill Hohenzollern', *McClure's Magazine* 49(5), pp32–4.

leader of their new ally, President Woodrow Wilson, was a great baseball fan, and sometimes would throw the first ball at important baseball games. When it was learnt that American forces stationed in London in the summer of 1918 were to play an exhibition game, in aid of American and British Red Cross funds, the opportunity was taken for George V to be invited to throw the first ball. The King dutifully acquired a baseball, and during June practiced throwing it in baseball rather than cricket fashion. The game was held at Chelsea Football Ground, on 4 July, with the US Army playing the US Navy. Before the game a group of Americans stopped in front of Buckingham Palace and gave three cheers for the King, and were delighted when the King and Queen came out on the balcony to wave. At the game, the spectators included several members of the royal family as well as the Anglo-American Winston Churchill, the South African General Jan Smuts, Prime Minister William Hughes of Australia, and Prime Minister William Massey of New Zealand. At the last moment it was noted that safety netting had been strung between the fans and the field, which would prevent the King throwing the ball, so he gave it to an umpire. After the game the monarch autographed a ball, 'George R.I.' and had it sent to Wilson, who kept it in a glass case as a prized object in a specially dedicated baseball room in his post-presidential home, near the White House.⁷⁴ At the time it provided both newspaper coverage as well as useful newsreel footage.

The Great War ended in November 1918, when the German government asked President Wilson to arrange an armistice. The following month Wilson travelled to Europe to attend the post-war peace conference, the first American President to travel to another country while in office. Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, was desperate to meet Wilson before the Peace Conference began, and invited Wilson to visit London. Lloyd George did so, however, without consulting the King, an action which did little for relations between 10 Downing Street and the Palace.⁷⁵

⁷⁴'The Fourth in England: The King at the American Baseball Match', *The Living Age*, 24 August 1918; 'War Celebration of Independence Day', *Manchester Guardian*, 4 July 1918; 'Our London Correspondent: Young America', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 July 1918; '"The Ball Game": King and Queen See It', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 July 1918; 'Court Circular', *The Times*, 5 July 1918. 'King and Big Crowd see Navy Win', *New York Times*, 5 July 1918. For a full account see Jim Leeke (2015) *Nine Innings for the King: The Day Wartime London Stopped for Baseball, July 4, 1918* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland). The baseball remains on display at the Woodrow Wilson House, now a property of the National Trust (US).

⁷⁵Stamfordham to Drummond, 18 December 1918. BL Add MS 49686, Balfour Papers, British Library, London; S. Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets* (London, 1972) vol. II, p36.

George V, though, did as requested, for what would be the first full-scale state event since 1914.⁷⁶ In line with the usual formalities for a state visit, Wilson was personally invited by George V to stay at Buckingham Palace. Wilson's grandfather had been a Presbyterian minister in the north of England, where before becoming President, he had often taken walking and cycling holidays. Now Wilson was greeted at Dover by the Duke of Connaught, and travelled on the Royal Train to London where he was greeted at Charing Cross Station by the King, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet. There followed the traditional open carriage drive to Buckingham Palace, in the royal carriage with the King and the Duke of Connaught, and Wilson had the unusual honour of appearing on the Palace balcony with the King. As they passed Marlborough House, Edward VII's widow, Queen Alexandra, and her grandson, the future King Olav V of Norway, came out, with Alexandra waving small British and American flags. Wilson responded by standing in the carriage and doffing his hat.⁷⁷ All this was captured by the news cameras. A lavish state banquet was held in the President's honour. Wilson's physician and brother-in-law was staggered by the display of the banquet, recording in his diary that the value of the gold state dinner service was easily \$15 million. Given the scale of British war debts to the United States such lavish display may have been unwise.⁷⁸

Wilson's staff believed he was making a good impression, but the reverse was in fact the case. Cultural communication had broken down between the heads of state and the British Prime Minister, even with the advantages of a common language. George V's biographer commented:

Wilson made a deplorable impression on his hosts. In reply to the toast of his health, he omitted any reference to the part played or the sacrifices endured by the British Empire in their joint struggle. 'Not a word of appreciation, let alone of gratitude, came from his lips' Lloyd George wrote. The King was equally disenchanted. 'I could not bear him,' he told a friend, 'an entirely cold academical professor—an odious man'.⁷⁹

⁷⁶The United States was still not fully involved in these forms of diplomacy and, officially, the Americans did not term this a state visit, but it certainly had all the trappings. See Erik Goldstein (2008) 'Politics of the State Visit', *Hague Journal of Diplomacy* 3(2), pp153–78.

⁷⁷'Mr Wilson in London', *The Times*, 27 December 1918.

⁷⁸Arthur S. Link (1986) *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, 53: November 9, 1918–January 11, 1919 (Princeton: Princeton University Press) pp508–27.

⁷⁹Kenneth Rose (1983) *King George V* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson) p232.

Lloyd George had hoped the visit would allow the first steps to be taken in the building of a working relationship, essential if a fortnight later they were to begin to negotiate the post-war peace settlement. Wilson, however, was concerned not to be overly influenced by such contacts and as a result, his actions sent signals which were perceived otherwise than he intended. The result was to worsen, not improve, Anglo-American relations.

There had been a very different result to another American visit to the King earlier that year. On that occasion, in July 1918, George V had received the United States Assistant Secretary of the Navy, whom the King considered ‘a charming man’—it was the young Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁸⁰ Roosevelt’s biographer referred to the encounter as forming ‘two of the most memorable days of his life’, and observed that royalty would always have ‘a peculiar fascination for him.’ Of course there was already a family connection, and the King understood the value of family connections, as he mentioned to Roosevelt that he had just received ‘a nice letter from Uncle Ted’ whose youngest son had just been killed in action on the Western Front.⁸¹

The value of a royal visit was understood in London. As the memory of the Great War receded and another global conflict loomed, George VI became the first reigning British monarch to visit the United States, at the invitation of the now President Franklin Roosevelt. As the British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Ronald Lindsay, observed to his brother of the visit,

The political dividend will not be clearly evident – but the political profit will be there. It is the emotions of this people that may induce them to help us, & nothing else – how could an American 3000 miles away be expected, on rational grounds, to take or risk or face sacrifice about a quarrel in Dantzic or Bulgaria? But do you know? They might go to any length for England under certain emotional stresses. And the King & Queen will appeal to this side.⁸²

⁸⁰Ibid., p345. Franklin Roosevelt had only a distant blood connection with Theodore Roosevelt, from the seventeenth century, and he really only became an ‘uncle’ through Franklin’s marriage to Theodore’s niece Eleanor in 1905.

⁸¹Kenneth Davis (1971) *FDR: The Beckoning of Destiny, 1882–1928* (New York: Putnam) pp519–20.

⁸²National Library of Scotland, Papers, David Alexander Lindsay, 27th Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, Crawford 97/10, Letter, Ronald Lindsay (Washington) to Lord Crawford & Balcarres, 22 May 1939.

It is a sentiment that could just as well summarise the experience of royal diplomacy in the making of the Anglo-American relationship and the part it played in leading America to enter the Great War on the same side as the country that had once been seen as the greatest threat to its existence.

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CHAPTER 3

Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, the German Command and Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1914–1915

Jonathan Boff

INTRODUCTION

Was Wilhelm merely a ‘shadow-Kaiser’, with real power vested in the traditional power structures of Prussia and Germany? Or did he exercise a decisive influence on political outcomes? Such questions have generated intense debate over a long period. The list of scholars who have taken part is a veritable ‘Who’s Who’ of the biggest beasts in the modern German history jungle.¹ In essence, there are two main camps.

¹John C. G. Röhl (2014) *Wilhelm II: Into the Abyss of War and Exile, 1900–41* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); John C. G. Röhl (1994) *The Kaiser and His Court: Wilhelm II and the Government of Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Hans-Ulrich Wehler (1973) *Das deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871–1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht).

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On the one hand, some, like Professor John Röhl, believe that Wilhelm was either bad or mad, a proto-Hitler who led his country to destruction via a quasi-absolutist 'kingship mechanism'.² On the other, others believe that he had little real power.³ Within this tradition, one can distinguish between those, like Hans-Ulrich Wehler, whose interest in structures prevents them ascribing much importance to any kind of individual agency; and those, such as Christopher Clark, who maintain that Wilhelm did exercise agency. He operated, however, within a power structure so fluid and complex that it could only be controlled by a statesman of Bismarck's calibre; since Wilhelm fell far short of that standard, he was unable consistently to exercise the executive prerogatives at his fingertips and to deliver any consistent programme or set of outcomes.

This chapter is born out of a view that a gap remains in the existing scholarship. Specifically, although the role of the Kaiser in the outbreak of the First World War, while still contested, has been examined minutely, his involvement in the actual conduct of the war has been less deeply explored. The two best known recent biographies of Wilhelm II are those by Christopher Clark and John Röhl. The former dedicates 39 of his 367 pages to the First World War, compared with 50 to discussion of the Kaiser's foreign policy role in the run-up to the war from 1909. In his third volume, Röhl spends proportionally even less space on war-time: 78 pages out of 1267, almost the same as he lavishes on Wilhelm's exile and death. This compares with 128 detailing preparations for war in 1913 and 1914 alone. What work has been done on it tends to take a top-down view, drawing primarily on the evidence of the immediate entourage.

This chapter takes a different approach. It provides a bottom-up perspective on the German Emperor, and does so by analysing how a subordinate commander experienced the command system of the German army in the early months of the war. Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria was General Officer Commanding Sixth Army on the Western Front in 1914–15. It draws in particular on four key interactions between Rupprecht and the *Oberste Heeresleitung* (Supreme Command: *OHL*).

² Röhl, *Wilhelm II*; Röhl, *The Kaiser and his Court*.

³ Gerhard Ritter (1972–1973) *The Sword and the Sceptre: The Problem of Militarism in Germany* Volumes II–IV (London: Allen Lane); Hans-Ulrich Wehler (1993) *The German Empire 1871–1918* (Oxford: Berg).

Rupprecht offers a particularly interesting case study for two reasons. First, he straddled dual worlds. As heir to the throne of the second most important state in Germany he had political access and royal clout of his own. Additionally, he had privileged sources of information, such as the Bavarian Military Plenipotentiary at the Kaiser's General Headquarters, General Karl von Wenninger. Also, he was as close as any royal heir could come to being a career soldier and initially had, as his Chief of Staff, the extremely professional and talented Konrad Krafft von Dellmensingen. Secondly, the conduct of Rupprecht and Krafft in Lorraine in August and September 1914 has generated an impressive paper trail. The German army obsessively picked over the bones of the Schlieffen Plan between the wars, but we tend to remember only the controversies about what went wrong on the right wing up to and during the Battle of the Marne. At the time, there was almost as much argument—some of it vicious—about what went on in Alsace and Lorraine. Argument raged back and forth in at least 20 publications before the outbreak of the next war closed the debate down, as Markus Pöhlmann has shown.⁴ The well-known papers of several members of the *OHL* and the Imperial Court are here complemented by two versions of the diaries of Crown Prince Rupprecht as well as those of his staff, notably Krafft and Major Rudolf von Xylander.⁵ This chapter argues that,

⁴Markus Pöhlmann (2002) *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik: Der Erste Weltkrieg: Die amtliche deutsche Militärgeschichtsschreibung 1914–1956* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh) pp284–321.

⁵Published sources include Bernd F. Schulte (1979) 'Neue Dokumente zu Kriegsausbruch und Kriegsverlauf 1914', *Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen* 25; Walter Görlitz, ed. (1961) *The Kaiser and His Court: The Diaries, Note Books and Letters of Admiral Georg Alexander von Müller, Chief of the Naval Cabinet, 1914–1918* (London: Macdonald); Holger Afflerbach, ed. (2005) *Kaiser Wilhelm II als Oberster Kriegsherr im Ersten Weltkrieg: Quellen aus der militärischen Umgebung des Kaisers 1914–1918* (Munich: Oldenbourg); Rupprecht, Crown Prince of Bavaria (1929) *Mein Kriegstagebuch*, in Eugen von Frauenholz, ed. 3 vols (Munich: Deutscher National Verlag). Unpublished sources include the *Nachlässe* of Gerhard Tappen and Wilhelm von Dommers (both in the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg (BA-MA)); and those of Krafft and Major Rudolf von Xylander in the Munich Bayerische Hauptstaatsarchiv Abt: IV: Kriegsarchiv (BKA), alongside Rupprecht's 4200 page manuscript diary, in Geheimes Hausarchiv (GHA). For discussion of Rupprecht's diary as a source, see Pöhlmann, *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik*, pp303–6; Dieter J. Weiss (2007) *Kronprinz Rupprecht von Bayern: Eine politische Biografie* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet) pp14–18.

from the start, the command system of the German army was dysfunctional in the extreme and that a range of factors underpinned that state of affairs. Further, that the Kaiser was more responsible, directly and indirectly, for the problems than has previously been allowed, with all the implications that had for the survival of the German monarchy.

CONTEXTUALISING RUPPRECHT

Rupprecht was formally named to command of the Sixth Army on mobilisation on 1 August 1914. Originally commissioned in 1886, Rupprecht had enjoyed a royal rise through the ranks but took his military career at least as professionally as any prince of the time did. To fill out gaps in his expertise, he was given as his Chief of Staff Major-General Konrad Krafft von Dellmensingen, Chief of Staff of the Bavarian Army. Krafft was a dedicated professional soldier who knew Lorraine well from pre-war staff rides.⁶ This was a surprise appointment, the result of an interplay of chance and politics which is itself instructive as to decision-making processes in Imperial Germany.

Originally, Rupprecht had been allocated a Prussian Chief of Staff, because, as Moltke had rather tactlessly explained to him in January 1914, the outcome of the war would be so important to Prussia.⁷ Lieutenant-General Konstantin Schmidt von Knobelsdorff was pencilled in for duty with the Sixth Army, while Krafft was earmarked to work with the Prussian Colonel-General Hermann von Eichhorn, commanding the Fifth Army. Eichhorn, however, had been injured in a riding accident in the spring and was not fit to take the field in August 1914. Crown Prince Wilhelm of Prussia was promoted to take his place, although he was only 33 and had never commanded anything larger than a division. Clearly, he would need

⁶The staff ride was an important element in army planning for any military campaign, consisting of a systematic preliminary study of terrain over which action could be expected to take place, along with the incorporation into any pre-planning of lessons learned both from the physical survey and the experiences of relevant past campaigns. For more discussion of its military importance, see Brian Bond (1972) *The Victorian Army and the Staff College, 1854–1914* (London: Eyre and Spottiswood); M. Samuels (1995) *Command or Control? Command, Training and Tactics in the British and German Armies 1888–1918* (London: Frank Cass); also Paul Harris (2016) *The Men Who Planned the War: A Study of the Staff of the British Army on the Western Front 1914–1918* (Aldershot: Ashgate).

⁷Rupprecht's dry response was: 'No less so for Bavaria', GHA Nachlass KPR 716, 'Meine Teilnahme am Weltkrieg 1914–18', p10.

considerable guidance in his new role. Schmidt von Knobelsdorff was an obvious candidate to provide it. Not only was he the most senior member of the General Staff after Moltke, but he had been teaching Wilhelm tactics and operations at the *Kriegsakademie* and knew him well. The Kaiser himself told his son: ‘whatever he advises, you must do.’⁸ Teaming Schmidt with Wilhelm would also avoid the potentially awkward possibility of the heir to the Empire taking instructions from a Bavarian.

Thus Schmidt and Krafft swapped places. The Bavarian military historian Dieter Storz has suggested that another motive might have been to make the Bavarians feel beholden for the favour.⁹ Certainly, Krafft thought this a concession.¹⁰ Rupprecht was not only glad to have a Bavarian colleague, but knew Krafft personally from their time together at the Munich *Kriegsakademie* and respected him as a ‘smart and energetic man’. The next three most senior staff officers were also Bavarian and known personally to Rupprecht, the rest being a mix of Bavarians and Prussians.¹¹ As we shall see, Prusso-Bavarian dynamics are important in this story.

Their respective biographers disagree about who called the shots in the Rupprecht-Krafft relationship.¹² However, the pair seem generally to have worked well together as a team. Although there is no space to go into detail here, it is clear from the events of 1914 that Rupprecht was able at times to contribute to the debates between them. He constituted no mere royal figurehead, even if he was not yet the perceptive and skilled general he later became.¹³ For current purposes Krafft and Rupprecht can be treated as a single unit.

⁸Crown Prince William of Germany (1922) *My War Experiences* (London: Hurst and Blackett) p4.

⁹Dieter Storz (2006) ‘“Dieser Stellungen- und Festungskrieg ist scheußlich!” Zu den Kämpfen in Lothringen und in des Vogesen im Sommer 1914’ in Hans Ehlert, Michael Epkenhans, and Gerhard P. Gross, eds *Der Schlieffenplan: Analyse und Dokumente* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh) pp162–204, 166.

¹⁰BKA Nachlass Krafft 145, Diary, 31 July 1914.

¹¹GHA Nachlass KPR 699, Diary, 1–5 August 1914, pp4–5.

¹²The key biographers here are Thomas Müller (2002) *Konrad Krafft von Dellmensingen (1862–1953): Porträt eines bayerischen Offiziers* (Munich: Kommission für bayerische Landesgeschichte); Kurt Sendtner (1954) *Rupprecht von Wittelsbach, Kronprinz von Bayern* (Munich: Richard Pflaum Verlag); Weiss, *Kronprinz Rupprecht*.

¹³Müller, *Konrad Krafft*, pp308–9, 444–5; Sendtner, *Rupprecht von Wittelsbach*, pp242–3; Weiss, *Kronprinz Rupprecht*, pp124–5.

RUPPRECHT, KRAFFT AND EARLY INTERACTIONS AT THE FRONT

The first interesting interaction took place within days of the outbreak of fighting. The Sixth Army was a formation of some 220,000 men deployed in Lorraine. It consisted of eight Bavarian infantry divisions and one cavalry division. Two Prussian divisions, recruited largely from Koblenz and Trier, were also attached. Rupprecht's initial orders were to take overall command of the German left wing and protect the flank of the rest of the German army, sucking in as many French troops as possible to prevent them being sent north. Specifically, if attacked by superior forces they were to attempt to pull the French into a salient between the Rivers Nied and Saar, where they could be trapped, surrounded from Metz and Strasbourg, and destroyed.¹⁴ This was an operational problem which had been intensively studied before the war. The German staff ride of 1904, which had been attended by both Ludendorff and Krafft, had investigated it, as had a purely Bavarian exercise in 1912.¹⁵

The intelligence picture in 1914 was murky in the extreme, but in the days following the French attack on 14 August it seemed, to the *OHL* at least, that this might be Joffre's main effort. At one time, the Germans thought 18 of the 22 active corps in the French army were involved. Rupprecht was less sure. The French advance was far from the reckless onrush of legend. It was, in fact, cautious in the extreme, averaging only five to eight kilometres per day and carried out only after 'painstaking artillery preparation'. The reality was that Castelnau was wary of precisely the trap Moltke was hoping to spring.¹⁶ Rupprecht and Krafft had been arguing with the *OHL* from the beginning that only by attacking would they be able to halt and surround the enemy. When, by

¹⁴GHA Nachlass KPR 476, 'Aufmarschanweisung für Oberkommando der 6. Armee, 2 August 1914', paras 38, 44. Original emphasis.

¹⁵Müller, *Konrad Krafft*, p301.

¹⁶Michel Goya (2004) *La Chair et l'Acier: L'invention de la guerre moderne (1914–1918)* (Paris: Editions Tallandier) p181; Service Historique, État-Major de l'Armée, Ministère de la Guerre (1922), *Les Armées Françaises dans la Grande Guerre*, 34 vols (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale), I, pp183, 230–43.

16 August, the Sixth Army had identified only eight or nine French corps opposite, the two of them began to agitate more actively to be allowed to go on the offensive.¹⁷ This involved a series of telephone calls and face-to-face meetings between 16 and 18 August, with a shifting cast of *OHL* characters, including the Chief of Operations, Lieutenant-Colonel Tappen, along with the Head of the Political Section, Lieutenant-Colonel von Dommes, and the Quartermaster General, Lieutenant-General von Stein. In the various exchanges, Rupprecht pushed ever more strongly for an attack. A sense that the *OHL* was not giving him a free hand to carry out the mission he had been charged with added to his frustration. At least one encounter, with Dommes on 17 August, grew so heated that Dommes forgot his sword and helmet in his hurry to get away.¹⁸ Finally, during the afternoon of 18 August, Krafft spoke again with Stein, who finally told him that the *OHL* would not forbid an attack. Stein informed Krafft that the Sixth Army must do what it considered right, and ‘you must bear the responsibility.’ The decision was that the Sixth and Seventh Armies would attack on 20 August.¹⁹ The official history summarises the back-and-forth thus:

after a lively debate with *OHL*, Crown Prince Rupprecht had decided, despite Generaloberst von Moltke’s previously advocated plans for a further retreat of the Sixth Army, to go over onto the offensive on 20 August to clarify the situation. *OHL* had delegated freedom of action, along with full responsibility, to *AOK* 6.²⁰

¹⁷GHA Nachlass KPR 699, Konrad Krafft von Dellmensingen, ‘Kurzer Überblick über die Vorgänge beim Oberkommando der 6. Armee im August 1914 bis zur Schlacht in Lothringen am 20.8.1914’, pp2, 11–16.

¹⁸GHA Nachlass KPR 699, Diary, 17 August 1914, p36.

¹⁹Rupprecht, *Mein Kriegstagebuch*, I, pp6–21. The account in the published diary follows the manuscript version closely, omitting only the flustering of Dommes. See also Konrad Krafft von Dellmensingen (1925) *Die Führung des Kronprinzen Rupprecht von Bayern auf dem linken deutschen Heeresflügel bis zur Schlacht in Lothringen im August 1914* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler and Sohn) pp17–21.

²⁰The *AOK*, in full *Armeeoberkommando*, were the German (and Austro-Hungarian) army commands. Reichsarchiv (1925) *Der Weltkrieg 1914 bis 1918: Band I Die Grenzschlachten im Westen* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler and Sohn) pp256. See also pp208, 210–11.

In the event, the German attack was a success. ‘Our troops, in their enthusiasm, attacked with flags flying’, wrote Rupprecht.²¹ With the advantage of surprise on their side, they swept all before them and, amongst heavy losses on both sides (some formations losing 40–50% of their strength), within 48 hours the French were back where they had started.²² The official French military history identified it as ‘a serious defeat for our forces’.²³ Moltke was moved to tears by Rupprecht’s success. The Kaiser awarded Rupprecht the Iron Cross, both Second and First Class, and was only dissuaded with difficulty from visiting Rupprecht in person to congratulate him.²⁴ News of further French defeats in the Ardennes on 22 August only increased the general euphoria. Only later did controversy arise, with Rupprecht accused of having attacked too soon in contravention of Moltke’s wishes and Schlieffen’s master-plan, and then of pushing too far. There is no room to explore that issue here. Instead, what is important for this chapter is that this decision node seems to display frustration on both sides culminating in a somewhat petulant abdication of responsibility by an increasingly exasperated *OHL*.

A series of confusing and sometimes contradictory orders emanated from the *OHL* throughout the rest of August and the first days of September. Moltke’s command was famously dysfunctional and he did not survive long, being forced out on 14 September.²⁵ Two things are striking about his replacement, Erich von Falkenhayn, however. First, he changed few of the personnel within his immediate staff. Secondly, he brought no radical new idea to the table, instead trying again to manoeuvre around Joffre’s open flank in a scaled-down re-run of the Schlieffen Plan.²⁶ To that end, the Sixth Army was shifted up from

²¹ GHA Nachlass KPR 699, Diary, 20 August 1914, p48.

²² Ibid.

²³ Service Historique, *Les Armées Françaises*, 1, pp252–60.

²⁴ Rupprecht, *Mein Kriegstagebuch*, I, pp36, 41.

²⁵ Annika Mombauer (2001) *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp266–71.

²⁶ Holger Afflerbach (1996) *Falkenhayn: Politisches Denken und Handeln im Kaiserreich* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg) pp190–3; Robert T. Foley (2005) *German Strategy and the Path to Verdun: Erich von Falkenhayn and the Development of Attrition, 1870–1916* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp92–104.

Lorraine to the area of the River Somme in an effort to outflank the French who would, it was hoped, be pinned along the River Oise.

On 18 September Rupprecht and Krafft met Falkenhayn to receive their orders. This meeting and its aftermath constitutes the second decision node. The instructions Falkenhayn gave them were to use three (later to rise to four) corps to force a decision on the right wing and to secure the German army's right flank. Communications were a problem, however. Everything necessary for transporting and supplying well over half the German army in the West was forced to travel along just one railway line, going via Brussels and Valenciennes. Rupprecht's corps would detrain days apart and then be faced with approach marches to the enemy of up to 100 miles. The question was whether they had time to wait, to concentrate Sixth Army resources and to strike in strength in a few days; or whether the need was to advance as soon as possible with whatever strength and resources were to hand. To Rupprecht, Krafft and Moltke, the first course of action was clearly preferable. Falkenhayn, however, insisted on a piecemeal deployment.

His reasons were twofold. First, there were already signs of French pressure on Kluck's open and vulnerable flank which had to be protected as soon as possible. Secondly, the Germans, as so often in both wars, underestimated enemy resistance and overestimated their own strength. One more push and the French, as it seemed to the German Command, would collapse.²⁷ Although Falkenhayn had promised Rupprecht a free hand, it is hard to see what that could possibly mean when he was committed by the German Command to such a piecemeal deployment. To make matters worse, Joffre's men were also arriving in dribs and drabs like the German reinforcements, but they were arriving more quickly. The predictable result was that time and again over the next couple of weeks, the same pattern played out in what could, perhaps, be called the real First Battle of the Somme. One side or the other would advance, trying to get around the enemy flank. At first, they would encounter only light opposition, mainly from cavalry and artillery. Soon, however, enemy resistance consolidated, the weight of fire increased and it became ever harder to push forward. Eventually both sides went to ground

²⁷ Rupprecht, *Mein Kriegstagebuch*, I, pp26–7; BKA NL Krafft 48 Tagebuch 18.9.–27.10.1914, Diary, 18 September 1914, pp1a–2a; Foley, *German Strategy*, pp99–102; BKA Armeoberkommando 6: Bund 1 Vorl Nr 1 Kriegstagebuch, 2 August 1914–14 March 1915, Sixth Army War Diary, 23 September 1914, p30.

and began to dig themselves in, while to their north, the process began again. This series of scrappy meeting engagements, rolling northwards from the River Somme up to Lens, achieved little beyond an extension of the stalemate northwards.²⁸

CHANGE OF COMMAND: NO CHANGE IN DETERIORATING RELATIONSHIPS

Thus the change of command from Moltke to Falkenhayn eased command relationships between the Sixth Army and the *OHL* only temporarily. Krafft, in particular, accused the *OHL* of a ‘dilettante’ approach. He complained, for instance, that the orders he received on 23 September talked airily of grand objectives with none of the necessary detail. It was, he said, as if the staff officers involved had never had a lesson in how to write orders from Moltke. On 4 October, Krafft noted his opinion that Falkenhayn and Tappen had wasted their time driving around their subordinates’ headquarters, interfering. He saw Falkenhayn as untrustworthy, referring to his ‘scheming character’.²⁹ Rupprecht’s response to new orders arriving on 14 October—the third node in the decision tree—reveals how far relationships between the *OHL* and the command of the Sixth Army had already deteriorated.

The Sixth Army, now operating from Arras up into Flanders, was told it must hold on the defensive from La Bassée through Armentières to Menin. The intention was to lure the British, who were advancing from the west, into a trap around Ypres which the new German Fourth Army, advancing from the north-east, would close:

The mission we’ve been given is analogous to that we had at the beginning of the campaign and it remains as questionable as before, whether the enemy will run into the trap. *This return to Schlieffen’s ideas, under very different circumstances, seems to me very doubtful.* We’re ceding the initiative completely to the enemy.³⁰

²⁸Bayerische Kriegsarchiv (1923) *Die Bayern im Großen Kriege* (Munich: Verlag des Bayerischen Kriegsarchivs) pp111–29.

²⁹BKA NL Krafft 48 Tagebuch 18.9.–27.10.1914, Diary, 23 September 1914, 4 October 1914, 14 October 1914, pp15b–16b, 54a, 91a.

³⁰GHA Nachlass KPR 700, Diary, 14 October 1914, pp303–6. It is interesting to compare with the published diary, as the words in italics feature only in the unpublished diary. See Rupprecht, *Mein Kriegstagebuch*, I, pp206–9.

In the unpublished version of the diary he added the comment that this displayed ‘a *completely amateurish view of the situation*.’³¹ No less than three times did Rupprecht ask to be permitted to take the offensive. Three times, Falkenhayn refused to let him do so. Falkenhayn allegedly told Wenninger ‘even if the Crown Prince of Bavaria stands on his head, he may not attack!’³² When Krafft and Rupprecht discussed protesting this decision to the *OHL*, they decided on balance that they should not. Their position was that it was, after all, the *OHL*’s idea so it was their responsibility.³³ Such an adolescent response may reflect poorly on Rupprecht and Krafft but also, importantly, it indicates how deeply the rot of alienation had already penetrated into relationships in these very early stages of the war.

In the last few days of October, relations between the *OHL* and the Sixth Army deteriorated even further, in something which offers a fourth case study for this exploration of dysfunctionality with the German army. Rumours began circulating that Falkenhayn was criticising Rupprecht’s leadership behind his back. Certainly the *OHL* bypassed Rupprecht by setting up a quasi-independent command under General Fabeck, partly using divisions from the Sixth Army, to plan for a ‘decisive’ attack up the Menin Road. This forced Rupprecht to cancel an assault he had planned for 27 October, and to do so after he had issued an order of the day calling for energetic attacks. The cancellation made him look stupid in the eyes of his men, and unsurprisingly, Rupprecht was furious:

Either I command the army, or I resign. This cannot go on. Falkenhayn lets himself be influenced by every Chinese whisper and jumps to conclusions which are in every way damaging, which weaken the offensive spirit of the men and undermine their trust in their superiors. *If only Falkenhayn would be replaced by Gen. Oberst von Bülow or one of the senior generals.* On the one hand army commands are kept too much in the dark about the general situation, on the other *OHL* interferes in their business, instead of contenting itself, in the manner of the great Moltke, with issuing general directives and leaving the armies to carry out the missions they’ve been assigned.³⁴

³¹ Ibid.

³² Rupprecht, *Mein Kriegstagebuch*, I, p236.

³³ BKA NL Krafft 48 Tagebuch 18.9.–27.10.1914, Diary, 14 October 1914, p87a.

³⁴ GHA Nachlass KPR 700, Diary, 27 October 1914, pp356–7. Again, the words in italics feature only in the unpublished manuscript diary. See, for comparison, Rupprecht, *Mein Kriegstagebuch*, I, pp232–4.

Rupprecht even threatened to drive to see the Kaiser to complain, although there is no evidence he did so. Nor is there evidence that he raised the matter when the Kaiser next visited the Sixth Army Headquarters at the end of the month. What is certain, however, is that from that point on, Rupprecht and Falkenhayn were enemies. The Prince formed part of the Hindenburg Fronde which sought to unseat Falkenhayn in early 1915. Falkenhayn, meanwhile, continued to try to bypass Rupprecht in the chain of command all the way through the Artois battles of the spring of 1915, until at last the Prince was moved to complain to the Kaiser, in May of that year. At this point, Falkenhayn was forced to apologise but he took his revenge by transferring Krafft away to command the Alpenkorps and installing a Prussian colonel as the Sixth Army Chief of Staff.

To summarise, four different manifestations of command friction between the *OHL* and Rupprecht have been highlighted here. On 18 August 1914, the *OHL* apparently devolved decision-making but in fact abdicated responsibility for it. One month later, the *OHL* again in theory gave Rupprecht a free hand, but in practice did not. On 14 October 1914, the *OHL*'s direct intervention was met by the Bavarian royal equivalent of the modern teenager's 'whatever'. And on 27 October 1914 came a final breakdown, one which led to both Rupprecht and Falkenhayn trying to find ways to work around, instead of with and through, the formal chain of command.

CAUSES OF THE FRICTION

There were six factors underlying the friction observed in this relationship. First, the intelligence on which any army relies was consistently problematic in these early stages of the war. Gaining even the most basic picture of enemy actions—never mind enemy intentions—was difficult and time-consuming. German estimates of French strength fluctuated wildly. This was largely the result of external problems. Rupprecht felt throughout this stage of the campaign that the French were better prepared for both cavalry and aerial reconnaissance than his own men were.³⁵

³⁵GHA Nachlass KPR 716, 'Meine Teilnahme am Weltkrieg 1914–18', p17.

Secondly, the institutional arrangements in place were not conducive to easy command. Communications between the *OHL* and Army headquarters were poor, and so were the army facilities. At the Sixth Army headquarters, for instance, the operations staff was crammed into two rooms (one of which doubled as Krafft's bedroom) with only one telephone between them all.³⁶ Things were not much better at the *OHL* in Luxembourg. There was no gas or electric light and the office of the Chief of Operations, Tappen, was in a cupboard.³⁷ A round trip between the Sixth Army and *OHL* headquarters could take six hours. The idea of unifying the command of the Sixth and Seventh Armies under Rupprecht was a piece of improvisation designed to minimise communications friction. In practice, however, the arrangements were jury-rigged at best. No formal mechanism, such as a separate Army Group headquarters, had been planned for. Instead, the Sixth Army staff was simply expected to take on more work. Nor had the two headquarters practised working together. Although the two armies exchanged liaison officers, coordination remained poor. Later, Rupprecht identified this as a fatal mistake.³⁸

The third factor concerned personality. The commander of the Seventh Army, General Josias von Heeringen, was nineteen years senior to Rupprecht, and an ex-War Minister of Prussia. On the amalgamation, von Heeringen resented his subordination to the Crown Prince and consequently repeatedly proved to be difficult to work with.³⁹ According to Hentsch, one of his close collaborators, Moltke had never been up to the strain of command. He was incapable either of detailed work or of sticking to a single line of action. Instead, he was blown off course with every new report from the Front. Moltke's moods, also, were volatile, depending on the latest news, and this temperamental volatility infected

³⁶Rudolf von Xylander (1935) *Deutsche Führung in Lothringen 1914: Wahrheit und Kriegsgeschichte* (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt Verlag) p22.

³⁷Holger H. Herwig (2009) *The Marne, 1914: The Opening of World War I and the Battle that Changed the World* (New York: Random House) p171.

³⁸GHA Nachlass KPR 716, 'Meine Teilnahme am Weltkrieg 1914–18', pp16–17. A similar arrangement on the other wing proved equally unsatisfactory: H. von Kuhl (1920) *Der deutsche Generalstab in Vorberietung und Durchführung des Weltkrieges* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler and Sohn) pp182–3.

³⁹Müller, *Konrad Krafft*, p317.

everyone else nearby.⁴⁰ Rupprecht himself could be extremely prickly. He was also apparently, but unsurprisingly, hard hit by the death of his elder surviving son on 27 August 1914.

One of the topics about which Rupprecht was most prickly was his own position and that of his men as Bavarians in a largely Prussian German army. This played directly into the fourth factor causing friction in the German command: the proliferation of inter-German rivalries. There was definitely a Bavarian inferiority complex *vis à vis* Prussia and a determination—one especially strong in Rupprecht's mind—to prevent the encroachments of Prussian unitarism on the constitutional rights of the throne he expected one day to occupy. This factor substantially predated the Great War. A major controversy relating to this which had begun in 1895 was not resolved until 1908. The dissent was over reforms to the Reich's military code of justice, something which threatened to impinge on the independence of Bavarian military courts. A resolution required considerable compromise, and this mainly on the part of Munich rather than Berlin.⁴¹ Consequently, in the context of war, Rupprecht reacted nervously to any apparent Prussian impingement on Bavarian rights to promote and decorate their own officers, for example.⁴² Social differences also played a part. The aristocratic domination of the officer corps in both Prussia and Bavaria had declined between German unification and the outbreak of the war in 1914. However, the proportion of noble, rather than bourgeois, officers in the Prussian army remained double that in Bavaria: 30–15% in 1913 versus 50 and 25% respectively in 1867–8.⁴³

With these mindsets at work, it was very easy for the members of the Sixth Army to believe that all criticism of their operations was deliberate criticism of them as Bavarians. At times, the politics of regional rivalries directly affected decisions that were made or not made. Rupprecht's appointment is an excellent example. It was a political act along the lines of a *Proporzprinzip*, or proportional representation system; one specifically designed to recognise Bavaria's importance to the war effort. As already seen, Prusso-Bavarian political considerations similarly affected

⁴⁰BKA NL Krafft 48 Tagebuch 18.9.–27.10.1914, Diary, 1 October 1914, p44a.

⁴¹Isabel Hull (1982) *The Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II 1888–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp215–25.

⁴²Weiss, *Kronprinz Rupprecht*, pp140–1.

⁴³Hull, *Entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II*, p190; Weiss, *Kronprinz Rupprecht*, p46.

the choice of Krafft as Chief of Staff. Krafft's replacement in May 1915 by a Prussian, Colonel Gustav Count Lambsdorff, was primarily the result of an ongoing guerrilla war between Rupprecht and Falkenhayn. However, the way it was done, at short notice and without any reference to Munich, seemed designed to emphasise to Rupprecht that his wings as a Bavarian were being clipped.⁴⁴ Lambsdorff was not a success, but there was no question of anyone but another Prussian taking over from him. After October 1914, the Bavarians were never again to fight together as an army in the field. Instead, the different Bavarian corps were distributed throughout the German army.

Political considerations affected all sorts of other decisions, too. When the railway expert Wilhelm Groener suggested that the I Bavarian Army Corps should be one of the two corps sent east to liberate East Prussia, Quartermaster Stein replied: 'That's impossible. We Prussians can't let it be said that East Prussia was liberated by Bavarians'. Another formation was despatched instead.⁴⁵ Equally, political considerations could hold commanders back from speaking out when they wanted to. For instance, on 1 October 1914 Rupprecht was frustrated at the slow pace with which the Fourth Army Corps and the Guards were advancing on Arras. He drew up a sharply-worded order urging greater speed. On reflection, however, he decided not to send it for fear of upsetting his Prussian subordinates, commenting 'If I were a Prussian, I wouldn't have thought twice.'⁴⁶

Of course, Rupprecht was not just any Bavarian, but the heir to the Wittelsbach throne. This introduces a fifth factor, closely related to the last: the influence of dynastic policy on military decision-making. This does not relate directly to the specifics of Bavarian war aims and hopes of annexations in 1914.⁴⁷ Periodically during the war these did become a hot topic, however. Certainly until at least 1918, Rupprecht was no more than an observer of, and occasional backstage meddler in, the formulation of Bavarian war aims and policies. He had little influence on Bavarian policy, largely because he and his father enjoyed such

⁴⁴ GHA Nachlass KPR 702, Diary, 19 May 1915, p808.

⁴⁵ GHA Nachlass KPR 716, Rupprecht, 'Meine Teilnahme am Weltkrieg 1914–18', p22.

⁴⁶ GHA Nachlass KPR 700, Diary, 2 October 1914. The sentence quoted here is, once again, omitted from Rupprecht, *Mein Kriegstagebuch*, I, p180.

⁴⁷ On this point, see Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig (2004) *Decisions for War 1914–1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

a terrible relationship. The relevance to this chapter is that such thinking in Germany made it easy for accusations to be made that Rupprecht allowed his military decision-making to be warped by dynastic ambition. The suggestion was that he attacked too soon in September 1914, before he was ready to take Nancy, meaning that his army was caught in a bloody stalemate. The implication was that he had launched the attack too early and was in too much of a hurry because, as a Bavarian, Rupprecht was eager to secure a victory for himself and for Bavaria. This criticism was subsequently made publicly in 1927, in publications by the Swiss military writer Eugen Bircher. However, it was based on information gleaned from the Prussian army commander General Karl von Einem. Bircher had called the September attack a ‘*dynastische Luxus Schlacht*’ (a battle fought as a dynastic luxury, not for strategic reasons).

In 1928, Hermann Ritter Mertz von Quirnheim, then President of the Reichsarchiv and Hindenburg’s ghostwriter, also gave credit to this perspective on the September attack. From 1914 to 1916, he had been a senior member of Rupprecht’s staff, and it was on this basis he had expressed the view that dynastic considerations affected the command of the Sixth Army as early as August and September 1914. Von Quirnheim’s perspective was that if the *OHL* had lacked faith in Rupprecht, they had been right to do so.⁴⁸ The response from Rupprecht, Krafft and Xylander to such accusations was to defend the military logic of their decisions.⁴⁹ As Markus Pöhlmann has argued, it is not possible entirely to disentangle wartime reality from interwar antagonisms. Much of this interchange of opinions must be seen through the lens of Bavarian post-war distrust of ‘Prussian militarism’ and the Prussian response.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, there was clearly plenty of grit here to get in the way of the smooth running of the motor of German army command.

The sixth, last and most important factor, however, was the nature of the command set-up itself. The German command system was opaque and Protean. Just so long as generals like Rupprecht thought they could bypass the chain of command and go straight to the Kaiser through the

⁴⁸ BKA NL Krafft 188, Correspondence with Reichsarchiv President Mertz von Quirnheim, Letter, Quirnheim to Reichsarchiv Director Dr von Haefen, 20 November 1928, p6.

⁴⁹ Pöhlmann, *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik*, pp284–321, 301–3.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p81.

Immediatsystem, just so long they were less likely to do as they were instructed by the Chief of the General Staff.⁵¹ This undermined the Chief's authority, which was in any case weakened by the fact he that he knew he held his appointment only at the whim (using the word advisedly) of Wilhelm II. As early as 10 August 1914, the head of the Imperial Military Cabinet was openly asking around whether Moltke was up to the job and Falkenhayn knew he was far from the army's candidate for the job.

The need to manage the Kaiser as well as the war was quite clearly too much for Moltke to cope with effectively. This reality must also have proved a serious distraction for his successor, too. More insidiously still, however, the monarch-courtier dynamic characterised not just the relationship between the Kaiser and his Chief of the General Staff but also that between the Chief and his immediate collaborators: those whose future and career depended on him. Men of the so-called '*camarilla*' around Moltke, like Tappen, Hentsch and Dommes, were lucky to survive his fall, and they knew it. The importance of their views, and the seriousness with which men like Rupprecht had to take what they said, inevitably waxed and waned along with that of their influence at the *OHL*. This injected yet more uncertainty into the relationship between the *OHL* and subordinate commands.

CONCLUSION

Annika Mombauer and Robert Foley are right, therefore, that in some ways the organisation of the German army in 1914 reflected Hans-Ulrich Wehler's characterisation of the *Kaiserreich* as an 'authoritarian polycracy'. Despite the theoretical position of the Kaiser as the ultimate authority, there was no clear locus of power. That does not absolve the Kaiser of responsibility for what went wrong, however. As Holger Afflerbach has argued, it was Wilhelm II's influence and personality which allowed such a confusing and uncertain system to continue and indeed to replicate itself as thoroughly as it did in the higher ranks of the army. This was a command system without system, shot through with personal and political considerations, which multiplied the already immense difficulties of decision-making and control on the modern

⁵¹There is an interesting parallel here with Matthew Glencross's chapter in this volume, see Chapter 6.

battlefield. The difficulties observed here in relation to Rupprecht's position in 1914 are extreme, but they were far from unique, especially as other German princes served in the German army. This says much about the importance of the German monarch in undermining the efficiency of the German army.

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‘Hesitant Heir and Reluctant Ruler’: Karl I/IV of Austria-Hungary During the Great War

Christopher Brennan

This chapter explores Karl I/IV, a largely forgotten figure, but essential to an understanding of why the Austro-Hungarian Empire vanished after the Great War, losing the institution of monarchy in the process.¹ Drawing on his own research and the historiography of the last thirty years, it is this author’s case that, while the Habsburg Monarchy had grievous problems, it was neither moribund nor condemned when war broke out in 1914 and when Karl succeeded Franz Joseph as Emperor in late 1916.² Judson recently referred to the ‘generally uninformed

¹The spelling of his name was Carl before his accession to the throne and Karl as Emperor. For the sake of clarity, the spelling Karl will be used throughout.

²Barbara Jelavich (1987) *Modern Austria: Empire and Republic 1800–1986* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Alan Sked (2001) *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815–1918* (London: Longman) first published 1989; F. R. Bridge (1990) *The Habsburg Monarchy Among the Great Powers, 1815–1918* (Leamington Spa: Berg); Bernard

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opinion that the monarchy was doomed', insisting that 'The war was not the proverbial final straw that broke the camel's back. It did not accelerate an inevitable collapse'. Tara Zahra's dust-jacket review summary is even blunter: 'Judson forever banishes images of the Habsburg Empire as a decrepit and declining anachronism'.³ This chapter illuminates Karl's significant role during his country's eclipse.

On the evening of 11 November 1916, Archduke Carl Franz Joseph (later crowned as Karl), heir to the Austrian throne since the assassination of his uncle Franz Ferdinand, boarded a train to return to Vienna from Sighișoara in Transylvanian by the Romanian Front.⁴ He had just heard that the health of his great-uncle, Emperor Franz Joseph, was fast deteriorating.⁵ Ten days later, aged 29, he became Emperor—the youngest potentate among all belligerent nations of the Great War. The new monarch was known as Kaiser Karl I to the Austrians and IV Károly *magyar király* to the Hungarians (King Károly IV). Importantly, he had been uninvolved in the decision for war and thus bore no negative association with a conflict that was already deeply unpopular with his subjects. Essentially, Karl was a largely unknown quantity to those over whom he now ruled. Today, any straw poll in Vienna would reveal that he is little remembered by their descendants.⁶ The demise of Austria-Hungary as

Michel (1991) *La chute de l'Empire Austro-Hongrois* (Paris: Robert Laffont); Zdeněk Kárník (1996) *Socialisté na rozcestí, Habsburk, Masaryk či Šmerál* (Prague: Univerzita Karlova); Mark Cornwall, ed. (2002) *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary, a Multi-National Experiment in Early Twentieth-Century Europe* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press); Steven Beller (2006) *A Concise History of Austria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Fredrik Lindström (2008) *Empire and Identity: Biographies of the Austrian State Problem in the Late Habsburg Empire* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press); Manfred Rauchensteiner (2014) *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914–1918* (Vienna: Böhlau).

³Pieter M. Judson (2016) *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press); Ibid., Tara Zahra, dust-jacket review. Such comment echoes Sked's argument from 1989, see Sked, *Habsburg Empire*. In contrast, note the unenthusiastic depiction of Austria-Hungary as 'The Empire without Qualities' Christopher Clark (2013) *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Penguin).

⁴Sighișoara, now in Romania, was then in Hungary.

⁵Karl Freiherr von Werkmann (1931) *Deutschland als Verbündeter. Kaiser Karls Kampf um den Frieden* (Berlin: Verlag für Kulturpolitik) pp74–5.

⁶Christopher Brennan (2015) 'The Memory of the First World War in the Former Lands of Austria-Hungary' in 'Memorias contemporáneas de la Gran Guerra. Narrativas nacionales 1914–1918', *Comillas Journal of International Relations*, 2, pp140–65. Karl barely

an empire is most commonly explained without reference to Karl.⁷ He is virtually absent from modern Austria's school curricula, and generally omitted or glossed over in the classic international Great War narratives.

Many Habsburg histories stop with Franz Joseph's death. Typically, Bagger wrote in 1927 that Franz Joseph 'was the last of the Caesars', adding: 'the episodic figure of the good-natured but incapable Karl... can easily be disregarded'.⁸ However, these casual dismissals of Karl and his monarchy are unjustified and misleading. After his father's death in 1906 Archduke Karl had known that he would almost certainly, eventually, succeed to the Habsburg titles.⁹ As this chapter will reveal, Karl was no mere cipher but a man with political opinions, an understanding of his empire and its mission, and clear—if not necessarily wise—thoughts on leadership. These ideas had been—sporadically at least—slowly brewing in his ten years as presumptive second-in-line to the throne, even though he had only expected to accede to it twenty or thirty years later.¹⁰

The problem for a proper acknowledgement of Karl and his short, but eventful, reign is that Franz Joseph, having ruled for eleven days shy of 68 years, had come to embody Austria-Hungary in the minds not only of his subjects but of the surrounding European Powers. Domestically, most could not imagine his demise, despite his advanced years and gradual withdrawal from public life. Franz Joseph was widely respected as a

features in the modern memorial narratives of the War in Austria-Hungary's successor states. However, his star shines brightly in the Vatican where, after his 2004 beatification, he is in the process of canonisation.

⁷A. J. P. Taylor (1990) *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809–1918* (London: Penguin); Robert Kann (1950) *The Multinational Empire, Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848–1918*, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press); Arthur J. May (1968) *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy 1914–1918*, 2 vols (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press); Leo Valiani (1973) *The End of Austria-Hungary* (London: Secker and Warburg); Robin Okey (2001) *The Habsburg Monarchy c.1765–1918* (Basingstoke: Macmillan). For all their excellence, these rarely present Karl as anything more than a gauche or powerless witness of his empire's collapse, and discard any agency on his part.

⁸Eugene Bagger (1927) *Franz Joseph. Eine Persönlichkeits-Studie* (Zurich: Amalthea) p7.

⁹Though his uncle Franz Ferdinand was heir apparent until his assassination, his morganatic marriage meant that his children could not inherit the imperial titles.

¹⁰Gordon Brook-Shepherd (1968) *The Last Habsburg* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson) p3.

‘protector by people of all social, linguistic, religious and political groups in the Empire’.¹¹ In reality, his leadership had long been unimaginative and ossified, much like the man himself. But his reputation as a supra-national and social unifying power, serving as a bulwark in the face of his Empire’s multifarious ethnic and class problems, had long led to predictions at home and abroad that, as a polity or entity, Austria-Hungary would not survive his death.¹² In a sense, they were perhaps right, as Austria-Hungary would have changed drastically under Karl I, but the end of the monarchical institution itself was by no means a foregone conclusion.

THE HABSBURG INHERITANCE: ‘A CROWN OF THORNS’?¹³

It is true that the conditions Karl inherited were far worse than pre-1914 but though dismal, they were not yet critical (‘hopeless but not serious’, as the old Austrian joke went). Certainly, 1916 had been *horribilis*.¹⁴ Save for the defeat of Montenegro, disastrous campaigns like the South Tyrol Offensive against the Italians and the Brusilov Offensive launched by Russia had resulted in huge losses of manpower and equipment. This had left the Austro-Hungarian state substantially dependent upon German military support. Signalling this, in mid-September 1916 a Joint High Command had been established between the two Empires, with German Emperor Wilhelm II as its official head.¹⁵ The Central Powers, denied their anticipated early victories, faced considerable challenges at the start of Karl’s reign. But again this cannot be taken too far: despite

¹¹Judson, *Habsburg Empire*, p417.

¹²Christopher Brennan (2012) ‘Reforming Austria-Hungary: Beyond His Control or Beyond His Capacity? The Domestic Policies of Emperor Karl I: November 1916–May 1917’ (Unpublished PhD, LSE, University of London) p105.

¹³Friedrich Funder (1952) *Vom Gestern ins Heute. Aus dem Kaiserreich in die Republik* (Vienna: Herold-Verlag) p496; Fritz Fellner, and Doris Corradini, eds (2011) *Schicksalsjahre Österreichs 1869–1936: Die Erinnerungen und Tagebücher Josef Redlichs*, 3 vols (Vienna: Böhlau) I, 27 January 1906, p177. Franz Ferdinand had used this expression during his own heirship.

¹⁴Jean-Paul Bled (2014) *L’agonie d’une monarchie. Autriche-Hongrie 1914–1920* (Paris: Tallandier) Chapter VII.

¹⁵Brennan, ‘Karl I’, p50. As heir, Karl was annoyed but powerless to contest this arrangement.

appalling losses, Austria-Hungary's army nevertheless remained an able military force.¹⁶

Domestically, matters were also problematic. In parts of the Empire, the food situation was catastrophic; yet in Hungary, for instance, this was not the case. However, there was no spirit of sharing out either resources or burdens.¹⁷ This led to tension and protests, where long-established ethnic resentments played a part alongside more predictable social conflicts which began 'to have an effect on the best elements of the population'.¹⁸ Government reactions approaching Karl's accession had been distinguished by a determination to crush rebellion and remove leading dissident figures, regardless of actual involvement in anti-government activities. The resulting indiscriminate persecution was undertaken despite the warnings of much of the bureaucracy and various politicians, and even more tellingly, despite the disapproval of both Emperor and heir.¹⁹

Despite the conflict's dragging on and consequent material deprivations, gradually alienated patriots, inflamed rebels, added to the general war-weariness, stoked national tensions, spurred on centrifugal forces and dented the ruling house's prestige.²⁰ The morale of the population was understandably low. In November 1916, a monthly report of intercepted correspondence at the Austro-Swiss border painted a mixed but mostly downbeat picture of the popular mood and identified an overwhelming desire for the war to end, even among 90 per cent of the stalwart Austrian German population.²¹ A further complication was that various groups within Austria-Hungary sought to exploit the situation to further their agendas. Austro-German nationalists (particularly from Bohemia) tried to take advantage of the lack of functioning democratic platforms to promote their claims for ethnic, cultural and linguistic German dominance. Their 'internal war aims' caused consternation, fear and anger among the non-German nationalities of Austria, and fundamentally compromised the country's viability as a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural entity. What would have been a challenging task

¹⁶Ibid., pp149–50.

¹⁷Ibid., pp87–9.

¹⁸Général Max Ronge (1932) *Espionage. Douze années au Service des Renseignements* (Paris: Payot) p179.

¹⁹Brennan, 'Karl I', pp50–68.

²⁰Ibid., pp96–7.

²¹Kriegsarchiv (KA), Vienna, *Kriegsüberwachungsamt* (KÜA), Karton 169, 90747.

for any new emperor was especially gargantuan for one as politically naïve as Karl.²² But for now, the *Burgfrieden*, or political truce, which had commenced at the start of the hostilities, still prevailed (helped by the pre-war closures of parliament in Vienna and provincial diet in Bohemia.)

PREPARATION FOR THE THRONE: A WASTED HEIRSHIP?

Despite being second in line to the throne, Karl had remained in the shadows and largely unknown to both the imperial court and the general public before 1914.²³ Effectively this meant he had had no court-led preparation for his role. Curiously, even with the outbreak of war, no relevant role had been found for the new heir apparent. The implications were not lost on everyone. Karl's childhood friend and the future Chief of his Private Office, Count Arthur Polzer-Hoditz, felt compelled to write to Karl's former tutor Count Georg Wallis to voice alarm in November 1914: 'He must enter the arena, he must be seen and recognised as the future ruler, he must be felt; for he is the heir!'.²⁴ However, Franz Joseph ignored the need for a visible, preparatory and useful role, probably wishing to avoid any repeat of his feuds with Franz Ferdinand. Thus, Karl remained almost totally ignorant of the inner workings of statecraft, politics and bureaucracy and did not seek to change this. His personal tastes were military. He would gladly have taken supreme command of the army in 1914, but he was considered too young and inexperienced given that any military reverse would damage him and the dynasty irremediably before he even acceded to the throne.²⁵

After the outbreak of war, Karl left for what was to prove an unproductive and unfulfilling posting to the Army High Command (the *Armeeoberkommando*, or AOK) in Teschen, which also stalled his minimal education in the affairs of state.²⁶ What little political and diplomatic

²²Brennan, 'Karl I', pp68–77.

²³KA, *Personalunterlagen, Qualifikationslisten* (PQ), Erzherzog Karl (sic) Franz Joseph; Brennan, pp16–9.

²⁴KA, *Nachlass Polzer-Hoditz* (NPH) B/1499, Polzer to Wallis, 5 November 1914, pp21–3.

²⁵Brennan, 'Karl I', pp19–48; Rauchensteiner, *Habsburg Monarchy*, p153.

²⁶Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf (1921–1925) *Aus meiner Dienstzeit 1906–1918*, 5 vols (Vienna: Rikola Verlag) IV, p172. Teschen is nowadays divided between Cieszyn in Poland and Český Těšín in the Czech Republic.

instruction Karl had received upon his prior sojourns in Vienna had, by his own admission, taught him little. Not until March 1915 did Karl sit in on his first Crown Council.²⁷ In July 1915, Franz Joseph named his great-nephew as his personal representative on the Front, offering him an opportunity to earn a name for himself and partake in army life. This did have valuable consequences. Karl eagerly took up the role, regularly inspecting the troops, meeting the men and handing out decorations. As heir, he travelled to the various Fronts ten times in 1915 and sixteen in 1916, never shrinking from entering the trenches and shelters to meet the soldiers. Partly as a result of this, he also gained increased access to political and diplomatic information from mid-1915 onwards.²⁸

Clearly, though, Karl's training and preparation for his future position were wanting, and he himself was not blameless in this. He thought of himself primarily as a soldier, considering military duties superior to civilian ones.²⁹ While he accepted that, as heir, he could not afford to be killed or made prisoner, he had still hoped for a frontline posting, feeling duty-bound to take an active role in the conflict. When, in March 1916, he was posted to the Italian Front, he managed to distinguish himself in battle, earning promotion, rising by November 1916 to the ranks of Colonel General and Grand Admiral.³⁰

As this suggests, for all his limitations, Karl could be cool-headed, pragmatic, flexible, perceptive and eager to learn. His views could often be contradictory, but he was still maturing. His greatest weakness as noted by contemporaries was his tendency to agree with the interlocutor before him.³¹ As mentioned previously, Karl was not without political understanding and opinions. A detailed memorandum written in late 1914 (when he was still confident of victory) reveals much about his outlook.³² His vision was not especially sophisticated, involving a revival of

²⁷Brennan, 'Karl I', pp20–1.

²⁸Brennan, 'Karl I', pp22–3; Bled, *L'agonie*, pp250–1.

²⁹Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Vienna, *Ministerium des Äußern (MdÄ)*, *Politisches Archiv (PA)* I. Allgemeines, K504, Austro-Hungarian diplomat Kajetan von Mérey to Foreign Minister Count Ottokar Czernin, 27 December 1917.

³⁰Brennan, 'Karl I', pp16, 20, 23, 43–4.

³¹*Ibid.*, p46.

³²The whole memorandum is reproduced in Elisabeth Kovács, ed. (2004) *Untergang oder Rettung der Donaumonarchie?* 2 vols, II, *Politische Dokumente zu Kaiser und König Karl I. (IV.) aus Internationalen Archiven* (Vienna: Böhlau) 3, *sine loco*, 13 October 1914–1924 December 1914, pp49–86. For an analysis of it, see Brennan, 'Karl I', pp36–42.

the Three Emperors' Alliance with Germany and Russia on the basis that an alliance with Germany alone would condemn his Empire to becoming a 'larger Bavaria', which would disaffect the Slavs within it. His ambition was for an alliance where pan-Germanism and pan-Slavism would somehow neutralise each other. In all his thinking, Germany remained Austria-Hungary's main ally, showing that he recognised his country's diplomatic isolation and understood the calamitous implications of a collapse of the alliance. Domestically, Karl, like his murdered uncle, was a relentless foe of Dualism, the so-called *Ausgleich* between Austria and Hungary, dubbing it the 'disastrous Compromise of 1867'. Karl made detailed comments on the ethnic and cultural nuances of his future inheritance, but in ways that showed his failure to appreciate the complexities involved, most notably in the Bohemian lands.³³ He supported the fight against nationalism, but simultaneously wished to 'grant each nation within Austria the greatest possible national autonomy compatible with the unity of the Empire'.

These plans were already somewhat outdated by late 1914, and in 1916 Karl remained unaware of the most recent ideas and projects for reforming Austria-Hungary. Such national autonomy as he envisaged was cultural, economic and linguistic rather than political, and involved bolstering the dynasty and the unitary state by attenuating ethnic tensions in order to thwart nationalist and irredentist tendencies. Karl did, however, understand that the Habsburg monarchs had a supranational mission. His country was a 'large conglomerate of nations' whose survival as a Great Power required a 'great, common goal'. He conceded that Austria-Hungary's future belonged to Slavdom but his views contained at their root an unalterable German bias. Ultimately, the experience of war exerted a decisive influence on Karl's *Weltanschauung*, in that he recognised that a degree of democratisation and liberalisation was inevitable.³⁴ His immediate priorities, however, were shaped by his

³³Jan Galandauer (1986) *Bohumír Šmeral 1914–1941* (Prague: Nakladatelství Svoboda) pp101–3; Brennan, 'Karl I', p38. The Czech state-rights dogma was based on the insistence that the historic Czech state (the lands of the Crown of Saint Wenceslas: Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia) had never ceased to exist and that its affiliation to the remainder of the Empire rested on an agreement between its representatives and the monarch.

³⁴*Tagebücher Redlichs*, II, pp154–5; HHStA, *Nachlass Baernreither* (NB), K6, 15 March 1916.

longing for peace, which most of his subjects shared.³⁵ Thus despite his shortcomings and lack of preparation, and the sombre circumstances surrounding his accession, Karl was, rightly, not entirely fatalistic about his prospects as monarch and his Empire's future.³⁶

THE NEW RULER—GLIMMERS OF HOPE

If the overall scenario for Austria-Hungary was indeed bleak, it was not without hope. The Central Powers (mainly thanks to Germany) had occupied Russian Poland; Serbia (almost forgotten despite being at the root of the conflict) had been beaten and occupied in late 1915, while Montenegro and Romania (despite having only entered the war in August 1916) had been overwhelmed. This latter victory gave the Dual Monarchy hope of overcoming part of its domestic crisis by acquiring considerable food supplies from this new territory.³⁷ Moreover, Austria-Hungary had withstood the late-1916 Italian attacks and could enjoy the respite provided by winter.

In the Empire itself, despite the tensions, there was plentiful evidence indicating substantial patriotism and dynastic loyalty on the part even of 'suspect' nationalities such as the Czechs.³⁸ Shortly after his appointment in early 1915, the new Governor of Bohemia Count Max von Coudenhove wrote: 'It is beyond any doubt that the majority of the Czech population of the Empire is completely loyally minded'.³⁹ Several commanders testified that 'the Czech peasant is generally a brave, reliable soldier, who is wholly removed from the endeavours to tear the Bohemian lands away'.⁴⁰ Faithfulness to the Habsburgs seemed,

³⁵Theodor Ritter von Zeynek (2009) *Ein Offizier im Generalstabskorps erinnert sich*, ed. Peter Broucek (Vienna: Böhlau) p253; Werkmann, *Kaiser Karls Kampf*, p22.

³⁶Brennan, 'Karl I', pp48–9.

³⁷*Neue Freie Presse, Morgenblatt (NFP)* pp3–4.

³⁸Ivan Šedivý (1999) 'České loajální projevy 1914–1918', *Český časopis historický* 97(2) pp293–309.

³⁹Allgemeines Verwaltungsarchiv (AVA), Vienna, *Ministerratspräsidium (MRP)* K257, 3861, 26 June 1915.

⁴⁰KA, *Militärkanzlei Seiner Majestät (MKSM)* K1240, 28-3/1-4, AOK to Head of the Military Chancellery Baron Arthur von Bolfras, 24 June 1916: Report on the Czechs, 4 June 1916.

superficially at least, undisturbed. Overall, the nationalities—even including some Italian and Serb subjects of Austria-Hungary—still envisaged their future within the Habsburg Monarchy, and were eager to show loyalty, in order to secure their respective positions in the Empire’s inevitable wartime or post-war reorganisation.⁴¹

Personally, the new Emperor was not unqualified to occupy his position successfully. Almost all who had met him as heir had noted his friendliness, personal appeal and lack of pretence, as well as his eagerness, sincerity and honourable intentions.⁴² German General Hans von Seeckt commended his charm and his open, natural manner with subordinates and strangers.⁴³ The veteran Bohemian German politician Baernreither found him ‘friendly, open, lively, fresh’ and a man ‘very thirsty for knowledge, intelligent’, as well as being interested in the big questions of government, and filled with a tremendous sense of duty.⁴⁴ Franz Joseph’s reluctance to involve his heir in the ruling process had had more to do with his own inflexibility than with his opinion of Karl.⁴⁵ He valued his great-nephew and described him as ‘a brave and splendid young man’ who brought him ‘much joy’, adding: ‘One can have complete confidence in him’.⁴⁶

Perhaps most importantly, Karl’s room for manoeuvre as Emperor-King was actually considerable, given his constitutional powers. Despite the parliaments in Vienna and Budapest, and the provincial Crownland Diets, the 1867 reconstitution of the Empire as Austria-Hungary had created a constitutional monarchy in which the monarch had merely consented to surrender a smidgen of his autocratic power as an act of grace. There remained an accompanying unspoken understanding that the monarch could also reverse that surrender. In contrast to parliamentary monarchy, where the monarch’s rights are constitutionally curbed, Austria-Hungary’s constitution was granted from above, by the Emperor

⁴¹Brennan, ‘Karl I’, pp50–68, 89–93, 97–100.

⁴²Ibid., pp24–9.

⁴³Hans von Seeckt (1938) *Aus meinem Leben 1866–1917*, ed. Friedrich Rabenau (Leipzig: Hase-Kochler Verlag) pp400, 460.

⁴⁴*Tagebücher Redlichs*, II, p152; NB, K6, 15 March 1916.

⁴⁵Brennan, ‘Karl I’, pp30–1.

⁴⁶*Österreichs Illustrierte Zeitung, Kaiser-Huldigungsnummer*, p8; Brook-Shepherd, *The Last Habsburg*, p46.

himself.⁴⁷ As Rauchberg pointed out in 1911, 'Through the transition from absolutism to constitutionalism, the central position of power of the monarch and the role of the dynasty has only become stronger.' The result was a constitutional monarchy 'with embedded particles of absolutism and feudalism', in effect an *Obrigkeitsstaat*—an authoritarian state. The legitimising focus of the state idea was the dynasty, and political rule was centralising and bureaucratic. To quote Rauchberg again, 'The rights of the monarch could not be further diminished, as they derived from God'.⁴⁸ In practice, the Emperor led the army, as supreme commander; the soldier wore the Emperor's uniform. He concluded treaties, decided on war and peace, directed foreign policy. Justice was dispensed in his name and he sanctioned the laws. The Emperor also appointed and dismissed the government, summoned parliament and dismissed it.⁴⁹ Karl was therefore neither powerless nor helpless, and he would show no restraint or compunction in using his rights. He was no nonentity, and never a mere figurehead.

AUSPICIUM MELIORIS Aevi?

The accession of Karl made a great impression on the peoples of Austria-Hungary, largely because it appeared to bring the prospect of peace closer.⁵⁰ There had been an outpouring of public mourning for Franz Joseph, but beneath the (often sincere) grief, there lay lethargy.⁵¹ According to the German Ambassador, Franz Joseph's standing, like the dynasty's, had plummeted since 1914.⁵² The German journalist Paul Goldmann wrote that 'the popularity of the Emperor, the love and

⁴⁷ Heinrich Rauchberg (1911) *Österreichische Bürgerkunde*, 11th Edn (Vienna: Verlag von F. Tempsky) p33.

⁴⁸ Rauchberg, *Österreichische*, p77.

⁴⁹ Ernst Hanisch (1994) *Österreichische Geschichte 1890–1990. Der Lange Schatten des Staates. Österreichische Gesellschaftsgeschichte im 20. Jahrhunderte*, ed. Wolfram Herwig (Vienna: Ueberreuter) p209.

⁵⁰ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp92–3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp94–7.

⁵² Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (PAAA), Berlin, *Österreich 70, Allgemeine Angelegenheiten Österreichs (Ö70)*, 50, German Ambassador to Vienna Heinrich von Tschirschky to German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg 50, Heinrich von Tschirschky to Bethmann, 18 December 1914.

adoration for the person of the venerable monarch [...] are essentially gone'.⁵³ Though allowance must be made for exaggerations by hostile or short-sighted observers, these comments signalled that Franz Joseph and his House had lost much of the popular goodwill which they had carefully constructed over previous decades.

The persona of the new Emperor-King was, however, largely free from this negativity, probably thanks to his discretion and comparative anonymity. Press portrayals were characteristically positive, highlighting Karl's popularity, generosity and composure. His humility, bonhomie, kindness and courage were justly emphasised alongside his battlefield actions. These provided the most exploitable publicity, enabling tales highlighting his joviality, linguistic ability and common touch, while his active duty had established him as 'a successful army leader and war hero'. At the outset, Karl was easy to endorse and popularise, being uncontroversial, affable, youthful and surrounded by a picturesque family—on the occasion of Franz Joseph's funeral, Karl, Zita and particularly the young Crown Prince Otto made a touching impression on the crowd. The general population thus legitimately hoped for renewal and recovery.

Political and intellectual circles expected fundamental changes, including a new set of officials at court and, possibly, a reshaping of relations with Germany. Predictably, each nation of the Empire hoped that the new Emperor would satisfy their respective (and most often mutually incompatible) aspirations. Largely unaware of Karl's inclinations and beliefs, national representatives trod carefully. They sought to curry favour with him by stressing their boundless loyalty while also underlining the inalienable rights which, they claimed, his predecessor had granted them. Helped by his youth, charm and neutrality, Karl enjoyed popular goodwill, albeit bound up with considerable expectations.⁵⁴

A STUTTERING START

One early problem facing Karl was that, because he was unacquainted with potential alternatives, he had little choice but to accept the advice of confidantes such as Prince Konrad zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst to keep the existing ministers and court dignitaries, at least initially.

⁵³Ibid.; *Österreich 95 Geheim, Die Beziehungen Österreichs zu Deutschland* (Ö95G) 4, Goldmann Report, 26 September 1916.

⁵⁴Brennan, 'Karl I', pp97–100, 105.

On the day his hurriedly written accession manifesto, with its vague promises and hopes of peace (and distinct lack of reforming zeal), was published, Karl also took the portentous decision to be crowned King in Budapest. The shrewd and charismatic Hungarian Prime Minister István Tisza had appeared at Schönbrunn Palace the morning following Franz Joseph's death, convincing Karl of the necessity of a Hungarian coronation. Tisza swayed Karl by assuring him that it was a first step towards peace, which explains the speed with which the ceremony took place, on 30 December 1916.⁵⁵ True, until he took the coronation oath, Karl could sanction no Hungarian laws. But it involved his swearing a binding religious oath to maintain the constitution and the integrity of the lands of the Crown of Saint Stephen, which made him reliant on Hungary's gentry-dominated parliament, effectively thwarting any reform. Problematically for the state's future, the pious and 'legalistic from head to toe' Karl would never consider perjuring himself by reneging on his oath.⁵⁶ But having thus voided his own power in Hungary, Karl was dependent on the inflexible Magyars themselves to put their feudal, retrograde house in order.

When Karl did act, his lack of experience and political insight hindered him. One of his first independent actions was to dismiss the experienced Prime Minister, Ernest von Koerber. After almost a month in power, and surrounded by political machinations, Karl's lack of a working government had become an embarrassment, making the matter urgent.⁵⁷ For want of other options, Karl relied on two men, Prince Konrad zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst and Count Ottokar Czernin von und zu Chudenitz for political direction. The former was Karl's real guiding spirit and 'one of the few people who had been intimate with the Emperor from his early days'.⁵⁸ Yet for all his charm and empathy, Hohenlohe was not held in high intellectual esteem. Many considered him a downright fool and egotist. Karl was unmindful of his reputation, however, and valued him highly.⁵⁹ Czernin, a diplomat and aristocrat in the Bohemian Diet, had been singled out by Karl because of his desire

⁵⁵Ibid., pp107–9.

⁵⁶Max Schiavon (2011) *L'Autriche-Hongrie dans la Première Guerre mondiale. La Fin d'un Empire* (Saint-Cloud: SOTECA) p147.

⁵⁷Brennan, 'Karl I', pp106–30.

⁵⁸Count Arthur Polzer-Hoditz (1930) *The Emperor Karl* (London: Putnam) p117.

⁵⁹Brennan, 'Karl I', pp140–2.

for a rapid peace. In August 1916, the then heir had received a copy of Czernin's memorandum 'Thoughts on Ending the War', which predicted the eventual defeat of the Central Powers, and urged strategies which might extract Austria-Hungary unscathed from the conflict.⁶⁰

Yet this seemingly sensible choice had unfortunate ramifications, especially domestically. Like Hohenlohe, Czernin was a pro-German, authoritarian meddler, averse to compromise. The distinguished Austrian historian Robert A. Kann later summarised one of Czernin's pre-war reform plans for the country as a 'Wagnerian death raving, intoned by an emotionally overcharged, political Don Quixote'.⁶¹ Despite a superficial dazzle and guile, Czernin was also regrettably neurotic, cynical, arrogant and dilettantish, besides being close to the intractable Tisza and a firm supporter of Dualism.⁶² Czernin and Hohenlohe inspired Karl's appointment, on 19 December, of Count Heinrich Clam-Martinic at the helm of the new administration. Practically unknown nationwide, Clam was a member of the historically Czech-friendly Conservative Landowners in the Bohemian Diet but his recent experience in the trenches had resulted in a radical turnaround in his views on Czech reliability. Once this became known, he could no longer wield any influence over the Czechs. Unfortunately, Karl probably imagined Clam to be a supranational federalist and, not being intimately acquainted with Bohemian politics, overlooked his volte-face's implications.⁶³

Unusually, the government immediately announced its programme, including the creation of the preconditions for the reopening of parliament (long-standing Austro-German demands to be implemented by decree, or *octroi*, thus bypassing the Lower House), the renewal of the economic *Ausgleich* (compromise) with Hungary and the initiation of closer economic ties with Germany.⁶⁴ As the German-language Bohemian newspaper, the *Prager Tagblatt*, pointed out enthusiastically, this was an 'outspokenly pro-German course', and the Czechs were understandably horrified. The Czech Union's efforts to display

⁶⁰Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, p124.

⁶¹Robert Kann (1956) 'Count Ottokar Czernin and Archduke Francis Ferdinand', *Journal of Central European Affairs*, XVI(2) pp119, 130–1, 139, 144.

⁶²Brennan, 'Karl I', pp139–40.

⁶³*Ibid.*, pp130–3.

⁶⁴*NFPM*, p3. For details of these German 'internal war aims' see Brennan, 'Karl I', pp68–84.

its loyalty now seemed entirely in vain and the disparate organisation closed ranks.⁶⁵ Personally, Karl felt no enmity towards the Czechs, having already commuted the death sentences for treason of two prominent Czech politicians, Karel Kramář and Alois Rašín. But with the prospect of a Czecho-German compromise non-existent by 1916, he took the safest option and sided with the confident, dominant (and increasingly chauvinistic and anti-Slav) Germans in his Empire.⁶⁶

Karl's wavering first weeks in power underlined the fact that, despite over two years as heir, he had come to the throne unprepared for the realities facing him. He was deficient in political acumen, possessed little eye for detail, had no concrete plans for domestic reform and no obvious candidates to enforce what few policies he had in mind. Ironically, he had room for manoeuvre and could easily have banged his fists on the table to advance a reformist agenda. But Karl's concerns were almost entirely focused on army leadership and an honourable peace. Typically, when pressed on the increasingly tense domestic situation, Karl repeatedly resorted to the same platitude: 'All peoples must feel happy and at home in Austria'.⁶⁷

WAR AND PEACE

Karl's priority was peace, but his position from the start was complex and seemingly intractable.⁶⁸ He had been disillusioned not only by the attempts of the Central Powers to open peace negotiations via the neutral European states in December 1916, but also by the predictable Entente dismissal of this move.⁶⁹ Unsurprisingly, Karl had promptly assumed supreme command of the Imperial and Royal Army on 2 December.⁷⁰ Soured by his experience among the military leadership,

⁶⁵ *Prager Tagblatt, Morgen-Ausgabe*, 11 December 1916; *Abend-Ausgabe*, 22 December 1916.

⁶⁶ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp137–8; Zdeněk V. Tobolka (2008) *Můj deník z první světové války*, ed. Martin Kučera (Prague: Univerzita Karlova) pp226–7; *Tagebücher Redlichs*, II, p250.

⁶⁷ NB, K7, 6 February 1917; 10 March 1917.

⁶⁸ Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, p224.

⁶⁹ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp47–48.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p232; Arthur Freiherr Arz von Straussenburg (1924) *Zur Geschichte des Grossen Krieges 1914–1918. Aufzeichnungen* (Vienna: Rikola) p132.

he moved the Army High Command to Baden (just outside Vienna) and imposed a new, more 'moral' code of conduct. He also, on 1 March 1917, sacked the overbearing, meddling Conrad as Chief of General Staff and installed the obedient and apolitical Arthur Arz von Straussenburg instead.⁷¹

Karl (rightly) doubted the sincerity of Berlin's desire for peace, and had already looked into other channels. But in an early public message to his troops, he also expressed his frustration by condemning the Allies: 'They are rebuffing, without even knowing our conditions, the hand we held out to them... Blame lies only with our enemies.'⁷² Despite this, Karl made a gesture often dismissed as outdated dynastic diplomacy, but which also underlined his faith in the monarchical system, or what the British King, Edward VII, had labelled the 'Trade Union of Kings'. He entreated his mother-in-law, Maria Antonia the Dowager Duchess of Parma, to contact her sons Sixtus and Xavier in Belgium. Two letters were sent, dated 5 and 14 December 1916.⁷³ Karl seems to have genuinely believed that Austria-Hungary's role would be to bring about a compromise between the warring powers. These initial hopes were all but shattered by Germany's resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare on 1 February 1917. Though Karl vehemently objected to this strategy, Berlin had presented him with a *fait accompli*, which he officially recognised, despondently, during a Crown Council on 24 January. Washington instantly broke off diplomatic relations with Berlin, but the American Ambassador assured Karl that his country would not do so with Vienna.⁷⁴

Meanwhile, Karl's mother-in-law met her sons covertly in Switzerland and informed them that he wished to see them urgently. A month later, having consulted with the French government, the brothers travelled incognito to Austria, and were received by Karl in Laxenburg on 23 March. The visibly weary Emperor apparently declared immediately: 'We must definitely make peace—I want it at all costs'.⁷⁵ In fact, the price Karl was willing to pay had limits, especially regarding cessions of land

⁷¹ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp134–4, 145.

⁷² *NFPM*, 7 January 1917, p1.

⁷³ Prince Sixte de Bourbon (1920) *L'offre de paix séparée de l'Autriche (5 décembre 1916–12 octobre 1917)* (Paris: Plon) pp38, 43.

⁷⁴ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp155–7.

⁷⁵ Sixte, *L'offre de paix*, pp83–4.

to Italy. Ironically, the potential price might have been modest, given the chaos in Russia. The Tsar's abdication in favour of a provisional government had certainly made the Allies jittery. One thing that Sixtus made implacably clear, however, was that Austria-Hungary would have to break with Germany if she were to achieve peace. The Entente categorically refused to negotiate with Berlin. Wishing to keep the mission going, Karl disingenuously assured Sixtus that he would sign a separate peace with the Allies if Germany could not be restrained. On the evening of 24 March, Karl gave his brother-in-law the infamous 'Sixtus Letter' for French President Raymond Poincaré in which he vowed to use all possible means to convince Germany of France's 'just claims' to Alsace-Lorraine.⁷⁶ Although the exact authorship of the letter subsequently became controversial, Karl undoubtedly wrote it, probably with the help of Sixtus, and possibly of his wife, Zita. Despite Bourbon-Parma claims to the contrary, it is also highly implausible that Czernin was aware of the final wording.⁷⁷

Karl's wishful thinking undoubtedly convinced him that he had made significant advances towards mediation of a general peace. However, Sixtus was only working towards a separate agreement with Austria-Hungary. Karl was fundamentally unwilling to entertain concessions to Italy and of separation from Germany, whereas these were *sine qua non* for the Allies. Just as Franco-British pleas for compromise and concessions fell on deaf Italian ears, so too did Austria-Hungary's on German ones. After two inconclusive Austro-German meetings in Vienna and Berlin in mid- and late March 1917, Karl launched his grandest and most desperate bid to twist Berlin's arm. On 3 April, a vast delegation including the imperial couple, Czernin, Arz and Polzer (head of Karl's Private Office since February) arrived at German Headquarters in Homburg.⁷⁸ The trip was a fiasco. When Czernin suggested giving both Congress Poland (i.e. Russian Poland) and Galicia to Germany in exchange for its surrender of Alsace-Lorraine to France, Bethmann, Hindenburg and Ludendorff were aghast. Moreover, they were wholly unmoved by the

⁷⁶Ibid., pp94, 97; Brennan, 'Karl I', pp169–71.

⁷⁷Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, p234; Brook-Shepherd, *Last Habsburg*, p71; Sixte, *L'offre de paix*, pp94–5; NB, K7, 16.4.1918; Bled, *L'agonie*, p274. It has also been suggested that the writer was the Czech academic, orientalist and explorer Alois Musil.

⁷⁸Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, p241.

Austrians' scaremongering and increasingly exasperated by their fatalism and hypocrisy (for instance, begging for peace while eyeing up annexations).⁷⁹ Incomprehensibly, Karl himself, contradicting his own directives to his men to paint everything as blackly as possible, gravely undermined his minister. He downplayed Czernin's apocalyptic depictions of the situation within Austria-Hungary. In response to a question from Wilhelm, he replied: 'Count Czernin always exaggerates.'⁸⁰ The best explanation is that Karl was influenced by the early quashing of his Polish proposal, combined with his own unwillingness (or inability) to stand up to either the German High Command or Wilhelm. Thus he dared not raise Alsace-Lorraine, despite his promise to Sixtus. Karl and his retinue left Homburg empty-handed and dejected.⁸¹

THE WORLD CHANGES: REVOLUTION IN RUSSIA AND AMERICA'S ENTRY INTO THE WAR

Karl's dejection deepened with the United States' declaration of war on Germany on 6 April, and the subsequent cutting of Vienna's diplomatic ties with Washington.⁸² This was particularly ominous for Austria-Hungary, since Wilson had announced that the USA would 'fight... for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations'.⁸³ The tone of the American intervention appeared to threaten the existence of the Dual Monarchy, and added to the mid-January statement of war aims from the Allies, with its passage on 'the liberation of Italians, Slavs, Romanians and Czechoslovaks from foreign rule'.⁸⁴ In addition, in April 1917, Russia vowed to continue the fight, and her Foreign Minister Pavel Milyukov endorsed Wilson's war aims, demanding the full

⁷⁹Werkmann, *Kaiser Karl*, p222. The Germans could not sensibly reconcile Czernin's refusal to make territorial concessions to Italy with his pleas for an immediate peace.

⁸⁰August von Cramon (1920) *Unser österreichisch-ungarischer Bundesgenosse im Weltkriege. Erinnerungen aus meiner vierjährigen Tätigkeit als bevollmächtigter deutscher General beim k.u.k. Armeecorpskommando* (Berlin: E. S. Mittler und Sohn).

⁸¹Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, p243; Werkmann, *Kaiser Karls Kampf*, p222; Brennan, pp181–4.

⁸²*Fremden-Blatt, Abend-Ausgabe*, 10 April 1917.

⁸³*Neue Freie Presse, Abendblatt (NPPA)*, 7 April 1917.

⁸⁴Brennan, 'Karl I', pp149–50.

reorganisation of Austria-Hungary—her destruction, effectively.⁸⁵ Russia represented an insoluble conundrum for Austria-Hungary. Events there held out the prospect of Russia laying down arms (despite Milyukov's stridently anti-German and belligerent promises), but the promotion of self-determination of nations undermined the basis of the Dual Monarchy. Furthermore, the Revolution had revealed the limits of the endurance of an indigent, war-weary and famished lower class.

Karl was terrified to see that the all-powerful Tsar had been toppled so easily and swiftly, and feared contamination for his own Empire, given the scarcity of foodstuffs and other basic necessities. Nervously, he inquired: 'Is such a thing possible here?'⁸⁶ Shortages now affected all but the highly privileged and the self-sufficient, but despite this, no popular revolt occurred. The Vienna Police Department, for instance, noted that patriotic feelings remained well-preserved and that the population did not oppose the continuation of the war per se, merely the current unfair division of hardships. In the industrial powder keg of Bohemia, and especially in the working-class districts of Prague, demonstrations did occasionally spill over into brutality and looting, but they were not revolutionary in spirit. The Police Department reported that, to the hungry masses there, events in Russia had simply brought the hope of a quick end to the war. The local military commander still thought the masses 'politically and nationally indifferent'. There were occasional acts of provocation—for instance, an inscription in Dvůr Králové/Königinhof which read: 'Down with Karl, long live the Austro-Hungarian Republic!'. However, very few political cases reached the military courts.⁸⁷ The authorities in Prague remained confident that the Russian Revolution would not spread to the Dual Monarchy.⁸⁸

These conclusions were corroborated by the Interior Minister's March report for the whole of Cisleithania (the Austrian side of the Empire), which found no political or ideological elements in incidents recorded there. Even the German Ambassador Botho von Wedel believed that the fear of revolution which had gripped the Viennese corridors of power

⁸⁵ NFP, *Nachmittagblatt* (NFPN), 10 April 1917.

⁸⁶ NB, K11, p28.

⁸⁷ Otáhalová Libuše, ed. (1957) *Souborná hlášení presidia pražského místodržitelství o protistátní, protirakouské a protiválečné činnosti v Čechách 1915–1918* (Prague: Československé akademie věd) docs 1747; 1775, pp217, 222; MKSM, K1305, 28-2/10; 28-2/10-3.

⁸⁸ MRP, K305, 2720, *Polizeidirektion Prag*, 14 April 1917.

was exaggerated, as it ‘did not fit the character of the Habsburg peoples’. As Clam conceded in late March, there were no signs of a revolutionary movement.⁸⁹ The Social Democratic leaders were loyal to the monarchy and, despite advertised support for revolutionary ideals, were prone to caution. Instead, freed from the fight against Tsarism (their only reason for having backed the war), the Austrian Social Democratic Party re-emerged as a political force for peace.

The resultant reality in March 1917 was that, under the confusing domestic and diplomatic circumstances, the moderate Social Democrats gained Karl’s ear. Aware of the potential mutual benefits of collaboration, an unlikely *rapprochement* took place between the socialist leadership and Karl, Czernin, and even Clam. The Foreign Minister was the driving force here, as he hoped that this makeshift alliance might facilitate negotiations with Russia (and thus put pressure on Germany), while appeasing the disgruntled working class at home.⁹⁰ In early April, Karl confessed to the prominent Social Democrat Deputy, Karl Renner: ‘I have had a predominantly military education—I must first train myself’ in the questions of how to promote the necessary new socio-political system in the Empire.⁹¹ Karl proceeded, as a result, to make a number of changes which he and his advisors believed would be a sound preparation for what they hoped were imminent peace negotiations, because the government had all to gain by depriving the Entente of the ace up its sleeve: the championing of minorities. The absolutist, pro-German *octroi* was to be halted and parliament recalled—the Socialists themselves had insisted on this.⁹² Czernin particularly had become convinced of the need to scrap (temporarily at least) the *octroi*, since it demonstrated vassalage to Berlin and contradicted the self-determination slogans roared by Russian revolutionaries and Wilson. Should opportunities for peace arise in the East or the West, such a reactionary, undemocratic and pan-German policy would foster neither at the negotiating table. Czernin (although Foreign Minister) therefore liquidated it on 16 April.⁹³

⁸⁹Brennan, ‘Karl I’, pp165–6, 173–5.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp177–9.

⁹¹Národní archiv, Prague (NA) *Fond Šmeral* (F55), K18, S136, 11 April 1917 (henceforth F5).

⁹²Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, pp280–4.

⁹³Ibid., pp292–3; NB, K11, pp34–5; Count Ottokar Czernin (1919) *In the World War* (London: Cassell) pp147, 168–9.

This domestic U-turn did not help Czernin's peace policy in the East. He could not even obtain a joint statement with Germany, directed at Russia, solemnly renouncing further conquests or annexations on the basis of the self-determination of nations. The Germans resisted making such a declaration and again, Czernin yielded.⁹⁴ As in the West, German hopes for a victorious peace thwarted Austria-Hungary's desire for a rapid end to hostilities. Yet efforts to coax concessions from the Germans continued. On 12 April, Czernin presented Karl with an ominous memorandum to be used to attempt to convince Wilhelm to move towards peace forthwith, spurning the usual diplomatic niceties and reassurances to insist that Austria's military strength was fading. A picture was painted of 'the dull despair that pervades all classes owing to under-nourishment and renders impossible any further endurance of the sufferings from the war'.

Interestingly, he also raised the threat to the institution of the monarchy posed by continuation of war, warning: 'Five monarchs have been dethroned in this war... Let it not be said that in Germany or Austria-Hungary the conditions are different.'⁹⁵ Tellingly, Czernin stressed Austria-Hungary's dire straits without seeking to secure generous terms in case of victory. In forwarding Czernin's memorandum, Karl sent an accompanying letter to Wilhelm, which echoed and endorsed these warnings. Famine, he argued, was breeding an international revolution and was the most dangerous enemy to the interests of both Germany and Austria-Hungary, and only a rapid, if inglorious, peace could avert a disaster.⁹⁶ Yet again the Germans dismissed these fears, recommending 'a good and proper injection of camphor' (a traditional remedy for hysteria) for the restless Czernin. Arthur Zimmermann, the German State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, refused to believe these predictions of disaster for the monarchical institution: 'I consider it impossible that in Archducal Austria, in Tyrol, Carinthia, Styria and in Hungary there is any thought of removing the monarchy.' Bethmann's formal response weeks later, and an accompanying note from Wilhelm, both discounted Austrian fears while reiterating the German belief in a final triumph.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ PA, I, K956, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador to Berlin Gottfried Hohenlohe to Czernin, 9; 13 April 1917.

⁹⁵ Czernin, *In the World War*, p147.

⁹⁶ Memorandum cited in full, Erich Ludendorff (1920) *Urkunden der Obersten Heeresleitung über ihre Tätigkeit 1916–1918* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler) pp374–5.

⁹⁷ Brennan, 'Karl I', p197.

During April 1917, the internal wrangling and intricate political games that marked governance under Karl continued, though they were far from the daily wartime concerns of the populace. The need to avoid antagonising the disparate domestic elements presented Karl and his advisers with a huge dilemma. Disaffected Austro-German nationalists were still reeling from the termination of the *octroi*, yet Karl needed to appease them while rejecting any Germanisation of Austria because, in his words, ‘the majority of the population consisted of Slavs’ and he did not want ‘to violate his peoples’.⁹⁸ Karl’s priorities were shaped by his ‘burning desire for peace’ and his ‘fear of the consequences of the Russian Revolution’, which worked to enhance internal tensions.⁹⁹

Despite the continuation of damaging internal dissent which implicated his ministers (not only their humiliating political about-turn, but also a widely publicised corruption scandal), Karl did not dismiss his entire administration. Instead, he devoted all his efforts to solving the ministerial crisis, which, with some skill and much disingenuousness, he achieved in just over a week. Karl sought to pacify all political and national groups by stalling the implementation of radical policies and remaining vague in his reform promises, because he hoped thereby to avoid complicating the chances of a reasonable peace—his foremost concern.¹⁰⁰ Realistically, his prospects of this in late April 1917 were not without promise: with Serbia and Romania beaten and Russia incapacitated, external threats to the Dual Monarchy’s existence had been virtually eliminated, and this also diminished its reliance on Germany. Only the Italian menace remained, although a curious, and equally dubious, secret Italian peace offer convinced Karl that Rome was no longer a threat.¹⁰¹ Under such

⁹⁸Matthias Erzberger (1920) *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt) p119.

⁹⁹NB, K7, 22 April 1917.

¹⁰⁰Brennan, ‘Karl I’, pp216–20.

¹⁰¹Sixte, *L’offre de paix*, pp160, 166, 181; Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, pp240–1; PA, I, K511, Czernin to Austrian Legation Councillor Wilhelm Ritter von Storck, 2 April 1917; NFPM, 13 January 1920, p2; Alexandre Ribot (1936) *Journal d’Alexandre Ribot et correspondances inédites 1914–1922* (Paris: Plon) p104. The offer, made via the German Embassy in Bern and allegedly sent by Cadorna and the King (behind Sonnino’s back), was shown to Karl by Czernin on 2 April. Only the cession of the Trentino was demanded. Karl rejected the offer, chiefly in order not to obstruct Sixtus’s mission, though he also feared an Italian trap. Nevertheless, he took it as a sign that the proponents of peace were gaining the upper hand in Entente countries. Czernin later denied ever having seen the offer.

circumstances, Karl—his prestige still undiminished—hoped peace would come soon enough to nip social revolution and internecine conflicts in the bud. In the meantime, he relied on his peoples' continued loyalty.¹⁰²

However, during May, the practicality of Karl's hopes for a rapid peace began to dissipate. Peace with Russia continued to be elusive. Italy remained inflexible regarding the promises of the Treaty of London (during which the Entente offered her territorial gains wholly incommensurate with her military performance), despite Britain and France's enthusiasm for the Bourbon-Parma channel of negotiations. Instead, Italy launched her tenth offensive on the Isonzo. Most crucially, Sixtus's endeavour finally faltered. Karl's brother-in-law travelled to meet him at Laxenburg for a second time on 8 May, where he told him bluntly that he should seize this propitious time for peace, pointing out the failure of Berlin's unrestricted submarine warfare strategy, and warning of the boost to the Allies of the U.S.A.'s entry into the war. He even suggested that the Americans might ultimately favour the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary.¹⁰³ Despite this, Karl and his advisors remained strongly committed to their illusory mediating strategy. Karl continued to rely on grand rhetoric which took things no further forward. The underlying truth was that, although exasperated, neither Karl nor Czernin envisaged a genuine breach with Germany (either through fear or fidelity).¹⁰⁴ Czernin insisted to Bethmann that the 'close alliance with the German Empire [was] the bedrock of the policy of Austria-Hungary'.¹⁰⁵ Quite obviously, neither Karl nor Czernin accepted the fact that breaking ties with Germany was essential for any agreement with the Allies and therefore remained optimistic about achieving a general peace. Karl thus wrote Sixtus a confident second letter where he refused to commit himself to any concessions to Italy until France and the United Kingdom responded to his own proposals. He adjoined a blunt note by Czernin, categorically refusing any one-sided cessions of land to

¹⁰² KÜA, K191, 104.774, Report, Vienna Censor's Office, April. It reviewed over 420,000 letters and observed that political statements remained rare and the general mood differed little from that of March.

¹⁰³ Sixte, *L'offre de paix*, pp142–14, 148, 150, 152–3, 167–8.

¹⁰⁴ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp245–7.

¹⁰⁵ NB, K7, 25 May 1917.

Rome and demanding guarantees for the monarchy's territorial integrity. Upon clarification of both points, Austria-Hungary would enter into negotiations with Berlin. To keep his venture alive, Sixtus deliberately mistranslated this point, in order to imply that Austria-Hungary would conclude a separate peace upon receipt of the two aforementioned guarantees, and inform her allies (essentially Germany) post hoc. Karl was utterly oblivious to reality in believing that he could secure a peace which both denied the claims of his Italian arch-enemy and preserved his loyalty towards his German ally.

Alexandre Ribot, the new French Prime Minister was less enthusiastic about the Sixtus venture than Lloyd George. Consequently, he suggested a meeting as near as possible to the Front, to be attended by himself and his British counterpart (but without diplomats) alongside the French President, Raymond Poincaré, with Britain's George V and Italy's Victor Emmanuel III. But the impossibility of arranging the attendance of the Italian King, 'the most constitutional of monarchs', without the approval of his Foreign Minister, the intransigent and land-hungry Baron Sydney Sonnino, saw the plan dropped, essentially ending the entire Sixtus negotiation.¹⁰⁶ The Allies did not even deign to answer Karl's missive, and Sixtus returned to his Belgian regiment on 25 June 1917.¹⁰⁷ Then, just as the lights went out on peace prospects in the West, they were also extinguished in the East.

Czernin had continued to press for German moderation towards Russia. Karl had joined him in stressing the urgency of preventing the Slavs in his Empire from claiming that Austria-Hungary was fighting only for German war aims. Both warned that the threat of revolution had to be taken especially seriously in a country held together only by its ruling dynasty. However, the Germans again deemed that the Austrians had lost their nerve and were seeking a swift peace at German expense. The Russians were not in a propitiatory mood either, rejecting a separate peace and vowing to fight on. But, concerned that Austria-Hungary might make an advantageous separate peace rather than continue the war, Germany did make some concessions, particularly in Romania. The Kreuznach Agreement, worked out on 17 and 18 May, marked the end of Czernin's campaign for peace in the East, and the victory of the

¹⁰⁶ Alexandre Ribot, *Journal d'Alexandre Ribot*, pp104–25.

¹⁰⁷ Sixte, *L'offre de paix*, pp185, 241.

German High Command. The net result was to tie Austria-Hungary more closely to her German ally, and to eliminate the possibility of a separate peace with Russia.¹⁰⁸

THE IMPOSSIBLE REFORM

Karl needed domestic peace while he negotiated for it abroad. Karl's commitment to reform was opportunistic and unconvincing, but he did realise that 'the proclamation of national autonomy would deprive the Entente Powers of their trump card, pity for, and desire to champion the little nations'.¹⁰⁹ Unaware of Sixtus's failure, and convinced of imminent diplomatic success, a hopeful Karl started, in April 1917, to tackle the issues on which his plan for peace and the future of his Empire depended. But here too, his weakness and indecision showed and the opportunity was lost.¹¹⁰ As long as he remained surrounded by Czernin, Hohenlohe and Clam, and his programme alienated influential nationalities, a credible reorganisation of the political structures of the Empire was unachievable. By late May, Karl was conscious that time was running out for an internal political truce featuring a working parliament and enabling a semblance of national harmony.

Despite his concerns, Karl remained confident about his peoples' attachment to Crown and fatherland. But although he had gained new allies such as the Social Democrats, he was losing traditional stalwarts such as the Poles, who were now looking for a status within the Empire equal to that of Hungary (far more than what Franz Joseph had promised them).¹¹¹ Evolving Czech radicalisation was another major challenge. The Czech Union had shown its first signs of rebellion during a plenary session amidst the industrial unrest in Bohemia on 13 and 14 April, by passing a resolution urging reform in the 'Austrian confederation of states' (a telling choice of words), demanding constitutional changes according to the self-determination of nations.¹¹² Over the subsequent weeks, Czech political life developed speedily in ways that

¹⁰⁸ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp250–2.

¹⁰⁹ Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, pp283–6.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp193–4, 197–8, 252–5.

¹¹¹ *NB*, K11, pp78–80.

¹¹² *NFPM*, 15 April 1917, p6.

directly threatened the authority of the Habsburgs.¹¹³ Most crucially, just over a month later, 222 illustrious Czech authors signed a manifesto without mention of the Empire or the dynasty—effectively the first publication of the exiles’ programme in the Bohemian lands. In subsequent meetings, deputies who had previously supported the Czech Union’s ‘activist’ (i.e. loyal and monarchic) doctrine, gradually demanded complete independence for a Czech state, dismissing the Habsburgs as foreign rulers with no part to play in the future of the nation.¹¹⁴ Others now demanded the addition of Slovakia to the application of historic state rights (despite this claim’s innate contradiction).¹¹⁵ Ultimately, the most radical deputies insisted that any mention of dynasty or monarchy be dropped entirely, whereas only a fortnight before, maintaining the declaration within the framework of Austria-Hungary had not even been in doubt.¹¹⁶

The resultant reality, on the eve of the opening of Karl’s first parliament, was that the age-old Czech-German feud was raging and there was little consolation elsewhere. The South Slavs may have been less organised and less radicalised but they were following along the path of the Czechs. Slovene and Cisleithanian Croat deputies united in a South Slav club (the *Jugoslavanski Klub*) and adopted a unanimous resolution on the South Slav question.¹¹⁷ Nor had the refractory Poles returned to the fold: indeed quite the opposite. On 25 May, in Cracow, a gathering of all parties and of various non-political groups, passed several resolutions demanding that Polish deputies declare before the parliament that ‘only an independent, united and free Poland would satisfy the wishes of the Polish nation’.¹¹⁸ Much like the Czechs, the Poles had, by late May 1917, both political unity and popular support to back their radical national demands.

¹¹³Zdeněk Tobolka (1932–1937) *Politické dějiny československého národa od r.1848 až do dnešní doby*, 4 vols (Prague: Nákladem Československého Kompasu) IV, p234.

¹¹⁴Ibid., pp180–1.

¹¹⁵The draft is in Beneš (1929) *Světová válka a naše revoluce. Vzpomínky a úvahy z bojů za svobodu národa. Dokumenty*, 3 vols (Prague: Orbis) II, pp176–8.

¹¹⁶Brennan, ‘Karl I’, pp291–3.

¹¹⁷*NFPM*, 30 May 1917, p7. For the emergence of the Yugoslav Declaration, see Milada Paulová (1968) *Tajný výbor [Maffie] a spolupráce s Jihoslovany v letech 1916–1918* (Prague: Academia) pp235–46.

¹¹⁸Brennan, ‘Karl I’, pp294–7.

Karl's various hopes for a political (or at least tactical) reconciliation of the nationalities within his Empire had not materialised and, personally, he had failed to impose his will. Throughout May, he had remained a peripheral figure to the political developments within his Empire, with his domestic political activity being both scant and ineffective. His greatest mistake was his confidence in Clam as a competent figure to preside over the domestic political challenges of the Empire during these testing and exceptional circumstances. The run-up to 30 May probably shook Karl's faith in Clam, but it was too late to part with him.¹¹⁹

In Hungary, on the other hand, Karl had long understood that Tisza represented an insurmountable obstacle to the fulfilment of his aims. Believing himself bound by his oath to the Hungarian Crown, he had sought to instigate change through electoral reform, in the hope of securing the support of the voiceless working masses and nationalities.¹²⁰ While Karl forced his resignation on 23 May, Tisza retained a majority in parliament and remained the most powerful man in Hungary. His young and feeble successor Móric Esterházy, a friend of Karl's, was unable to overcome this opposition and resigned after just over two months to be replaced by the wily old Sándor Wekerle, who had little interest in carrying through Karl's reforms (and ultimately stayed in power until the collapse of the Empire).¹²¹ While Karl had avoided taking a similarly shackling oath in Austria, his failure to remove Clam confirmed the various nationalities in their distrust of the government and, by extension, of the system and of the monarchy. Young, charming and untainted, Karl was still a popular figure. Yet he mistakenly believed that the personal goodwill he enjoyed extended to all he symbolised. Since the Tsar's overthrow, his main worry had been the outbreak of social revolution, but the loyal attitude of the Social Democrats, the untroubled May Day of 1917 (unlike in Germany) and the sympathy of the public towards him helped allay his fears. He therefore scarcely considered the possibility of national revolutions and remained confident of his subjects' patriotism.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp297–9.

¹²⁰ Schiavon, *L'Autriche-Hongrie*, p153. Though 47% of the population of Hungary was non-Magyar, they had only 14% of the representatives in the Lower Chamber.

¹²¹ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp298–9.

¹²² Ibid., pp167–8, 178–9, 185, 280–1, 298–9.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

When parliament opened on 30 May, the Head of the Czech Union's Presidium František Staněk announced that his deputation was convinced of the necessity of transforming the 'Habsburg-Lorraine Monarchy' into a 'federal state of free and equal nations' and invoked 'the natural rights of nations to self-determination and free development, reinforced, in our case, by inalienable historical rights'.¹²³ Shockingly for the government and (parts of) the audience, he added: 'we will demand, at the helm of our people, the unification of all branches of the Czechoslovak nation in a democratic state; furthermore, we cannot forget the Slovak branch, which lives contiguously to the historic Czech lands'.¹²⁴ Anton Korošec, the Slovene President of the Yugoslav Club, made a similar announcement demanding 'the unification of all areas of the monarchy inhabited by Slovenes, Croats and Serbs in an autonomous state body, free of all foreign dominance, on a democratic basis', though also still 'under the sceptre of the Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty'.¹²⁵ The Ukrainians and Poles similarly emphasised their national rights, with the latter reiterating their commitment to a united, independent Poland.¹²⁶ By any measure, this first day of parliament had been disastrous for Karl's government—indeed, for the Habsburg Monarchy. These declarations proved seminal. In the Bohemian lands, for example, the Czech Union's address was immediately picked up by the masses in various locations. Thereafter, it remained a key point of reference as social movements took on an increasingly nationalist hue. Similarly, in South Slav territories, the Yugoslav Club's words became the basis of the 'Declaration Movement,' which began that autumn.¹²⁷ Polish crowds had not even waited for the reopening of parliament to cheer and call for secession. It became increasingly likely therefore that these developments would be taken seriously by the Allies in any peace negotiations where they held the upper hand.

¹²³ *Stenographische Protokolle über die Sitzungen des Abgeordnetenhauses des Reichsrates* (SPA), 22nd session, 1st sitting, 30 May 1917, p34.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., Janko Pleterski (1990) 'The Southern Slav Question' in Mark Cornwall, ed. *The Last Years of Austria-Hungary* (Exeter: Exeter University Press) p141.

¹²⁶ SPA, pp36–7.

¹²⁷ Brennan, 'Karl I', pp300–1.

In August 1917, Karl could look back on eight months of failure in his two main aims: peace at home and abroad. Both were in fact further away than on his accession. Ironically, though, Austria-Hungary's military fortunes were in the ascendancy. Galicia and the Bukovina had been liberated, dealing a decisive blow to the Russian Army.¹²⁸ The continuation of war now seemed less daunting, especially after the resounding Austro-German breakthrough at Caporetto in late October. Karl also received assurances from Arz that the army could survive another winter.¹²⁹ Karl, his administration and his Crownland governors were also cautiously confident that his subjects would endure another winter of war, and hold out beyond spring without large-scale striking or rioting.¹³⁰ Although secret diplomatic negotiations did continue, the American declaration of war on Austria-Hungary in early December convinced Karl of the impossibility of a rapid general peace.¹³¹ But, in the first months of 1918, the Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest, the preparation of a decisive attack against a seemingly broken Italy and the Ludendorff Offensive all offered the realistic possibility of a final victory for the Central Powers. These developments abroad, combined with the failure of the revolutionary danger to materialise at home, offered Karl a reprieve from the Herculean task of restructuring his Empire. His most serious contemplation of constitutional reform had occurred in moments of panic in April and May 1917, and then in October 1918, when he sanctioned the proclamation of a derisory, last-gasp manifesto (which failed even to include Hungary).¹³² Without that impulse, he muddled along quietly without pushing reform. His lack of willpower—of 'moral courage'—meant a considerable disparity between his words and his actions.¹³³

By summer 1918, though, German and Austrian hopes of success for an overall victory were diminishing rapidly. The 1918 Spring Offensive had failed to deliver the necessary breakthrough on the Western Front, and had

¹²⁸ Arz, *Geschichte des Grossen Krieges*, pp162–4.

¹²⁹ Ibid., pp197–8, 28 October 1917.

¹³⁰ Brennan, 'Karl I', p303.

¹³¹ *NFPM*, 7 December 1917, p1; Arz, *Geschichte des Grossen Krieges*, p201.

¹³² Helmut Rumpler (1966) *Das Volkermanifest Kaiser Karls vom 16 Oktober 1918. Letzter Versuch zur Rettung des Habsburgerreiches* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik) pp62–3.

¹³³ Edmund von Glaise-Horstenau (1930) *The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire* (London: Dutton) p14.

cost Germany immensely. Meanwhile, Austria-Hungary had not capitalised on the victory at Caporetto, failing to cross the River Piave and capture Venice. Although they had encountered stiff resistance, they had additionally perhaps been held back by their German allies, who feared the predictable consequences of a total Austrian victory over Italy: an agreement with the Allies and withdrawal from the war.¹³⁴ As the Dual Monarchy was imploding in October and early November 1918—Czechoslovakia declared its independence on 28 October—its army had to surrender to the Italians at Vittorio Veneto. Effectively Karl no longer had an Empire over which to rule and, a week later, on 11 November, he resigned himself to this by relinquishing his participation in the administration of the state. He did not, however, abdicate, and still hoped that the Habsburg monarchy could survive, in Hungary at least. Indeed he worked for this (unsuccessfully) up to his death in 1922, most notably with two abortive attempts to retrieve the Hungarian crown. In effect, the Habsburg Monarchy was suspended rather than formally abolished in 1918, when the new states emerged from the chaos of the Empire's collapse. In 1919 and 1920 respectively, both Austria and Hungary had to answer for a monarchy that was now *in absentia* in the peace negotiations and sign the treaties which finally settled the Great War. But the disappearance of the institution of monarchy in Habsburg territories was no foregone conclusion—indeed, Hungary officially remained a kingdom until 1946. Karl had played a not inconsiderable part in making the survival of the Dual Monarchy unlikely and its fall ultimately unstoppable. It is often claimed that the Habsburg monarchy ended, spiritually at least, in 1916: this chapter has shown that this is untrue.

CONCLUSION

An unmistakeable and consistent degree of superficiality pervaded Karl's thoughts about his role as heir, and then as Emperor, whether on the conclusion of peace or the reform of Austria-Hungary. As he admitted to Polzer, he had little time for documents and details.¹³⁵ Perhaps from his lack of training, but also due to his temperament, Karl lacked rigour and depth in his attitude to his responsibilities. The plans he sketched in late

¹³⁴Richard Bassett (2015) *For God and Kaiser* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press) p524.

¹³⁵Polzer-Hoditz, *Karl*, pp64–5.

1914 were pedestrian and unoriginal, and certainly no long-term answer to his country's problems. Worse, the stagnation in his political outlook revealed his apparent incapacity for developing insight or learning from mistakes.

Even after his accession, Karl appears to have been remarkably ignorant of the scholarship on the topic of reform, as shown by his reaction to Karl Renner, one of the most distinguished theorists of the nationality problem for nearly two decades. The latter was received in audience by Karl in early 1917 in his capacity as a director of the Food Office.¹³⁶ Renner managed to steer the conversation onto the subject of nationality, and gave him a copy of his latest compilation of essays, *Austria's Renewal*.¹³⁷ Karl put it down and declared with surprise: 'You have also written books'.¹³⁸ Almost comically, it later emerged that Karl had feared Renner would attempt to assassinate him.¹³⁹

Without doubt, Karl chose poor advisers, and failed to stand up to saboteurs of the state such as Tisza and Czernin (not to mention his German 'allies'). His upbringing and thinking were summed up by his ingenuous motto that he had 'no enemies, only temporary opponents'.¹⁴⁰ Yet contrary to accepted wisdom, he had had eminent statesmen and brilliant minds available, such as former Prime Ministers Baron Max von Beck and Koerber, Heinrich Lammasch (eventually appointed to liquidate the state on 27 October 1918), the jurist, academic and deputy Josef Redlich, Social Democratic Party founder Victor Adler, or Renner himself. But Karl's prejudices—notably against men of the old guard, liberals, modernisers, commoners, Jews, socialists, alleged Freemasons and atheists—and his fatalistic Catholicism (bolstered by his wife Zita) blocked any clear vision and effectively ruled out these figures as his advisers.¹⁴¹ This is not to say that any of these men could have

¹³⁶ *AZM*, 1 December 1916, p6.

¹³⁷ Karl Renner (1916) *Österreichs Erneuerung. Politisch-programmatische Aufsätze* (Vienna: Ignaz Brand).

¹³⁸ Ibid., 'Kaiser Karl hat Angst vor meinen Mordplänen', *Bunte Woche*, 25 December 1932, p8.

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp7–8; *AZM*, 11 November 1928, p4.

¹⁴⁰ These were the words of Empress Zita in her conversation with the author's friend Richard Bassett on 21 August 1982 at Schloss Waldstein.

¹⁴¹ Kovács, *Untergang*, I, *Die österreichische Frage. Kaiser und König Karl I (IV.) und die Neuordnung Mitteleuropas 1916–1922*, p19; II, 213, 8 September 1920, pp609–10, 615, 635.

secured Austria-Hungary's future or saved Karl's throne, especially after the first half of 1917. But they would, at least, have tried and therefore come closer to establishing whether this were possible.

Karl's reputation has been unjustly glorified and unjustly sullied.¹⁴² Yet he cannot escape a substantial degree of blame in Austria-Hungary's collapse. Until the very end, however, he seems not to have entirely realised the gravity of his predicament. He was blinded by a natural insouciance, combined with a constitutional unwillingness to hear bad news and an overestimation of his subjects' loyalty. On 27 September 1918, long past the eleventh hour, Karl summoned civil servant Baron Johann von Eichhoff to him and queried: 'You worked on these questions for Archduke Franz back then; how did he envisage the new constitution?' Taken aback, Eichhoff dared not utter the answer on the tip of his tongue: 'Your Majesty is asking me a little late'.¹⁴³ Had Karl asked the question earlier, it is not impossible that at least some of the remaining parts of the Hapsburg lands within the Empire might have survived in the form of a monarchical institution or Danubian confederation.

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¹⁴² Brennan, 'Karl I', p309.

¹⁴³ KA, *Nachlass Johann von Eichhoff*, B/874, 150, Memoirs, 'Von Miramar nach St. Germain', pp36, 42–3.

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CHAPTER 5

Contextualising the Ottoman Dynasty: Sultan Mehmed V Reşad and the Ottoman Princes in the Great War

Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık

INTRODUCTION

When the Ottoman Crown Prince Reşad Efendi was enthroned as Sultan Mehmed V Reşad on 27 April 1909, nobody anticipated that this 65-year-old Sultan would rule the Empire during her most turbulent times. During his reign, the Ottoman Empire had not only lost her last province in North Africa (Tripolitania) as well as her entire Balkan territories, but also participated in First World War, something which finally led to its disintegration. Sultan Reşad did not witness this. He died on 28 June 1918. This was four months before the Armistice of Mudros, which allowed the Allied powers to invade parts of the Empire and two years before the Treaty of Sèvres. The latter attempted to transform

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the Empire into a small Turkish state under Allied control, composed of İstanbul and a few Anatolian provinces with its former territories as either independent states or mandates under Allied oversight. But the monarchy survived his death, and the Armistice in November 1918, under his successor Mehmed VI Vahideddin, falling finally in 1922. This chapter explores the role played by Mehmed V during the Great War and whether it could be considered that this contributed in any way to the final disappearance of the Ottoman throne.

The literature on the life and reign of Sultan Reşad is limited, and overshadowed by that on the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), often popularly referred to as the Young Turks. The centrality of the CUP to the historiography of the final years of the Ottoman Empire is understandable. It had been the CUP that it had initiated the revolutionary upheaval against Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909) in 1908 and later entered into a fierce rivalry with its opponents until 13 January 1913, when it assumed full political power with a *coup d'état* known as the 'Sublime Porte Incident' (*Bâb-ı Âlî Baskını*). Therefore, the books and articles focusing on the Ottoman Empire between 1908 and 1918 generally focus on the domestic and foreign policy of the CUP, its struggle with opposition political figures and organisations, and the defeats of the Ottoman armies in the Tripolitanian War of 1911, the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, and finally, the First World War.¹ The role of the Ottoman dynasty during these chaotic days of the Empire has generally been underestimated and substantially overlooked. The Ottoman dynasty in general, and Sultan Reşad in particular, have been described in the literature as puppet figures in the hands of CUP leaders. This interpretation argues that it was the CUP, not the Sultan, actually ruling the Empire. In this perspective, Sultan Reşad's portrayal is that of as an old, inept and inefficient monarch, who had failed to act as the ultimate political authority, unlike his predecessor, Abdülhamid II.² There could,

¹See, for example, Eric Jan Zürcher (1984) *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement, 1905–1926* (Leiden: Brill); Aykut Kansu (1997) *The Revolution of 1908 in Turkey* (Leiden: Brill); M. Naim Turfan (2000) *Rise of the Young Turks: Politics, the Military and Ottoman Collapse* (London: I.B. Tauris); Feroz Ahmad (2010) *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press).

²For this line of argument, see, for instance, Yücel Yanıkdağ, 'Mehmed V, Sultan (Mehmed Reşad) (1844–1918)' in Spencer C. Tucker, ed. (1996) *The European Powers in*

superficially, be a degree of validity to this. However, the extent of the political power wielded by the CUP, in terms of its levels of public support etc., has been exaggerated on a regular basis, thanks to the tendency to disregard Sultan Reşad as ‘only’ a constitutional monarch. In reality, the CUP was not in formal political control until 1913 and throughout the First World War, its German allies continuously intervened in Ottoman politics. Above all, though, the allegations of ‘inefficiency’ against Sultan Reşad are not sustainable. He may have been constrained to an extent by his ‘kind, gentle and naïve’ character, but also, his powers were restricted in exercising his authority by his own consciousness of the legal limitations imposed on him by the Ottoman Constitution. In other words, he was a new style of Ottoman monarch, one determined to act constitutionally in the broader understanding of that term.

Rather than adopting a narrative based on CUP policies, therefore, this chapter focuses on the role played by Sultan Reşad and other members of the Ottoman dynasty during the Great War. In doing so, instead of describing the Sultan and the Ottoman princes as mere puppets of the CUP regime, it will focus on what was a very complex relationship between the CUP and the dynasty. This will enable the chapter to demonstrate how the Ottoman dynasty transformed itself before and during the war and the impact that this had. To put it another way, the main argument here is that the Ottoman dynasty in general, and Sultan Reşad in particular, had adapted themselves to the new era in Ottoman politics both domestically and internationally.

(RE)PRESENTING THE OTTOMAN DYNASTY

Domestically, the CUP projected the Sultan as the ‘father of the Ottomans’, a paternalistic presentation designed to make the Sultan a link between the ordinary people (to whom the new constitutional arrangement was an alien concept) and the CUP. The Sultan seemed to accept this role voluntarily. Unlike his predecessor, he had anyway had

the First World War: An Encyclopedia (New York: Garland Publishing) p475; Selçuk Akşin Somel (2003) ‘Introduction’ in Selçuk Akşin Somel, ed. *The A to Z of the Ottoman Empire* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press) pcv; Nahid Sırrı Örik (2002) *Bilinmeyen Yaşamlarıyla Saraylılar* (İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları) p109; İsmail Hami Danişmend (1986) *Sadırazam Tevfik Paşa’nın Dosyasındaki Resmi ve Hususi Vesikalara Göre 31 Mart Vakası* (İstanbul: İstanbul Kitabevi) p197.

some direct contact with his subjects, not only in İstanbul but also during trips to some Anatolian and Balkan cities. In other words, the CUP was presenting the Sultan as a seminal figure, one who could unite the disintegrating components of the Empire.³ A particular emphasis on the concept of *jihad* endowed this paternalistic discourse with a religious tone in the context of war. The CUP, in other words, deliberately underlined not just the Sultan's monarchical authority but also added a religious dimension to their version of Ottoman nationalism when they invoked his position as Caliph. On its formal entry into the Great War, in the Sultan's name, a martial *jihad* against Britain and her allies was declared by the Ottoman Empire.⁴

This change in perspective on the monarch also influenced perspectives on, and expectations of, the Ottoman princes. Before 1908, their freedom and education had been limited. In the constitutional period, Ottoman princes had become relatively freer as individuals, and also better educated. Elder members of the dynasty became interested in politics, while the new generation focused more on military education. For the first time since the early seventeenth century, they had a visible public role. The CUP appointed some of these new-generation Ottoman princes to military posts, meaning some actually participated in the First World War as military commanders. The CUP's aim had been to demonstrate to its European allies that the Ottoman dynasty was not different to those in Europe, whose members had traditionally assumed military duties. These changes were welcomed by the Ottoman princes, as well as being useful to the regime, as the princes visited Ottoman troops stationed on the different Fronts to boost the morale of soldiers, men who had maintained a deep respect for the Ottoman dynasty.

Internationally, the Sultan and other members of the dynasty were very self-consciously desirous of being treated by European royal figures and dynasties as their equals. Ottoman membership of what Edward VII labelled the 'Trade Union of Kings' (what Paulmann calls 'the fraternity'

³There are interesting echoes here with the presentations of monarchy in both Austria-Hungary and the British Empire, see Chapters 4 and 6.

⁴This had implications for the British Empire in particular, given its large number of Muslim subjects in Asian and African colonies, particularly as—in Arabic—the declaration was circulated to such colonial subjects. See, for instance, Peter Clarke (1986) *West Africans at War, 1914–1918, 1939–1945: Colonial Propaganda and Its Cultural Aftermath* (London: Ethnographics Ltd.) p18.

of monarchs), was strongly emphasised by Sultan Reşad, in line with the attitudes of his predecessors.⁵ As a result, during First World War, Sultan Reşad was happy to receive European royal visitors, most significantly Kaiser Wilhelm II. He also enthusiastically participated in the regular exchange of imperial/royal medals and decorations with his European counterparts. In so doing, he acted to underline the Ottoman perspective that the Empire was a full member of the European monarchical system.

A CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY IN ACTION: SULTAN REŞAD AND THE CUP BEFORE THE GREAT WAR

Reşad Efendi had been born on 2 November 1844, the third son of Sultan Abdülmecid. He had received a classical Ottoman/Islamic royal education at the palace. Halid Ziya, the chief clerk of the Chamberlain's office 1909–1912, described this as being a poor one. Thanks to his comparatively high intelligence, however, he made good use of the education he had and used it to go further.⁶ He studied Arabic and Persian, and spoke the latter very well. He took piano lessons from an Italian pianist and calligraphy lessons from a famous Ottoman calligrapher, Mustafa İzzet Efendi (1801–1876).⁷ While such an eclectic education, uniting Eastern and Western elements, was, by the late nineteenth century, not uncommon in Ottoman royal circles, Reşad Efendi made particularly good use of it.

When his elder brother was enthroned in 1876 as Abdülhamid II, Reşad Efendi became the heir. During that reign, like other male members of the dynasty, he lived under his brother's control. Ottoman historian Ahmed Refik reflected that he was 'the most deprived' individual of the Hamidian era as 'for thirty-three years he lived a sorrowful and

⁵ See Matthew Glencross (2015) *The State Visits of Edward VII* (Basingstoke: Palgrave); Johannes Paulmann (2001) 'Searching for a "Royal International": The Mechanics of Monarchical Relations in the Nineteenth Century Europe' in Martin H. Geyer, and Johannes Paulmann, eds *The Mechanics of Internationalism: Culture, Society and Politics from the 1840s to the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp145–76.

⁶ Halid Ziya Uşaklıgil (2003) *Saray ve Ötesi* (İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları) p626.

⁷ Yılmaz Öztuna (1996) *Devletler ve Hanedanlar. Cilt II: Türkiye (1074–1990)* (Ankara: T. C. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları) p338.

solitary life'.⁸ Having witnessed the dethronement of his two predecessors (his uncle Abdülazziz and his brother Murad V), Abdülhamid II was extremely wary about allowing any potential conspiracies against his throne to arise in his own family. Consequently, he ensured that the Ottoman princes, particularly his brother and acknowledged heir Reşad Efendi, were placed under close surveillance. Typically, the Ottoman dynasty depended on male succession, but from 1617, the line of succession saw the Sultanate pass, on the death of a ruling Sultan, to the oldest surviving male in the family. This system of *ekberiyet* ensured that it was often a brother, an uncle or even a nephew who succeeded to the throne, and accompanying this, the habit developed of confining the Ottoman princes in line of succession to strictly guarded private locations, away from public view.⁹ As part of this, only a ruling Sultan was permitted to father children. As Quataert comments, this had served to focus power in the royal household, including the various officials appointed by the Sultan such as viziers and pashas.¹⁰ The tedium of such restricted lives was familiar to Abdülhamid II from his own experience as heir, but in fear, he pursued the traditional policy of confinement of his potential heirs strictly.

There are two different interpretations of the impact of this restricted lifestyle had on Reşad Efendi. Some claim that he turned inward, accepted his solitary confinement, engaged in reading history and Mevlevi texts and that consequently, when coming to the throne, he knew almost nothing about imperial politics.¹¹ Others argue instead that he deliberately portrayed himself as being naïve and ignorant, to appease his brother's suspicions, and that in reality Reşad Efendi was both clever and talented. In her memoirs, Mislimelek Hanım, the wife of Abdülkadir Efendi (son of Abdülhamid II), wrote that her husband had pitied Reşad

⁸Ahmed Refik (1909) *Sultan Mehmed Han-ı Hâmis Hazretleri: Hayat-ı Mâziye ve Husûsiyesi* (İstanbul: Kütübhan-e-i İslam ve Askeri) pp3–4.

⁹Donald Quataert (2005) *The Ottoman Empire, 1700–1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp90–3.

¹⁰Ibid., p92.

¹¹Handan Nezir Akmeşe (2005) *The Birth of Modern Turkey: The Ottoman Military and the March to First World War* (London: I.B. Tauris) p94; Sean McMeekin (2010) *The Berlin-Baghdad Express: The Ottoman Empire and Germany's Bid for World Power* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) p91; Ronen A. Cohen (2014) *Upheaval in the Middle East: The Theory and Practice of a Revolution* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books) p181.

Efendi for having to live surrounded by servants, who regularly reported to Abdülhamid II.¹² According to Midhat Sertoğlu, however, Reşad Efendi used this surveillance to convince his brother of his loyalty, as the servants wrote only what Reşad Efendi wanted them to write.¹³ Sertoğlu argues that Reşad Efendi was shrewd enough to have secret, but close, contact with the Young Turks, whose ambition was to (re-)establish a constitutional monarchy by overthrowing Abdülhamid II.¹⁴ His claim is also that when Abdülhamid II was forced to restore the Ottoman constitution, he accused Reşad Efendi of being one of the perpetrators of the 1908 revolution.¹⁵ Such claims have a certain resonance, underlined also by reportage in the foreign press of rumours that the Crown Prince was working against Abdülhamid, reinforcing the latter's suspicions of his brother.¹⁶

In 1908, Abdülhamid II won a brief tactical victory, in that he preserved his own hold on the throne, only to lose it the following year. But Sertoğlu's interpretation of Reşad Efendi's attitudes (and those of his three sons) seems sustained by the fact that the dynasty was allowed to survive in 1909. This strongly suggests that the new Sultan and his three sons had indeed cultivated good relations with the CUP even before his accession.¹⁷ However, in a signal of how things were changing, the process whereby Reşad Efendi was enthroned was very unconventional. As the acknowledged Crown Prince, traditionally no extra procedures would have been required to legitimise his accession. In 1909, however, the General National Council (*Meclis-i Umûmî-i Millî*), established by the members of the parliament at St. Stefano on the outskirts of İstanbul in tandem with the Action Army (*Hareket Ordusu*), voted on

¹²Mislimelek Hanım (2011) *Haremde Sürgüne: Bir Osmanlı Prensesi*, ed. Nemika Deryal Marşanoğlu (İstanbul: İnkılap Yayınevi) p31.

¹³Midhat Sertoğlu (1989) 'II. Abdülhamid ve Sultan Reşad'a Dair', *Türk Dünyası Tarih Dergisi* 3(27) pp22–8, 25.

¹⁴Ibid., p24.

¹⁵Ibid., p27.

¹⁶Kemal Karpat (2001) *The Politicization of Islam: Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p135. The Western press was, by the end of the nineteenth century, an active presence in the Ottoman state. Ibid., pp135–7.

¹⁷Nahid Sırrı Örik (1952) 'Sultan Mehmed Reşad'a Dair', *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası* 30, pp1523–7, 1524.

his accession, making Sultan Reşad became the first (and last) Sultan to have political input to his succession.¹⁸ According to Sertoğlu, this did upset the new Sultan, who perceived himself as the natural heir and so not in need of any endorsement.¹⁹ Despite this, the modernisation process continued, as the ceremony where the oath of allegiance (*bey'ât*) was sworn took place at the Ministry of War (the territory of the political government) rather than at the Topkapı Palace (the royal residence). Sultan Reşad had first to declare, in the presence of the heads of the two Chambers of the Parliament, the Cabinet, and some of the army commanders, his loyalty to the sharia system, the constitution, and the parliamentary regime.²⁰ The Sultan later had to come to Parliament, where the Grand Vizier read the text of an oath similar to the one Reşad had taken at the Ministry of War.²¹

These non-traditional practices in the enthronement of Sultan Reşad might have seemed to be strange, if not necessarily disturbing, for most Ottomans. However, the gestures thus made to indicate support for parliamentarism and constitutionalism were considered important by the CUP, because of the strength of the counterrevolutionary elements in the Empire. Beyond that, the CUP was quite respectful of the Ottoman dynasty and its policies were not anti-monarchist. In other words, the CUP and its leaders did not want to establish a republican administration; they were aware that the Ottoman dynasty held the Empire together. Even before the 1908 revolution, the CUP was conscious of the usefulness of the established traditions surrounding the status of the Ottoman dynasty. When it was rumoured that Abdülhamid II had attempted to change the system of succession in such a way as to leave the throne to his sons, the CUP had reacted against this fiercely.²² According to Hanioglu, the CUP wanted (and were successful in gaining) the support of the Ottoman princes for maintaining the existing customs, especially the support of the official Crown Prince, Reşad Efendi, and the second in succession to the position of Crown Prince,

¹⁸Danişmend, *Sadırazam Tevfik Paşa'nın*, p195.

¹⁹Sertoğlu, 'II. Abdülhamid ve Sultan Reşad'a Dair', p25; Danişmend, *Sadırazam Tevfik Paşa'nın*, p196.

²⁰Sina Akşin (1972) *31 Mart Olayı* (İstanbul: Sinan Yayınları) p300.

²¹Ibid., p303; Süleyman Kani İrtem (2004) *Meşrutiyetten Mütarekeye (1909-1918)* (İstanbul: Temel Yayınları) p24.

²²François Georgeon (2006) *Sultan Abdülhamid* (İstanbul: Homer Kitabevi) p448.

Yusuf İzzeddin Efendi.²³ This reinforces the CUP support for the idea of a constitutional monarchy, rather than a republic. It also provides further support for the argument that personally, Reşad Efendi was also a supporter of constitutional monarchy.

Considerable debate surrounds Sultan Reşad once he had assumed the throne. Some scholars criticise him for his non-interference in governmental affairs during his reign. According to them, the reason for his lack of interest in politics lay not only his old age and ignorance of governmental affairs at the time of his accession, but also his primal fear of dethronement. In one of his conversations with Elif Efendi (1850–1927), a prominent Mevlevi of his age, Elif Efendi asked Sultan Reşad why he had not enforced his rights, as given by the constitution. Sultan Reşad answered that had he done so, the CUP's leaders would have sent him to Konya and proclaimed a republican regime. He therefore remained silent to avoid bringing down the dynasty.²⁴ Similarly, in replying directly to contemporary criticisms regarding his non-interference in politics, he used to say, 'Everyone says that I am not engaging in [governmental] affairs. What is the fault of my brother [Abdülhamid II] if I have to engage in these affairs?'²⁵

Other authors, however, argue a contrary point, claiming that the main reason why Sultan Reşad left government policy and affairs to the CUP was that the Sultan had a genuine respect for parliamentarianism and constitutionalism. Even before his enthronement, Sultan Reşad had had the reputation of being a liberal-minded prince; probably a key reason why the CUP had favoured his succession.²⁶ On a number of occasions, Sultan Reşad went so far as to declare that he was 'proud of being the first sultan of the constitutional period'.²⁷ Such statements make it plain that he was aware of the extent to which the conditions under which he ruled had changed and believed that absolute monarchism was

²³The son of Sultan Abdul Aziz, he died in 1916. Şükrü Hanioglu (2001) *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p57.

²⁴Midhat Sertoğlu (1989) 'II. Abdülhamid ve Sultan Reşad'a Dair, Part II', *Türk Dünyası Tarih Dergisi* 3(28) pp35–42, 37. The Mevlevi Order is a fourteenth century Sufi order, subsequently banned in the Turkish Republic.

²⁵Ali Fuad Türkgeldi (1984) *Görüp İşittiklerim* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları) p275.

²⁶Georçon, *Sultan Abdülhamid*, p348.

²⁷İrtem, *Meşrutiyetten Mütarekeye*, p23.

impossible under these circumstances. According to İrtem, his response to the National Council's announcement on his enthronement, was to declare 'My first aim is to rule in line with *shari'a* and the constitution. I would never deviate from the will and demands of my people'.²⁸

As Halid Ziya wrote in his memoirs, the new Sultan was not, by nature, an absolutist. Once enthroned, he was very determined to become a constitutional monarch.²⁹ Once, when a member of his harem asked Sultan Reşad how it was possible for any of his wishes to be denied, since he was the Sultan, he responded:

Knowledge and wisdom sufficient to govern was absent where I have been educated In constitutional monarchism, sultans only reign, governance is carried out by those deputies elected by the people or those who had been chosen among the notables. However, you, the people of the palace, could not understand and accept this fact. What you know is absolutism. You still think that an imperial order could appoint a sweeper of the palace as the Grand Vizier; you even want it to be so. Nevertheless, this is neither in accordance with sharia, nor in accordance with law.³⁰

The speech delivered by Sultan Reşad on the anniversary of the 1908 revolution is also significant for an understanding of his thoughts on constitutional monarchy as an institution:

I hope, and I wish this from the grace of the God, that as the system of constitutional monarchy has been established in our country, all Ottomans will be happier; because, as a result, the Ottomans can have an unending happiness and a confident future. By creation and nature, I was born an admirer of constitutional monarchy. Thank God, that God has ordained me to reign in the era of constitutional monarchy. If I had been the sultan in the period of absolutism, be sure that I myself would have declared for liberty and constitutional monarchy.³¹

Overall, the relationship between the CUP and Sultan Reşad cannot be summed up simplistically as being a master-puppet one. On the one hand, the CUP did not want to abolish the monarchy and declare a republic. They were loyal to the Ottoman dynasty, despite being opposed

²⁸ Ibid., p21.

²⁹ Uşaklıgil, *Saray ve Ötesi*, p47.

³⁰ İrtem, *Meşrutiyetten Mütarekeye*, p69.

³¹ Ibid.

to monarchical absolutism.³² What they wanted was a constitutional monarch, who would act as a symbol of unity of the different components of the Empire, while leaving the management of the government to elected politicians. On the other, it is clear that Sultan Reşad himself genuinely preferred to act within the limits of constitutional monarchy according to this formula.³³ But arriving at an understanding of the relationship between Sultan Reşad and the CUP as a background to the Ottoman monarchy in war requires a comprehension of the reality that his Sultanate had a three-dimensional identity, which also included the Sultan's role as Caliph.

THE COMPLEX IDENTITY OF THE SULTAN

In terms of the internal politics of the Empire, the CUP presented Sultan Reşad as the 'father' of all the Ottoman communities. This suggests that from a political perspective, the CUP believed that only the Sultan could maintain the 'unity of components' (*ittihād-i anāsır*). But even before the Empire's entry into the Great War, the CUP was also portraying the Sultan as the Caliph to the Muslim components within the Empire. Particularly during and after the Tripolitanian war, the CUP leaders had used the concept of the Caliphate to arouse *jihadist* sentiments amongst the Tripolitanian Muslims and sought to do so again in 1914. Finally and internationally, the CUP presented Sultan Reşad as a monarch in the European understanding of the term, and one who was therefore equal to his European counterparts. As this underlines, the CUP and the Ottoman government were sensitive about the issue of their head of state being accorded a sovereign equality with other monarchs.

One crucial reason why the CUP was able to establish and sustain this complex identity for the Sultanate was down to the personality and co-operation of Sultan Reşad himself. Prior to the accession of Abdülhamid II, he had enjoyed taking trips. On his accession, though no longer young, Sultan Reşad was happy to travel to different parts

³²Indeed, Enver Paşa, one of the leading members of the Party, married into the Ottoman royal family in 1914, becoming Sultan Reşad's son-in-law thereby. See Şuhnaz Yılmaz (2013) 'An Ottoman Warrior Abroad: Enver Paşa as an Expatriate' in Sylvia Kedourie, ed. *Seventy-Five Years of the Turkish Republic* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp40–69, 45–6.

³³Ziya Şakir (2014) *İttihad ve Terakki Nasıl Yaşadı?* (İstanbul: Akıl Fikir Yayınları) p484.

of his Empire. This occurred particularly when the CUP thought that such visits were important as a part of their strategy to increase the people's loyalty to the Sultan and through him to the CUP-led government. While Abdülhamid II had only attended the Friday prayers at the Yıldız Mosque adjacent to his palace, Sultan Reşad took pains to attend prayers in different mosques throughout Istanbul to enhance his visibility and the sense of personal loyalty that could be created through this.³⁴ In 1909, Sultan Reşad visited Bursa, the first capital of the Ottoman Empire. It was recorded that in his discussions with the local notables there, he invited them to draw their seats closer to him, saying that 'the Sultan and his people should be in close contact'.³⁵ Similarly, in October 1910, after observing the military exercises at Seyitler, Sultan Reşad visited Edirne, the second capital city of the Empire, because the CUP perceived this as a way of sending a message to the Balkan territories in the Empire.³⁶

Linked to this, the most significant travel Sultan Reşad undertook in the interests of this policy of Empire unity was in June 1911, when he visited the Ottoman Empire's remaining Balkan territories. It was a trip proposed by the CUP, but enthusiastically accepted by the Sultan.³⁷ The aim behind this trip was two-fold. It served to appease Albanian insurgents, demonstrating the interest of the Sultan and his government in maintaining the unity of the region. It was also intended to convince European public opinion of the existence of a genuine sense of allegiance to the Sultan amongst these Balkan populations.³⁸ Certainly the visit and the symbols attached to it attracted the attention of the European powers as he travelled to Thessaloniki, going on to Skopje and Pristina. The highlight was the organisation of Friday prayer on 16 June 1911, led by the Sultan in his capacity as Caliph. The event was attended by thousands of Albanians, gathering at the Kosovo Plain, where Sultan Murad I had defeated the Christian Balkan armies in 1389.³⁹ As well as prayers, the

³⁴ Uşaklıgil, *Saray ve Ötesi*, p152.

³⁵ Lütfi Simavi (2004) *Son Osmanlı Sarayında Gördüklerim* (İstanbul: Örgün Yayınevi) p54.

³⁶ Uşaklıgil, *Saray ve Ötesi*, p252.

³⁷ Mevlüt Çelebi (1999) *Sultan Reşad'ın Rumeli Seyahati* (İstanbul: Akademi Yayınevi) p4.

³⁸ Uşaklıgil, *Saray ve Ötesi*, p443; Çelebi, *Sultan Reşad*, pp3–4.

³⁹ Uşaklıgil, *Saray ve Ötesi*, pp449–50.

event featured a speech from Sultan Reşad, in which he stressed his role as the father of his subjects; and insisted that while some of his Albanian 'sons' had strayed from the true path, being deceived by seditious elements, he believed in their loyalty.⁴⁰ This speech was not actually translated into Albanian, but regardless, the Albanians were happy to see their Sultan, with shouts of 'Long live the Sultan' echoing over the plain.⁴¹ Hüseyin Cahid, a pro-CUP journalist reporting on the trip, commented that Sultan Reşad reciprocated the respect and loyalty of the Ottomans through his demonstration of a paternal and merciful attitude, adding that the dynasty was the biggest and most genuine linkage holding together the component elements of the Empire.⁴² Another journalist, Hakkı Tanık, reflected that during his tour, Sultan Reşad showed himself as genuinely wanting to be in touch with his subjects. Such comments indicate the extent to which the dynasty transformed itself.⁴³

In the period before the outbreak of the Great War, the second aspect of Sultan Reşad's identity, his status as the Caliph of all Muslims, was less emphasised, given that a prime aim of the CUP was to bring together the Muslim and non-Muslim components of the Empire. However, as European states began to occupy parts of the Empire, the CUP and the dynasty did begin to put more emphasis on the Caliphate dimension, notably during the Tripolitanian War. Local Muslims were encouraged to side with the Ottoman Empire on religious grounds. There was no official declaration of *jihad*, however Landau has argued that 'Pan-Islam served as a bond for disparate tribes in Libya, as well as between them and the Ottomans, and between both of these and other Muslims within and without the Empire'.⁴⁴ The terms of the Treaty of Ouchy 1912, included a statement that the Sultan/Caliph had religious as well as diplomatic interests in Libya.⁴⁵ Although the Tripolitanian War does provide a significant demonstration of Sultan Reşad's role as Caliph, the real turning point away from 'secular Ottomanism' to 'Islamic Ottomanism' came with the Balkan Wars. Again, though there was no formal

⁴⁰Ibid., p154.

⁴¹İrtem, *Meşrutiyetten Mütarekeye*, pp150–4.

⁴²Çelebi, *Sultan Reşad*, pp19–22.

⁴³Ibid., p52.

⁴⁴Jacob M. Landau (1990) *The Politics of Pan-Islam: Ideology and Organization* (Oxford: Clarendon Press) p134.

⁴⁵John Wright (2012) *A History of Libya* (London: Hurst and Company) p113.

declaration of *jihad* after the loss of the Empire's Balkan territories, there was a greater emphasis on the Caliphate, which was to be of significance for the Great War.⁴⁶

In terms of the issue of monarchical equality with his European counterparts, Sultan Reşad himself was eager to stress this aspect of his rule. What he attempted to do personally in this area was to underline the fraternity that existed between monarchs, arguing that regardless of religious issues, all monarchies shared common characteristics. He believed that from this commonality came an intrinsic channel of communication which was specific to monarchs and separate from interference by their subjects.⁴⁷ Nahid Sırrı cited a conversation between the Sultan and the Austrian Ambassador to the Porte, Marquis Johann Markgraf von Pallavicini which took place during the Balkan Wars. The Ambassador told the Sultan that it was the will of his Emperor, Franz-Joseph, that the Ottomans should leave Edirne to the Bulgarians. Sultan Reşad responded:

This is your personal observation and opinion. As a diplomat, you can think like that. But I am sure that your grand overlord does not share your observation and opinion, because among the sovereigns of the Great Powers there is a solidarity. They think differently because they oversee everything from a higher point of view. The Glorious Emperor could not agree to leave a city that had been the capital of a state like the Ottoman Empire, one that had been glorified over centuries with majesty and power, to recently established states such as Bulgaria or Greece. I especially demand that you convey my opinion and my trust to your sovereign.⁴⁸

This answer is revealing of the extent to which Sultan Reşad interpreted the Ottoman Empire as being one of the Great Powers, with his insistence that equal sovereigns do not interfere in one another's respective monarchical rights.

⁴⁶Eyal Ginio (2005) 'Mobilizing the Ottoman Nation During the Balkan Wars (1912–1913): Awakening from the Ottoman Dream', *War in History* 12(2) pp156–77, 161.

⁴⁷Uşaklıgil, *Saray ve Ötesi*, 2003, p43.

⁴⁸Örik, 'Sultan Mehmed Reşad'a Dair', p1526.

SULTAN REŞAD DURING FIRST WORLD WAR: SULTAN, CALIPH, MONARCH

In the weeks following the assassination of the Austro-Hungarian heir, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Ottoman Empire felt itself forced to a critical decision about whether to participate in the war it saw coming in the region. Although most members of the political elites and the people as a whole were war-weary after the recent wars and supported the Ottoman Empire remaining neutral, the governing CUP triumvirate of Enver, Talat and Cemal Pasha together with the Grand Vizier Said Halim Pasha argued for active participation.⁴⁹ Ziya Şakir wrote in his memoirs that these prominent CUP members insisted that the Ottoman Empire had to choose a side:

War is certain. Two groups will certainly clash with each other. During this great collision, it is impossible for us to be indifferent toward this war because of the geographical conditions of our territories. It is undoubtedly preferable to decay for an honourable struggle instead of a dishonourable death via being downtrodden without defending ourselves for remaining neutral.⁵⁰

From that perspective, the only question was whose side the Ottoman Empire should choose to be on. That this stance was endorsed by the Grand Vizier was also important. The Grand Vizier had become, in the early modern Ottoman state, the chief minister of state, with both civil and military authority. While, under the constitution, the Grand Vizier no longer exercised such powers, the holder of that position carried considerable authority within the royal household, and Said Halim Pasha was valued by Sultan Reşad.⁵¹ The CUP leaders did seek alliances with powers traditionally interested in the region in the shape of Britain, France, and even looked to Russia. However, none of these powers was interested in the potential contribution that the Ottomans could make to any

⁴⁹Şakir, *İttihad*, pp221–2.

⁵⁰Ibid., p127. See also Stig Förster (2014) ‘Civil-Military Relations’ in Jay Winter, ed. *The Cambridge History of the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp91–125, 111, who endorses this contemporary perspective.

⁵¹For more on the position of the Grand Vizier, see Mehmet İpşirli (2008) ‘Sadrazam’ in *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 44 vols (İstanbul: Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Yayınları) pp35, 414–9.

forthcoming conflict in the region, advising the CUP leaders instead to remain neutral. Consequently, Enver and Said Halim Pasha in particular turned towards Germany.

The German influence in the Ottoman Empire was already significant and had been since the turn of the twentieth century. A group of German military advisors under the leadership of Liman von Sanders (1855–1929) had been employed in the Ottoman army since 1913, making it unsurprising that Enver Paşa was quite confident of a German victory should the coming conflict escalate outside the region.⁵² For the CUP leaders, then, an alliance with Germany seemed the best chance for the Empire's survival with its current territories. Ziya Şakir recalled that the pro-German mood in the higher echelons of the CUP was quite evident: the Germans were believed to have 'the most excellent army and vehicles'.⁵³ The hope was also that if the Ottoman Empire were to side with the Germans and the latter did intervene in the war, then the Ottomans might have an opportunity to regain territories lost with the Tripolitanian and Balkan Wars.

Negotiations for a formal alliance between the Ottoman and German Empires actually began by mid-July between Said Halim Pasha and the German Ambassador to the Porte, Hans Freiherr von Wangenheim, but in an atmosphere of great secrecy. Only a small number of CUP leaders knew the process was ongoing, and the records indicate that even Sultan Reşad was unaware of the negotiations.⁵⁴ According to Ali Fuad, the Sultan was informed only a few days before the signature of the alliance, when his permission was needed to conclude the treaty of alliance.⁵⁵ Deputed to undertake the task of informing the Sultan by the Grand Vizier, Ali Fuad subsequently brought the Sultan's consent back to Said Halim Pasha. However, during the days that followed, no news came from the Porte and Sultan Reşad had to instruct Ali Fuad to find out what was going on. On enquiry, Said Halim Pasha, the Grand Vizier told Ali Fuad that the treaty of alliance had been signed by him and that he would send a

⁵²Harold Wise and Spencer C. Tucker (2014) 'Liman von Sanders, Otto' in Spencer C. Tucker, ed. *First World War: The Definitive Encyclopedia and Document Collection*, 5 vols (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO) pp5, 962–4.

⁵³Şakir, *İttihad*, p127.

⁵⁴Gerard E. Silberstein (1970) *The Troubled Alliance: German-Austrian Relations, 1914 to 1917* (Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press) p14.

⁵⁵Türkeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, p114.

translation of the text to the Sultan.⁵⁶ Thus, the Sultan's involvement was only required to legitimise the already formulated and signed treaty, meaning that this was the only reason for informing him of its detail.

By the day that the treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Germany came into effect on 2 August 1914, it was plain that there was to be a major European war, and not simply another regional conflict. That day, the Ottoman government declared a general mobilisation. From this date until the formal declaration of war by the Ottoman Empire on 29 October 1914, the status of the Ottoman Empire was one of 'armed neutrality' (*müsallah bîtarafılık*). During this period, 'the idea that the Ottomans had good reason to prepare for the imminent war and, therefore, that every Ottoman needed to willingly support the mobilisation and act upon the call to arms' was widely disseminated.⁵⁷ The CUP also organised for an imperial decree to suspend Parliament in order to prevent any dissident voices publicly criticising government policy.⁵⁸ Finally, on 29 October 1914, Enver Paşa ordered two German battleships, the *Goeben* and the *Breslau*, which had taken refuge from the British Mediterranean fleet in Istanbul harbour, to shell the Russian ports of Odessa and Sebastopol. These two battleships were claimed by the Turkish government to have been bought as replacements for the two battleships ordered from Britain but subsequently confiscated by the British after the signature of the Ottoman-German treaty. As a result of this attack, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire and Britain and France followed suit. However, the official Ottoman declaration of war, dated 11 November 1914 and signed by Sultan Reşad, claimed that the Sultan declared war on Britain, France and Russia because of attacks by them upon Ottoman territory.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Mehmet Beşikçi (2012) *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Voluntarism and Resistance* (Leiden: Brill) p33.

⁵⁸ İrtəm, *Meşrutiyetten Mütarekeye*, p578.

⁵⁹ A note on the archival documents: The archival documents used in this chapter are provided by the Prime Ministerial Ottoman Archives. The abbreviations used for archival documents are as follows: BOA stands for the Prime Ministerial Ottoman Archives (*Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivleri*). İ. MMS stands for Imperial Decrees—Special Council (*İradeler – Meclis-i Mahsus*). HR. SYS stands for Foreign Ministry—Political Section (*Hariciye Nezareti – Siyasi Kısım*). HR. SFR stands for Foreign Ministry—Cipher Office (*Hariciye Nezareti – Şifre Kalemi*) while DH. SFR stands for Interior Ministry—Cipher

The official declaration of war by Sultan Reşad legitimised the *fait accompli* of Enver Paşa, and authorised the government to wage war. More importantly, however, as Caliph, the Sultan issued a proclamation of *jihad* on the same day as the declaration of war against the Triple Entente. For the first time, the Sultan openly called upon Muslims to take up arms. Five *fatwas* were issued at the same time by the Grand Mufti Ürgüplü Hayri Efendi, insisting that not only Muslims in the Ottoman Empire, but also those living in British, French and Russian territories, should take up arms against these enemies of Islam.⁶⁰ Therefore, the call for *jihad* not only targeted the Ottoman population but also the entire Muslim community globally, and particularly those living within the territories of the Ottoman Empire's enemies.

The German influence on the decision to declare *jihad* is evident. The German Kaiser was personally optimistic about the helpful effect it would have on the loyalty of Muslims in British, French and Russian colonies and their willingness to fight for their colonial masters. Therefore, the call for *jihad* was a joint German-Ottoman strategy.⁶¹ In his declaration, the Sultan Reşad argued that the Ottoman Empire had only entered into the war to 'defend their legal interests', adding that the Triple Entente powers all were guilty of oppressing Muslim communities living under their rule. Thus this 'greatest *jihad*' (*cibād-ı ekber*) was aimed at ending the attacks on 'both the dignity of Caliphate and the law of imperial governance'.⁶² Similarly, in another declaration specifically targeting the Egyptian peoples, Sultan Reşad asked his 'Egyptian sons' to contribute to his 'imperial aim' of saving Egypt from British oppression and restoring its autonomy by participating in the holy war that he had declared.⁶³ Hence, the declaration of *jihad* had both a religious and a

Office (*Dabiliye Nezareti – Şifre Kalemî*). BEO stands for The Sublime Porte Records Office (*Bab-ı Ali Evrak Odası*).

⁶⁰For the full text of these *fatwas*, see Uğur Ünal, ed. (2013) *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Birinci Dünya Harbi* (İstanbul: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü Yayınları) pp92–4.

⁶¹Mustafa Aksakal (2008) *Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) p17.

⁶²Tevfik Yener (2015) *Birinci Dünya Savaşı ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu* (İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi) p229.

⁶³BOA. HR. SYS. 2109/7-12.

secular strategic purpose, which was possible thanks to the dual identity of Sultan Reşad as both Caliph and Sultan.

The Gallipoli Front was of most concern to the Ottoman government, due to the closeness of the Dardanelles to the capital, including the royal palace. It was the lynchpin of the capital's security. If the Dardanelles were to be captured, then Istanbul would fall easily. Consequently, the Ottoman armed forces fought determinedly and valiantly to defeat the Allied fleet's assault on the Dardanelles and the land assault on the Gallipoli peninsula. Even so, the level of threat was considered so high that the government decided to take the precaution of moving its headquarters, along with the Sultan and the Imperial Treasury to Anatolia, first towards Eskişehir and then Bursa or Konya. During the previous Balkan Wars, even when Istanbul had been threatened by encroaching armies, Sultan Reşad had rejected suggestions that he should leave the capital. This time, during the Gallipoli campaign, he again rejected the suggestion of leaving at first, but later reluctantly consented to the idea.⁶⁴ The government also informed the deposed Sultan, the former Abdülhamid II, who had been transferred from exile in Thessaloniki to the Beylerbeyi Palace in İstanbul during the Balkan Wars, that he, too, could be moved to Anatolia. However, Abdülhamid strongly rejected the idea, advising Sultan Reşad not to leave the capital either, with a warning that he would never be able to return if he did.⁶⁵ Fortunately for the Sultan, the Ottoman armies repelled the Allied attack and the imperative need to move disappeared.

The Ottoman victory in the Gallipoli campaign aroused a significant public fervour in support of the government's war efforts, and enabled its leaders to turn it into a significant propaganda tool within the Empire. In August 1916, a poem attributed to Sultan Reşad's own authorship, was published in the pro-CUP *War Journal* (*Harb Mecmuası*), which was a key tool used by the government to provide positive war news for general public consumption. Composed of five couplets, it emphasised the might of the Ottoman army and claimed that the defeat of their enemies was thanks to both the will of God and the efforts of Ottoman soldiers. This 'imperial poem' (*gazel-i hümayun*) was so deeply appreciated that it was subsequently widely republished and

⁶⁴İtem, *Meşrutiyetten Mütarekeyet*, p616; Türkgeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, p117.

⁶⁵İtem, *Meşrutiyetten Mütarekeye*, p617.

translated into German and Arabic as well.⁶⁶ Whether Sultan Reşad himself wrote the poem or not remains unclear, and does not really matter.⁶⁷ It served its purpose of increasing Ottoman loyalty to the Sultan as a way of reinforcing support for government policies. As part of the same strategy, the government had already, on 30 April 1915, officially declared the Sultan as *ghazi* (warrior of the faith) in order to glorify the Ottoman victory in the Gallipoli campaign.⁶⁸ This is an interesting development as four years previously, when on his travels in the Balkans as previously mentioned in this chapter, Sultan Reşad had rejected the suggestion of one of the politicians accompanying him, Ubeydullah Efendi that he be labelled as *ghazi*. The grounds for Sultan Reşad refusal in 1911 had been that he had not personally fought in a war and his reign was a period of peace.⁶⁹ He had still not fought personally, however the advantage of bestowing the title in terms of its ability to arouse pro-government public opinion even further decided the issue. As with the imperial poem, CUP leaders used Sultan Reşad's authority to legitimise their own policies in the public gaze. Essentially, the Sultan Reşad was being used as a key public relations figure in strategies to increase popular loyalty to the CUP administration.

As this underlines, during the First World War the figure of the Sultan was still a significant political asset for the CUP and its leaders in government. Most of its policies acquired legitimacy by being passed to him for his formal approval. Equally as Caliph, the Sultan could also be used as a seminal figure with the potential not only for increasing support within the Ottoman Empire itself, but also for arousing hostility and disaffection amongst the Muslim communities of the enemy powers. But in addition to these two aspects of his royal identity, the third component discussed earlier could also be used positively within government pro-war propaganda. It was not only a matter of CUP government policy:

⁶⁶Enfel Doğan and Fatih Tıǧlı (2005) 'Sultan V. Mehmed Reşad'un Çanakkale Gazeli ve Bu Gazele Yazılan Tahmisler', *İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Dergisi* 33, pp41–96, 47.

⁶⁷Some argue for his authorship, others claim it was written by an unknown poet and attributed to the Sultan for political purposes. See Ali Vasıf Efendi (2012) *Bir Şehzadenin Hatıratı: Vatan ve Menfada Gördüklerim ve İşittiklerim*, compiled, Osman Selahaddin Osmanoğlu (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları) p91; İrtem, *Meşrutiyetten Mütarekeye*, p41.

⁶⁸Şakir, *İttihad*, p290.

⁶⁹Çelebi, *Sultan Reşad*, p81.

the Sultan himself was particularly pro-active here. He took pains to portray himself as a leader of equal status with the other royal leaders of the Triple Alliance. Royal visits to Istanbul made by members of the German and Austro-Hungarian dynasties provided highly visible and high profile opportunities for demonstrating this. Sultan Reşad hosted visits from figures including the brother of Karl I/IV of Austria-Hungary, the son of the Bulgarian Tsar, and the nephew of Wilhelm II.⁷⁰ Wilhelm II himself visited İstanbul in October 1917.⁷¹ Sultan Reşad appointed the Kaiser as a Field-Marshal in the Ottoman army, bestowing the uniform and sword upon him at the official dinner given to honour his visit. During this dinner, Sultan Reşad delivered a speech very slowly because of his old age, while in order not to upset the Sultan, Kaiser Wilhelm delivered his speech in a similar tone. This was a detail of royal courtesy not followed by a subsequent royal visitor, the new Emperor of Austria-Hungary, Karl I/IV. The latter delivered his speech in in powerful and rapid tones. For Ali Fuad, this showed the respect that Kaiser Wilhelm for the Ottoman Sultan as his royal equal, while Karl I/IV's reputation suffered there when he did not observe similar monarchical courtesy.⁷²

In addition to these official visits, and in line with the long-established habits of his European fellow monarchs, Sultan Reşad made a practice of regularly granting Ottoman medals and decorations to the members of allied royal dynasties. For instance, he despatched the Order of Privilege to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg.⁷³ He had already awarded the Medal of Privilege of War to Wilhelm II, while sending the Order of Privilege and the Order of *Mecidi* respectively to the new Austro-Hungarian Emperor and Empress on their accession.⁷⁴ As part of his deliberate strategy to demonstrate that he was a modern European monarch, he also took pains to show philanthropic concern for the subjects of the allied states.

Consequently, the Sultan donated to various charity organisations in Germany and Austria-Hungary. He donated to a statue being erected

⁷⁰Şakir, *İttihad*, p414.

⁷¹This was in fact his third visit to Istanbul, but the two previous visits had been made during the reign of Abdülhamid II.

⁷²Türkgeldi, *Görüp İştiklerim*, p131.

⁷³BOA. BEO. 4409/330670.

⁷⁴BOA. BEO. 4340/325476; BOA. BEO. 4520/338952.

in Vienna to commemorate Austrian losses in battle.⁷⁵ Similarly, he sent 1000 *krone* to one Austrian war charity, 1000 *krone* towards the erection of another war memorial in Budapest, and 2500 francs to the charity set up by the Austrian Archduchess Marie to look after Austrian war orphans along with 300 marks to the families of fallen soldiers from Bremen.⁷⁶ These efforts seem to have been successful in terms of their impact on German and Austrian public opinion, because the records indicate the perceptions of the Sultan were positive. For instance, one document in the archives records that in Budapest a significant crowd gathered before the Ottoman General Consulate in Budapest to express their respectful sentiments towards the Sultan and his army.⁷⁷ Similarly, another document records that the people of Vienna manifested similarly positive feelings for the Sultan and the allied Ottoman troops.⁷⁸

This demonstrates that while Sultan Reşad did not play an active political role in the evolution of war strategy (that was left to the CUP triumvirate) he had a role designated for him by the CUP government and he fulfilled that role effectively. Politically, his endorsement legitimised the CUP government's policies. This was important because to ensure the willingness of the Ottoman troops to fight, an apparently strong and legitimate cause was needed. Fighting in the name of the Sultan ensured the troops were fighting for the state, and not a political faction, as the Sultan represented the state for the masses. Secondly, Sultan Reşad co-operated in using his identity as Caliph, in response to the joint German-CUP strategy of arousing Muslim public opinion against the 'crusading' Triple Entente powers.⁷⁹ Although this scheme

⁷⁵ BOA. BEO. 4347/325965.

⁷⁶ BOA. BEO. 4405/330309; BOA. BEO. 4421/331551; BOA. BEO. 4421/331553; BOA. BEO. 4496/337159.

⁷⁷ BOA. BEO. 4384/328788.

⁷⁸ BOA. BEO. 4392/329382.

⁷⁹ It also, problematically, had the effect of alienating non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire though that was of less concern to the government given long-existing doubts about the loyalty to the Empire and the Sultan of groups like the Armenians. The religious dimension to the Ottomanism promoted by the CUP was exclusionary, but this was not new, since the previous Sultan and his governments had already faced the growing Armenian nationalist sentiments. The suspicions of successive Ottoman governments with regard to Armenian independence movements and their perception of Armenians as traitors

did not work, ultimately, in terms of creating support for *jihad* outside the Ottoman Empire, hopes for a general Muslim uprising were high at the beginning of the war and only the Sultan's consent to invoke his identity as Caliph could have enabled the strategy to be attempted. Finally, Sultan Reşad's determination to portray himself as a modern European monarch, capable of administering the state in a Western manner, was a factor in generating German, Austrian and Bulgarian public support for an alliance made with a Muslim Empire and, for many, a former enemy.

TRANSFORMATION OF THE OTTOMAN DYNASTY BEFORE AND DURING THE GREAT WAR: OTTOMAN PRINCES AT WAR

It was not just the Sultan who played an important role in legitimising the CUP government's war aims. Other members of the Ottoman dynasty also played their part. In understanding their role, it is important to note the distinction between the elder and new generations. The elder generation, composed of aged Ottoman princes including the two successive Crown Princes, Yusuf İzzeddin and Vahidüddin Efendis, was politically aware and active. However, a younger generation, largely born towards the end of Abdülhamid II's reign, was primarily interested in acquiring a military rather than a political education. Both Yusuf İzzeddin and Vahidüddin were known to be anti-CUP and unsurprisingly, they were hostile to Sultan Reşad's endorsement of the government's war strategy.⁸⁰ However, as the CUP closely followed the contacts between these two Crown Princes and anti-CUP politicians, and could control the public impact of their opposition, this did not amount to a significant threat. It is worth noting, however, that Sultan Reşad collaborated with the CUP in preventing the Crown Princes from engaging in politics.⁸¹

collaborating with the Allied forces would lead to the notorious 1915 relocation, claiming the lives of thousands of Armenians during the First World War. See Mustafa Serdar Palabıyık (2015) *Understanding the Turkish-Armenian Controversy over 1915* (İstanbul: Beta).

⁸⁰Prens Sabahaddin (2007) *Gönüllü Sürgünden Zorunlu Sürgüne: Bütün Eserleri*, compiled by Mehmet Ö. Alkan (İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları) p533.

⁸¹Mahmud Şevket Paşa and Hafız Hakkı Paşa (2009) *Rumeli: Yağmalanan İmparatorluk* (İstanbul: Örgün Yayınevi) pp37–42.

More significant, in terms of the war effort, were the public profiles of members of the younger generation of princes. The 1908 Revolution had transformed not just the political system within the Empire, in changing the monarchical system it had also transformed the opportunities available to members of the Ottoman dynasty. The poor education traditionally available to Ottoman princes has already been mentioned. Abdülhamid II had attempted to modernise princely education to an extent, however this had not included any public role or contact with the wider administration or public for the princes. They were largely unknown quantities to the Ottoman bureaucratic elite as well as to the ordinary people. Ali Fuad recorded that after 1908, when the princes could move freely out of their palaces, their ignorance of the wider world attracted negative public attention and decreased the dignity of the dynasty. As a result, the government had decided that princely education needed to be reformed.⁸² Princes started to attend ordinary Ottoman public schools and even attended civil or military schools in Europe. Mehmed Abid and Abdülkerim Efendis, the son and grandson of Abdülhamid II respectively, graduated from the Imperial School (*Mekteb-i Sultani*) and then attended the Military School (*Mekteb-i Harbiye*).⁸³ Although some form of military education had been available to Ottoman princes before 1908, this type of education only became systematic subsequently. In his memoirs, Prince Ali Vasıb Efendi described his education at the Military School in detail, including his relationships with other princes who were also there. Some members of the Ottoman dynasty also went abroad for further military education. Abdürrahim, the son of Abdülhamid II, along with the grandsons of Abdülmecid (Abdülhalim) and Murad V (Osman Fuad) were sent to the Potsdam Military Academy as the guests of Kaiser Wilhelm II.⁸⁴ Ömer Faruk Efendi, the grandson of Abdülaziz, went first to the Theresianum of Vienna before graduating from the Potsdam Military Academy.⁸⁵ The Kaiser had admitted these four princes into the Imperial Guard of Hussars, the personal guard regiment of the Kaiser.⁸⁶ Overall, the reform

⁸²Türkgeldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, p125.

⁸³Öztuna, *Devletler ve Hanedanlar*, pp328, 335.

⁸⁴Ali Vasıb, *Bir Şehzadenin Hatıratı*, p84.

⁸⁵Öztuna, *Devletler ve Hanedanlar*, p358.

⁸⁶Ali Vasıb, *Bir Şehzadenin Hatıratı*, p86.

of princely education in the Ottoman Empire was quite significant, therefore.⁸⁷

Also contributing to not only a better education of the Ottoman dynasty but also to improved Western perceptions of it, were the improvements in the education of female members of the dynasty after 1908. Sultan Reşad, along with Ünsiyar Hanım (the wife of his eldest son, Ziyaeddin Efendi) took a particular interest in this aspect.⁸⁸ Allied to this was a new policy on royal marriages. Ottoman princes had generally married Circassian concubines since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The princesses, on the other hand, traditionally married the sons of notable bureaucrats. After 1908, the CUP government enabled Ottoman princes to marry princesses from either the Ottoman or other dynasties. Previously, the kinds of intra-dynastic marriages common to other European monarchies had never occurred in the Ottoman Empire and this was another signal of the modernisation of the Ottoman dynasty, even if it remained uncommon.⁸⁹ Additionally, the Ottoman princes began to marry the members of other noble dynasties as well. For instance, Abdürrahim and Osman Fuad Efendis married the daughters of Abbas Halim Pasha, a member of the Khedive of Egypt's family. These marriages were the first European-style marriages in the Ottoman Empire, signalling the advance of Europeanisation in the dynasty.⁹⁰

Given this modernisation, it is less surprising to find that several of the Ottoman princes saw active military service after 1908, and particularly during the First World War. The process of imitation of European royal traditions was not complete, however. Lütü Simavi recalled visiting European royals asking whether Ottoman princes generally received a military education because during the military parades organised for these visitors, the Ottoman princes they encountered wore European-style civilian dress, not military uniforms. Simavi advised Sultan Reşad to adopt the European practice of putting the princes on display on such occasions in uniforms.⁹¹ According to Ali Vasıb Efendi, it had been

⁸⁷ Cevdet Kırpık (2016) *Osmanlı'da Şehzade Eğitimi* (İstanbul: Ötüken Neşriyat) p162.

⁸⁸ Safiye Ünüvar (2013) *Saray Hatıralarım* (İstanbul: Timaş Yayınları) p27.

⁸⁹ Türk geldi, *Görüp İşittiklerim*, p125.

⁹⁰ Ali Vasıb, *Bir Şehzadenin Hatıratı*, p19.

⁹¹ Simavi, *Son Osmanlı*, p91.

Enver Paşa who had made the decision to permit Ottoman princes to serve actively as members of the Ottoman army.⁹²

Ottoman princes undertook two types of engagement with the Ottoman forces during the First World War. In common with other royal dynasties engaged in the war, they were employed by the government on morale-boosting visits to troops on active service. This included sending some of these princes abroad, to increase Ottoman ties with their allies. Crown Prince Yusuf İzzeddin, for instance, visited the Ottoman troops in July 1915, during the Gallipoli campaign, while Vahidüddin went on visits to Austria-Hungary and Germany. However, the government was wary of the usefulness of such visits. It is rumoured that Yusuf İzzeddin's visit to Gallipoli provided a demonstration of the rift between the CUP and the Crown Prince, who reprimanded Enver Paşa for sacrificing the lives of thousands of Ottoman soldiers in vain.⁹³ Vahidüddin's visit to Austria-Hungary and Germany, in December 1917, did include a visit to the battle-front, as well as witnessing a military parade organised by German troops.⁹⁴ He also met the Kaiser and a number of German commanders including von Hindenburg and Ludendorff.⁹⁵ Some of the younger generation of Ottoman princes, including Osman Fuad Efendi and Abdürrahim Efendi also visited the troops for morale-boosting purposes. The two young princes visited the 15th Army Corps, sent to Galicia to fight with the Austrian troops against the Russians.⁹⁶ The younger generation was also employed in the more high-profile diplomatic visits on occasions. In September 1917, Osman Fuad Efendi was sent to Bulgaria to attend the funeral of the Queen of Bulgaria, where he met Prince August of Germany and Prince Maximilian of Austria.⁹⁷

However, some of the younger generation of Ottoman princes did see active service with the Ottoman army during First World War. Abdürrahim Efendi, who had graduated from the Potsdam Military Academy, served an artillery officer and saw action in battles on both the Galician and Palestinian Fronts. His success on the Galician Front saw his

⁹² Ali Vasıb, *Bir Şehzadenin Hatıratı*, p15.

⁹³ Öztuna, *Devletler ve Hanedanlar*, p291.

⁹⁴ Yılmaz Çetiner (1997) *Son Padişah Vahdettin* (İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları) pp128–44.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p144.

⁹⁶ *Birinci Dünya Harbi: VII nci Cilt – Avrupa Cepheleeri – I nci Kısım (Galiçya Cephesi)* (1967) (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi) p63.

⁹⁷ BOA. HR. SFR. 04.113/286.

promotion, before he was sent to Palestine, where his leadership saved artillery troops under his command from a British assault. As a result, he was awarded with the German Order of Merit, the only member of the Ottoman dynasty to earn this order in service.⁹⁸ Another Ottoman prince who saw active service was a further graduate from the Potsdam Military Academy, Osman Fuad. He served on various Fronts, including the Galician, Sinai, and Tripolitanian Fronts, being wounded in an accident on the Sinai Front.⁹⁹ Osman Fuad was appointed General Commander of the African Corps in April 1918, when it was decided to send him to Tripolitania with a German submarine to organise local resistance against the Italians.¹⁰⁰ The reasoning, however, was not his military prowess but rather an attempt by the government to engage local loyalties to the dynasty through this appointment. Enver Paşa took care to appoint Lieutenant Colonel Nafiz Bey, one of his confidants, as Osman Fuad's Chief of Staff, given the young prince's inexperience in command.¹⁰¹

The strategy initially seemed to work well in that the arrival of the prince did have the desired effect on the loyalties of local tribal leaders. He also undertook more military-style duties with an inspection visit to the Tunisian-Libyan border to see local conditions there. The Italians, on the other hand, were not happy with this new development and renewed their assaults on Tripolitania. Osman Fuad attempted both to counter these assaults militarily and to improve the chances of success by ending hostilities among the local chieftains, with little success. At the end of the war, when the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Mudros, the prince was still in Tripolitania. He was ordered to surrender to the Italians; however, he preferred to surrender to the French, hoping that the French would directly send him to İstanbul. However, when the French troops received the prince at the Tunisian-Libyan border, they delivered him to the Italians, who then held the prince captive on Ischia Island for three months before returning him to İstanbul in September 1919.¹⁰²

Another prince who saw active service during the First World War was Cemaleddin Efendi, grandson of Abdülaziz. Cemaleddin Efendi first

⁹⁸BOA. BEO. 4485/336353; Ali Vastı, *Bir Şehzadenin Hatıratı*, p28.

⁹⁹BOA. DH. ŞFR. 560/98.

¹⁰⁰BOA. BEO. 4510/338192.

¹⁰¹*Birinci Dünya Harbinde Türk Harbi VI ncı Cilt – Hicaz, Asir, Yemen Cepheleleri ve Libya Harekatı 1914–1918* (1978) (Ankara: Genelkurmay Basımevi) p709.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp716–36.

served on the Gallipoli Front before being appointed as Commander of the training camps of the 3rd Army, where he stayed for two years. After the conquest of Batumi in April 1918 (given to the Ottoman Empire under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, leading to the entry of Turkish troops the following month), Celameddin Efendi was sent there, where he served under Vehip Paşa. In his memoirs, Vehip Paşa mentioned the prince's conduct and abilities extremely positively.¹⁰³ Thus the Ottoman princes, as well as the Sultan, were part of a process of transformation and modernisation of the dynasty in what turned out, ironically, to be the closing years of the Empire.

CONCLUSION

The role played by the Ottoman dynasty during the First World War was a complex one, and the existing literature on the topic is inadequate. The memoirs of Ottoman bureaucrats, along with a small number of few books and articles, are the only resources to touch, indirectly or partially, upon the subject. The key reason for this inadequate literature lies in the established retrospective belief that the Ottoman dynasty in general, and Sultan Reşad in particular, were merely puppets in the hands of the CUP. From this perspective, the CUP dominated every aspect of Ottoman politics, and no space was left for the dynasty to become involved actively in the government of the Empire. This conclusion is certainly accurate to an extent, in that the CUP government's influence, especially in the areas of political and military affairs, was extensive. However, this does not automatically mean that the Ottoman dynasty was an irrelevant factor during the First World War. Had it been so, it might have survived the Turkish War of Independence, which brought about the Treaty of Lausanne in April 1923.

The identification of irrelevancy is a direct consequence of a neglect of the history of the transformation of the dynasty after the 1908 revolution. The new parliamentary regime certainly did limit the power of the Sultan, transforming him from absolute ruler to a constitutional monarch. It is also fair to say that Sultan Reşad would, on occasions, refrain from invoking his residual rights under the constitution because he feared being dethroned. But he was already a convinced liberal when

¹⁰³Yüksel Nizamoğlu (2013) *Vehip Paşa: Kahramanlıktan Sürgüne* (İzmir: Yitik Hazine Yayınları) p288.

he came to the throne in 1908, and like other constitutional monarchs of the twentieth century, seems to have accepted the limitations set upon him voluntarily. This chapter has shown that the relationship between the CUP and the dynasty was far from that of a master-puppet one. Instead, what was created was a constitutional monarchy demonstrating a mutually beneficial intercourse between government and monarch, where the CUP used the Sultan to legitimise its policies, while the Sultan accepted and used his symbolic power in that sense.

It is telling that the CUP government, as well as the Sultan, were interested in a process of modernising the dynasty, and choosing to do so by attempting to make the institution and the dynasty itself resemble their European counterparts. Members of the dynasty became freer and better-educated thanks to educational reforms sponsored by the government and supported by the Sultan. The memoirs of Ali Vasıb Efendi, one of these young princes, show a real sense of gratitude amongst them towards Enver Paşa. It needs to be accepted that the CUP also recognised that it benefitted from Sultan Reşad's support for its policies and initiatives. As the Sultan, Reşad had a significant impact on the ordinary peoples of the Empire. Up to the First World War, the CUP primarily portrayed Sultan Reşad as a secular symbol, one capable of unifying the diverse components of the Empire. Though the Sultan emerged in his persona as Caliph during the First World War, he did so on the prompting of his supposedly secular government. Equally, it was in the interests of the government and not just the Ottoman dynasty that the Sultan was portrayed as a modern, constitutional European monarch. All in all, Sultan Reşad's triple-faceted identity (as a Sultan, Caliph, and modern European monarch) played a significant role in supporting the CUP government during First World War and this was achieved with the support of the man on the throne. It had not been his decision to ally with Germany or to go to war, but there is no evidence he was unhappy with this strategy. His successor as Sultan, however, faced a new set of challenges in establishing the relevance of the sultanate in Turkey after the Great War. The sultanate had become associated with a religiously-inspired identity with the Sultan as a weaker protector of the Ottoman realm, whose borders had been shrunk to almost one-sixth of the pre-war territories, while the nationalist movement led by Mustafa Kemal looked to a more secular identity based on republican nationalism. It is in that context—not the context of the Great War—that the final collapse of the Ottoman dynasty must be understood.

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CHAPTER 6

A Cause of Tension? The Leadership of King George V: Visiting the Western Front

Matthew Glencross

INTRODUCTION

The Great War was declared four years into the reign of George V; a man who had never expected to be king until the unexpected death of his older brother. Instead, being effectively classified as a minor royal, George had joined his grandmother's Navy aged 12 in 1877, to train for a naval career. On the unexpected death of his brother in January 1892, he had left the Navy as a young man of 27; one who had already risen to the rank of Commander and had had charge of his first two ships, suggesting a future promising naval career. He was thus a man who had been trained as a leader, but in a practical way—one very different to the leadership role he had to prepare to assume as a potential King. This made George V a very different type of constitutional monarch to those who had ascended the throne in the previous century.

George had not, from childhood, received the education of a royal heir and future leader of a kingdom. Instead, while he had received the

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education of someone expected to be a leader of men it was a leadership training that was shared with others in a similar position to him; and it had included learning how to take, as well as give, orders and to work within a system under the authority of his seniors. This, as the chapter will reveal, ensured that his agenda and consequent initiatives as monarch during the Great War differed significantly from those of his predecessors. Nowhere did this manifest itself more strongly than when he was acting as the national leader in the context of a major war. George V adopted a new, and in some ways more ‘hands-on’ approach to aspects of this task. It was one which did not involve interference in government policy and the strategic management of the war, but one which enabled him to be seen as a ‘national’ leader in a cultural and social sense, with all the implications that carried for how Britain and its Empire’s spirit of involvement in the war developed.

GEORGE V AS CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCH

The throne George V inherited is regularly described as a constitutional monarchy, which suggests conformity to a certain well-defined model. However, the British constitutional monarchy had evolved in ways that were distinctive, and different to other constitutional monarchies of the era.¹ Since the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty in 1714, a recognisably modern constitutional monarchy had begun to emerge, where the monarch’s political input had diminished to a stage where, by convention, the monarch stood aloof from active politics. Elected politicians and hereditary peers actually governed in the name of the monarch. The long widowhood of Queen Victoria, in her lengthy period on the throne, had cemented both the ability and the willingness of the political class in the country to govern without expectation of political monarchical interference. The political changes of the Victorian era had also encouraged the development of a reality where elected state mechanisms took on many of the previous responsibilities of the Crown, leaving the institution in a much diminished state in terms of ‘traditional’ monarchical political power.

This meant, that on entry into the Great War, the King knew, and apparently accepted, that the management of the war and the majority

¹Other constitutional monarchies of the time included Belgium, the Netherlands and Denmark as well as the Ottoman state, for instance.

of decision-making on war strategy rested with the government acting in his name, and supported by both Houses of Parliament and the civil service machinery known collectively as Whitehall. Thus George V's ability to direct the course of the war was overtly restricted. Yet he was not without power, even if that power has understood by most historians to be more symbolic than real. The King had, for instance, seen how his father, Edward VII, had harnessed the power of the royal symbol to put the British firmly back at the centre of British diplomacy. Edward VII had achieved this through his restoration of royal state visits overseas, where the symbolic power of the British Crown, as an indicator of the might of the British State, had been repackaged for a modern era.² George himself had followed this trend after came to the throne by the staging of a magnificent Delhi Durbar in 1911, formally announcing the Crown's future vision, that it would continue to be identified as the symbolic representation of the British State and Empire.³ It was through a sustained exercise in symbolic leadership that George V was able to involve himself in leading his armies during the Great War, without actually taking a lead in evolving military strategy.

This chapter will explore how, in practical terms, the King worked to develop his role during the four years of conflict. It will also assess how far this placed him at odds with parliament's expectations of his behaviour at such a testing time for the nation, and how a practical reconciliation between those expectations and the expectations George V had of himself was attained. The core issue for the King was that the men who had joined the armed services were fighting and dying in his

²Matthew Glencross (2015) *The State Visits of Edward VII: Reinventing Royal Diplomacy for the Twentieth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan). The term 'state visit' is one that had, by the twentieth century, acquired a certain complexity. Formally, it remained a diplomatic visit overseas, arranged by the institutions of the state visiting and the state to be visited. Increasingly, however, it was a term also used for formal royal visits to locations within the United Kingdom and the British Empire, to distinguish between 'private' visits to locations like Nottingham, say, and ones where the monarch made a formal visit to a city and was received 'in state' by the civic authorities, who organised—in a way that echoed, to an extent, the formalities of an overseas state visit, with banquets, and other official events.

³Matthew Glencross (2016) 'George V and the New Royal House' in Matthew Glencross, Judith Rowbotham, and Michael Kandiah, eds *The Windsor Dynasty 1910 to the Present: Long to Reign Over Us?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) pp33–57, 39–41.

name, and not that of his ministers.⁴ George had not merely a theoretical appreciation of what this meant, but also a personal and practical one. He had served as a naval officer, and in that light had seen Queen Victoria not as his grandmother but as his ultimate commander. So he had a visceral comprehension of how the men who served in the Army and Navy felt about the monarch in whose name they fought.⁵ He had, as a naval officer, been taught to feel responsible for his ship's company and their welfare. Now, as King—in symbolic charge, at least, of the 'ship of state'—he extended those feelings of responsibility for the whole Navy and the Army, and Marines also.

As this chapter reveals, the King certainly surprised his Ministers and political advisers in acting as he did in order to fulfil his feelings of responsibility. The question of whether that amounted to the King, in the context of war, attempting to overstep the constitutional boundaries by then accepted as delineating the extent of those responsibilities when performing his role as monarch is a more complex issue. One challenge for both the King and the British government was that posed by French attitudes and sensibilities to having a British army on its soil. But more significant was the negotiation of what the royal symbol should properly represent at such times of crisis, given the popular consciousness of living in the 'modern' era in Britain and its Empire. What is often not properly appreciated is that when war was declared in 1914, the British monarchy was already going through a period of re-invention under George V, one which had started in 1910. This re-invention simply continued during the war years. If anything, the war needs to be understood as a catalyst; something which may have changed the pace, but not the direction, of the changes promoted by George V from his accession on.⁶

⁴It is acknowledged that women also died in the cause, however in organisations like Queen Alexandra's Royal Nursing Corps, the women who joined retained a quasi-civilian status and did not take an oath of loyalty to the monarch. The new women's auxiliary institutions linked to the Army and Navy only came in at the end of the war, and so did not, immediately, affect the King's thinking.

⁵For further on this, see Heather Jones (2016) 'The Nature of Kingship in First World War Britain' in Glencross, Rowbotham, and Kandiah, *Windsor Dynasty*, pp195–217.

⁶Glencross, 'George V and the New Royal House'.

THE MONARCH AND 'HIS' ARMED FORCES

What the war did do, however, was highlight the role of the armed forces as an urgent issue for the King, in relation to his active reconceptualisation of his monarchical role. With his troops engaged in action, his role as head of the armed services of the nation and the Empire became an immediate consideration, in terms of how it needed to be negotiated in relation to the expectations of politicians about what the monarch should appropriately do in wartime. Looking through the annals of history we see countless accounts of Kings throughout the ancient and early modern world leading their men into battle. Campaigning had traditionally been seen as one of the key aspects of successful monarchy, where a sovereign's presence and prowess on the battlefield added to the respect that he received not only from his subjects but also his fellow sovereigns. To the British in particular the image of the warrior King was so central to their idea of what the title conveyed that achievements on this front could even outweigh their failures domestically. The most famous example of this rule was Richard I, the Lionheart, who continued to be lauded in books by popular authors like G. A. Henty.⁷

After 1714, what helped the image of the incoming Hanoverians in the eyes of the British populace as a whole, especially given the Jacobite threat, was knowledge that both George I and his heir, who became George II, were experienced and successful military commanders on the field.⁸ But such prowess was increasingly not a recommendation to politicians governing in the name of the monarch. It was the actions of George II at the Battle of Dettingen in 1743 during the War of Austrian Succession resulted in a politically-inspired protocol which directly forbade a British monarch and the heirs in direct line from taking an active role in future conflicts.⁹ The problem for his British ministers was that at that time, the death of a monarch automatically triggered a general election. With involvement in what were identified as Hanoverian wars unpopular with many British subjects, the emerging class of professional politicians like William Pitt were happy to jettison any direct active link

⁷ G. A. Henty (1880) *St George for England* (Oxford: Latimer House).

⁸ See, on this point, the discussions in Andrew Thompson (2011) *George II: King and Elector* (Yale University Press) pp7–8, 14–15, 19, 31–3, 44–6, 148–50.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp147–8.

between the monarch and his armed forces.¹⁰ Thereafter, youthful male heirs to the British throne were expected merely to have a symbolic role in relation to their armies and navies.¹¹ Of course, William IV, the Sailor King, did serve in the Royal Navy—though not, in fact, with great personal distinction. However he had unexpectedly become a distinctly elderly heir to the throne after the death of Princess Charlotte, daughter of George IV and heiress presumptive to the throne until her demise. George V was still a young man when he became first heir, and later King, and was the first heir since William IV to have had a career in the armed forces in his youth and early manhood. As already stressed here, that training had been, for George, a serious commitment and one which directly shaped his attitude towards his armed services.

GEORGE'S MILITARY BACKGROUND

It is unsurprising that George V would look to a relationship with his soldiers and sailors as a core element of kingship at a time of national conflict. Back in 1901, towards the end of the Boer War, he and his wife (they were then the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York) had embarked on a much-photographed and well-received royal tour of the colonies which had contributed so much to the conflict. A regular feature of the tour had been the presenting of medals to veterans (including nurses from the colonies who had served in what was about to become Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service).¹² In 1914, he looked to build on this prior experience, especially in terms

¹⁰Strictly speaking this started as a convention which has, over the centuries, become considered as a legislative reality. It first operated in the 1750s, when George II forbade his grandson, the future George III, from adventuring his person in battle in the Seven Years War. See for instance, Jeremy Black (2010) *British Politics and Foreign Policy 1744–57: Mid-Century Crisis* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp18; 21–3; James Draper (2005) *Pitt's 'Gallant Conqueror': The Turbulent Life of Lieutenant General William Draper* (London: I.B. Tauris) pp9–10.

¹¹For more discussion of this aspect, see the chapters in Brendan Simms and Torsten Rott, eds (2007) *The Hanoverian Dimension in British History 1714–1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

¹²'The Royal Tour: Reception at Melbourne', *The Times*, 7 May 1901; 'The Royal Tour: Auckland', *The Times*, 13 June 1901; 'The Royal Tour: Dunedin', *The Times*, 27 June 1901; 'The Royal Tour: Reception at Cape Town', *The Times*, 20 August 1901; 'The Royal Colonial Tour: Speech by the Duke: Ottawa', *The Times*, 23 August 1901.

of active involvement with veterans. His habit of viewing his commitments through the lens of duty in general ensured that ‘his’ men (and women)—those fighting in his name—ensured he was very conscious of symbolism of that aspect. The words ‘God, King and Country’ was a weighty consideration for him in a way that directly related to his experience of serving as an ordinary career naval officer.¹³

During his fifteen years of service, his engagement with the Navy had been that of an active career officer. He had served on various ships in various parts of the Empire, being treated on the vast majority of occasions merely as an ordinary officer, with no notice being taken of his royal connections. This is something underlined by his promotion to command of his own ship, HMS *Thrush*, on the North American station in 1889. The experience of serving as an officer in the Queen’s name, something completely detached from his family relationship with his grandmother the Queen, lay at the heart of George’s conviction that, now *he* was the monarch, he had an obligation to be actively involved in the war effort in ways that went beyond the ceremonial. This had, of course, included expectations of a regular engagement between the monarch and the armed services, which involved the reviewing of review troops before departure and on return, from active service and the presentation of medals.

The development of the philanthropic face of monarchy under Victoria in particular had established an expectation also of royal women visiting military wounded when back in Britain, and from the Boer War on, George had also adopted this habit, often going with his wife and later, his daughter.¹⁴ Unlike his recent predecessors, however, his personal experience of what it was like to serve in the name of the monarch meant that he knew from personal experience the gratification that usually resulted from such visits and other royal engagement delivered by the King, in terms of the boost given to morale and effectiveness given by direct encounters with royal interest.

The insights of this nature that arose out of his military experience were not his only asset as a wartime king. Unlike his father, Edward VII, George was ill at ease in the company of politicians, scholars and economists, where his lack of university education and conversational flair

¹³Jones, ‘Nature of Kingship’, p209.

¹⁴On this point, see Frank Prochaska (1995) *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

could be daunting to him. The company he had preferred throughout his time as Duke of York and then Prince of Wales was almost exclusively military. He was acquainted with generals and captains, from the army and the navy, often either his own commanders and contemporaries or their relatives. It could be said that although George was forced from the officer's mess officially when he left the Navy to become heir to the throne, he simply re-created it around him at the Palace in his social circles. He also numbered amongst his circle ambitious and able men, as it was common knowledge around any respectable mess hall or ship's company that the way to military promotion was if not through George, then through the company he kept.

As a result, when George came to the throne in 1910 many of his father's inner circle in the court suddenly found themselves out of favour, with their places taken instead by the military and naval men whom the new King trusted. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that George's desire for military company surpassed even that of his cousin the German Kaiser. The practical result of this was that when the war commenced George had a readymade intelligence network formed from his military friendships.

George's military circle was bolstered by his adviser, Clive Wigram. Wigram and George had met when the former was assigned as an aide to George when he visited India in 1906. Wigram was undoubtedly a man with his finger to the clicked-heeled pulse; so much so that Wigram's correspondence list has been described as 'The opening pages of the leading page of the contemporary army list'.¹⁵ As a result of this, unlike the two previous Georges (III and IV) who had occupied the throne during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, George V had a direct information channel to his armed services, including the generals and admirals; one which was not filtered through politicians. Through this, he acquired information on the conduct of the war which, it is plain, the politicians of the day might often have wished he did not possess. The King had military intelligence that was 'probably as good as, maybe better than, that on which the Cabinet had to base its conduct of military affairs'.¹⁶ The generals, for instance, on the front line, consequently had the opportunity to air grievances such as munitions and

¹⁵Charles Douglas-Home and Saul Kelly (2001) *Dignified and Efficient. The British Monarchy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Claridge Press) p42.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

rations directly to the King, in the hopes that he would then raise them with relevant ministers, enabling these senior members of the services could hope to bypass reams of red tape. This knowledge base put the King in a very strong position when dealing with the Cabinet on military matters. The knowledge derived from his alternative sources combined with his own personal understanding of military strategy, forced George V's ministers into always listening to his comments and considering seriously any advice he might offer.¹⁷

However, as a man who firmly believed in the democratic structure of the British state, George never attempted to step outside his constitutional bounds. He made no attempt to force his opinions on his government, even where he may have made trenchant comment on policy and its impacts on the armed services. Nor did he have any ambitions to ape his cousin Nicholas II, the Russian Tsar, and attempt to run the war himself. As his papers and correspondence make plain, George clearly agreed that it was not his place to run the war by developing either political or military strategies. But alongside this, he certainly felt that his position at King gave him some special and specific responsibility in the war which could not be properly or effectively filled by politicians. From the war's outset he felt his duty was directly to his people, and providing the intangible moral and patriotic leadership that they needed. The best quote summing up George's personal perspective is: 'The King anyway saw himself as the embodiment of the nation: its successes were his successes, its reverses, his reverses, its moods his moods. Moreover, his symbolic leadership of the country was essentially expressed by his [symbolic] command of the armed forces of the crown.'¹⁸

¹⁷The evidence suggests strongly that Lloyd George, who had no such military connections, actually avoided involving the King in any war strategy or other military-related discussions from 1916 onwards, when—with Kitchener gone, and Haig replacing French—the quality of the King's connections at the highest levels of the military were lessened. The retirement of Grey would also have contributed to this. Lloyd George's self-serving memoirs have a tendency to promote his own role at the expense of the contributions made by others, and in this, the King was no exception. See Keith Hamilton (2013) 'Addressing the Past: The Foreign Office and the Vetting of Diplomatic and Ministerial Memoirs During the Years Between the World Wars' in C. Baxter, M. Dockrill, and K. Hamilton, eds *Britain in Global Politics Volume 1: From Gladstone to Churchill* (Basingstoke: Palgrave) pp99–131.

¹⁸Charles Douglas-Home and Saul Kelly (2001) *Dignified and Efficient. The British Monarchy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Claridge Press) p42.

GEORGE V AND IRELAND

George was, however, prepared to intervene in the affairs of state when he felt that the situation necessary, which usually meant maintaining the stability of the country. A fact often overlooked in narratives of the First World is that during the summer 1914, as the situation in Europe deteriorated, the British government looked not to Sarajevo with concern but to Ireland. The situation there had reached the point where it looked as if a civil war was almost inevitable with the political mechanisms at a standstill. Foreign Ministries across Europe were certainly aware of this as being the primary concern for the UK. Some even suggested that if conflict were to erupt in Europe in the final months of 1914, then Britain's non-involvement from what was expected to be a short term European war could be counted upon despite any rhetoric to the contrary, because the nation would be embroiled with what appeared to be an inevitable civil war in Ireland.¹⁹

George's solution to the Irish crisis was to use his role as head of state to act as impartial arbiter, by holding and chairing a conference on Ireland at Buckingham Palace between 21 and 24 July 1914.²⁰ There, he brought the parties concerned together, on what was advertised as politically neutral ground, in the hope that this would help them to find a resolution. This was a sidestepping of usual parliamentary procedure, but was in George's mind a necessity to avoid conflict. He was not behaving unconstitutionally as he was not directly involved in the discussions himself; instead he merely acted as a facilitator, giving an introductory speech and then withdrawing from the event, while the politicians conducted their discussions. Without his intervention, the talks could not have taken place.²¹ While they failed—it sufficiently defused the situation to make it easier for Ireland to become involved in the Great War

¹⁹Zara S. Steiner and Keith Neilson (2003) *Britain and the Origins of the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave) p231.

²⁰It was attended by Asquith, the Prime Minister, and John Redmond, the Irish Parliamentary leader, along with Lloyd George, Edward Carson and others, and with the Speaker of the Commons, James Lowther.

²¹However, it does need to be noted that he did have the (reluctant) support of his government in so acting, which was a constitutional requirement that he was careful to observe. See Vernon Bogdanor (1997) *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p77.

as a part of the United Kingdom, something which could have otherwise have been impossible.

The historiography of this ‘failure’ on the part of the King, as part of the general historical survey of both Irish history and that of the monarchy, fails itself. George V’s intervention is often overlooked or where noticed, dismissed as irrelevant. The current scholarship does not appreciate how significant this conference was for contemporaries—something which they fully discussed, when commenting appreciatively of the King’s efforts in using his role in the attempt to seek a resolution. This reminded people on both sides of the crisis of the value of monarchy, with *The Times* highlighting the idea that King had duty to keep his people from catastrophe: ‘there is no one who could play that part [of disinterested intermediary] but the SOVEREIGN’.²² The event showcases George’s willingness to take imaginative action for the good of his nation, which was possible, because he used his role of King to distance himself from the politics of the crisis, and this meant he could assemble a conference under his own aegis, without acting unconstitutionally.

GEORGE’S PERSPECTIVE ON THE MONARCH’S ROLE AT THE FRONT

To George, merely making laudatory statements about his armed services from the safety of Buckingham Palace or inspecting them before they departed for service on the front line was not enough. Doing this would be enough to sustain the traditional image of a British monarch, one who wished his troops well whilst they went off and fought on his behalf as his predecessors since the time of George II had done. But George understood leadership practically, rather than knowing it theoretically. For him a good leader was one who lead his troops from the front by example. Since he was debarred from actually leading his men into battle, this meant looking for other opportunities to demonstrate leadership through active involvement with the conflict.²³ Practically speaking, any demonstration of this using the Navy was not feasible. What he saw as achievable, however, was travelling to France to be with his armies

²² ‘The King and the Crisis’, *The Times*, 20 July 1914; see also ‘At the Royal Bidding’, *The Times*, 21 July 1914; ‘The King’s Stroke for Irish Peace’, *Illustrated London News*, 25 July 1914.

²³ See Chapter 1, Introduction, of this volume.

there. He was determined to show that he could at least share his men's hardships as much as possible. By slogging through the mud, talking to his men and seeing what their life was like in the trenches for them, he could prove to them tangibly that their hardships were acknowledged and appreciated by their monarch. In his own version of his daughter-in-law's famed World War II quote about 'looking the East End in the face' after the bombing of Buckingham Palace, George felt that he could only enter into and truly represent himself as appreciating his troops' sacrifice when he had experienced their hardships for himself.

George felt that the presence of the King on the front line amongst his men would be crucial for wartime morale in a way that respected the restrictions on his active engagement in conflict but also enabled him to achieve a modern version of his ancient duty as King: that of visibly leading his troops. The fact he was known to be an ex-sailor would also legitimise his presence there and ensure it not be viewed as self-serving propaganda. George's chief concern was that the government would not comprehend his thought processes and so share his opinion that his role was in France, and that they would attempt to block him. This was another reason why the King's personal information channels were so vital, as they afforded him the opportunity to negotiate authoritatively with them from a position of superior knowledge about the appropriate times and locations for his visits. So it was in this context of careful consideration derived from the knowledge received from his personal contacts that the King made known to the government his intention to visit the front line.

ARRANGING THE FIRST VISIT: POTENTIAL TENSIONS WITH THE FRENCH

Whilst, faced with his reasoning, the government agreed to the King travelling to France, there were other concerns. It is evident from the communications that were made in late 1914 about the King going to the Western Front that the Palace and Parliament had differing objectives for what they wanted these visits to achieve. The King's views on his initial trip were summarised for Lambton²⁴ in France, in the following letter from Wigram:

²⁴Major-General, The Hon. Sir William Lambton KCB, CMG, CVO, DSO commanded 4th Division in WWI.

His Majesty's idea, as far as I know, is to go over and visit the different Army Corps and Divisional Headquarters, and see as many of the troops as he can, but he does not wish to interfere in any way with the work of Sir John French and the General Headquarters Staff.²⁵

One can read this as the British King wishing to make an informal visit to frontline British troops and officers, but without it constituting a full-scale royal state visit to France, with all the accompanying fuss and ritual.

This interpretation is confirmed in the following letter, where Wigram stated the King's desire to avoid creating the level of spectacle that the German Emperor had made on his visit to the German front-line: 'The King would probably only come over with two or three of his Household and not in any way ape the German Emperor with a full military staff and large escort.'²⁶ What can also be gleaned from this is the very keen level of observation kept up by the British court on how the Germans conducted their state visits, continuing a theme that was ever-present during the reign of Edward VII.²⁷ It would be possible, at one level, to identify a political motive here—with George aiming for simplicity whilst Wilhelm opted for spectacle and display. However, that is more likely to have been the thinking of figures like Wigram, when calculating the visibility of the royal visit and its impact. From George's perspective, one must not forget that his characteristic was for straightforward thinking, and that his priority was how he could demonstrate a care, above all, for the ordinary fighting soldier above all. The King's personality, when it came to such things, was simpler than that of his courtiers.²⁸

The government, however, and in particular Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, had a different agenda when considering what could

²⁵Royal Archives, Windsor (RA): PS/PSO/GV/PS/WAR/QQ07/04745, Wigram to Lambton, 5 November 1914.

²⁶RA: PS/PSO/GV/PS/WAR/QQ07/04745, Wigram to Lambton, 5 November 1914. I acknowledge the gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to use quotations from the Royal Archives.

²⁷See Glencross, *State Visits of Edward VII*; for an account of the Kaiser's movements on the German front line see Catrine Clay (2006) *King, Kaiser, Tsar, Three Royal Cousins Who Led the World to War* (London: John Murray) p316.

²⁸Although this can be gleaned from a number of sources a frank assessment of George V's character can also be found in Christopher Hibbert (1980) *The Court at Windsor* (London: Longman) p256.

be achieved by a visit to his troops by the King.²⁹ Chief in their minds was how the visit would be received in France, and especially by French politicians and other senior figures in the state. It seems clear that the Foreign Office believed that Anglo-French wartime co-operation might be strained or even derailed if the King only went to France to visit British troops there. The implication of this fear is that they were afraid that the French might interpret this behaviour as a deliberate snub and perhaps even as something even more provocative—as not merely a royal troop visit, but rather an exercise in symbolic suzerainty. There is some substance to this, because whilst British aid had long been viewed by the French as inevitable in the war of *revanche* with Germany, the increasing presence of the British on French soil did become an issue for discussion at senior levels in French military circles.

French worries stemmed from a belief there that the British might conclude that, after the war was won, the best way of enhancing British security would be to establish an occupancy of part of the northern coast of France, from where any invasion of Britain could be expected to be launched. Some even suggested that after the war with Germany was won, the next war for France would be one to remove the British. These concerns were not completely baseless, in that as Europe had become more militarised in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century, the British had begun to look to their long-term security. As the German Navy became more powerful, the threat of Germany occupying French ports became one factor for consideration. Naval strategists in the Admiralty even produced reactions to a number of scenarios including this for political consumption and planning within Britain. The ‘Timetable of Nightmare’ strategy laid out exactly how these strategists feared that the United Kingdom could be invaded by Germany, using French ports a central feature in their plans.³⁰

There is no indication that the French were actually aware of any precautionary British military plans responding to such a scenario. However, both nations were certainly aware that the vulnerability of the British

²⁹Viscount Grey of Fallodon (1925) *Twenty-Five Years, 1892–1916*, 2 vols (London: Hodder and Stoughton).

³⁰Churchill Archives Centre Cambridge: CHAR/13/22A/43 ‘Timetable of a Nightmare’.

south coast to an invasion via the French channel ports was an issue for military concern. When these contemporary strategic and diplomatic concerns were contextualised by the historical angle to Franco-British relations, this was agreed as being something with the potential to exacerbate relations. Memories of English armies on French soil, led by victorious English kings like Henry V, endured as part of popular as well as elite culture on both sides of the Channel. If the French might have sought to forget that aspect of Anglo-French relations, the encapsulation of figures like Henry V in English literature, via Shakespeare and other popular tales, were a regular reminder.³¹ Therefore, whilst the positive effect a visit by the British King might have on British troops might be appreciated by the French, it was also a matter for concern for British politicians that the French government could feel itself to be deeply insulted if that British King felt able to travel around northern France seeing his army almost as an occupying monarch would.³²

Therefore, the situation as the British government saw it could be summarised as follows. The King wanted to go to France to see his troops as he felt their morale was key to the war effort and his presence beside them, sharing their hardships, would be a force for good. His perspective was that the more time he spent doing diplomatic pleasantries, the less time he would have to spend with his troops. Whitehall priorities were different, with a key focus on normal diplomatic protocols. Their fear was that if these protocols were not observed, it could be interpreted by the French as an act of arrogance on the part of the British King, and this would reflect, in turn, on his government.³³ The British government perspective was thus that it was crucial that the King should at least

³¹ Medieval English Kings had long laid claim to the French throne, and even though the title was purely nominal after the ending of the Hundred Years' War in 1453, the French monarchical title had remained in the list of British monarch's official titles until 1800 (it was dropped by George III as part of the preliminaries leading to the Act of Union with Ireland). The Treaty of Troyes 1564 had finally evicted the English even from Calais.

³² A royal presence with an army still creates a political issue today. When Prince William was deployed to the Falklands he was described by Argentina's Foreign Minister as 'arriving as a conqueror' and served to raise the tension between the two nations close to the anniversary of the Falklands war <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/prince-william/9053478/Prince-William-deploys-to-Falkland-Islands-as-tensions-rise-with-Argentina.html> (accessed 19 August 2016).

³³ As has been commented upon earlier the King was the very symbol and mouthpiece of the British Empire on the international stage.

acknowledge the French government when in France, through some formal ceremonial appropriate to those protocols. This demonstrates that although Europe was engulfed in war, there was an expectation that the rules and etiquettes of diplomacy had to be maintained in order to avoid lasting offence in a post-war world.

As both Palace and Parliament appreciated the morale-boosting value of the King seeing his troops, a compromise between their respective priorities was sought. Wigram wrote to Lambton on 9 November: 'His Majesty, I am sure, will wish to avoid receiving or returning visit from the President and members of the Government, as His Majesty's express purpose will be to see the higher Commanders and as many of the Troops as possible.'³⁴ However, unlike his father, George V indicated that he would be willing to yield to his ministers: 'But this will be a matter in which the Foreign Office will have to advise when the time approaches.'³⁵ What this reflects is the King ultimately taking the advice of his ministers when it came to diplomatic issues, a contrast to his father's attitude of possessing superior knowledge of these affairs compared with his government. Grey's advice on the issue was given plainly to Stamfordham shortly afterwards, 'Grey thinks that the French Government must be informed before The King goes to visit his troops on French soil'.³⁶ Grey knew that the French President, when informed, would immediately request a meeting with the King, and that this was something George would not refuse, given his recent diplomatic training, combined with his habits of obedience to established rituals and protocol instilled during his time in the Navy. This therefore alleviated many of the immediate concerns in France about the implications of the King's presence. The message that would be sent by George's being received by the President upon arrival in France was that the King was officially the President's guest. With that point established, the King could subsequently move freely around France seeing *his* army, because he was doing so as the French nation's guest which meant he was not there as a foreign head of state, surrounded by his army. This also meant

³⁴RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/PS/WAR/QQ07/04745, Wigram to Lambton, 9 November 1914.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/PS/WAR/QQ7/04745, A Nicholson to Stamfordham, 17 November 1914.

that every visit the King made to France to see his troops could also be interpreted as a state visit.

THE STYLE OF THE KING'S VISITS

Reportage of the King's initial visit to France does suggest that the King did indeed make it as a state visit to France. For a start, George met many senior members of the French government, including the President and Prime Minister.³⁷ What, however, made these state visits different to all previous ones in modern times was the fact that the respective heads of state met on the Front, thus enabling the King to fulfil also his own personal objective of meeting the troops *en masse*.³⁸ Surveying all of the King's subsequent visits to France made during the war years, this pattern seems to have been observed consistently. The King always met with the French President on the front line, and this was then followed by the visit to his troops.

Once the precedent had been established, it was a formula that the King would continue without any governmental prompting. The example of a letter from Stamfordham to the Foreign Secretary before a visit in 1918 underlines this:

As you are no doubt aware, His Majesty arrives in France on Monday next, and will probably be in the country for at least a week. The King desires me to ask you to inform President Poincaré of His Majesty's intention, and to say what pleasure it would give him if the President was able to come to luncheon with the King at Haig's Headquarters.³⁹

The recollection of the luncheon given by Haig in his diaries gives the impression that the King saw this occasion as a mere formality. By contrast, the French President saw it as an opportunity to talk some private business with the King as would have happened previously on such an occasion within a state visit: 'By the President's request, the King gave

³⁷RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/PS/WAR/QQ07/4745, Diary of the King's Visit to the Armies in the Field, 29 November to 5 December 1914.

³⁸Details of Field Marshal Sir John French's meetings with the King can be found in John French, Earl of Ypres (1919) *1914* (London: Constable and Company) p336.

³⁹RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/WAR/QQ19/07110/5, Stamfordham to the Earl of Derby, 1 August 1918.

him 10 minutes private conversation. I have given up my private writing room for the purpose.⁴⁰ This displays the difference in how these visits were understood by the French and British leadership. The French President viewed such contact as a serious issue, which could have consequences for Anglo-French relationships. The King was happy to honour the President's request, but he did not think of it as being of much importance—it was merely a formal duty he had to undertake as a preliminary to the real objective of the visit: seeing his troops.

Once such formalities were out of the way, the King would proceed to spend as much time as possible visiting the British and Empire troops on the Front. From his first visit on, his emphasis was on meeting the ordinary soldiers, rather than the generals and other senior commanders, and doing so with as little structure as possible, partly to avoid any implications of diverting resources and thereby interrupting the proper business of an army at war. As Wigram noted in 1916 in his correspondence relating to the visit that year:

The King is specially anxious not to throw any burden on Sir Douglas Haig and his staff, in the way of arranging programmes, parades etc. What His Majesty hopes to do is not to have any fixed programme, but to motor out every day to see what is to be seen of troops on the March, billets, etc.⁴¹

Showing a continuing emphasis on this low-key theme, in 1918, Esher noted in his diary, 'Our King comes to France on the 18th. If he moves in his simple and friendly way among the troops it will have an excellent effect. I hope he may not get entangled in ceremonials.'⁴² This entry clearly indicates that the King had become known for his 'simple' approach to such visits; it also shows that King possessed a genuine talent for talking to ordinary people. More, that this aspect of his personality had become a crucial part of what was understood at that time by a royal visit to troops or others involved in the war effort.

⁴⁰Douglas Haig (2005) *War Diaries and Letters* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson) p219.

⁴¹RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/PS/WAR/QQ06/4503, Wigram to General Peyton, 28 July 1916.

⁴²CAC: Esher Papers/ESHR/2/15, Esher Diary, 4 October 1918.

However, the emphasis on simplicity and lack of fuss as urged by the King cannot be taken too far. It must be noted as a qualification to this that these visits by George V to the front line to spend time with his troops did still contain many of the traditional requirements that characterised a state visit. It was not only that, as already mentioned, the King always met with the French President at the start of his time in France. Usually he also met members of the French government and senior military staff as well. This is underlined by the following extract from the memoirs of one such senior French military figure, Marshal Foch:

During the afternoon of this same 12th of August I met Sir Douglas Haig and General Petain at Flixecourt, near Amiens where they had been summoned, with myself, for an audience with HM the King of England.⁴³

Foch's use of the term 'audience' is telling. It emphasises again how differently these preliminary encounters to George's time with the troops were perceived by the French and the British. Further emphasising the contextualising diplomatic niceties to these visits, it should be added that, location permitting, George would also visit the King of the Belgians as well, thereby making a formal gesture to the Belgian nation.⁴⁴ What was lacking was the public spectacle and visible ceremonial usually contextualising these encounters when intended for public consumption.

It must be noted that the impression taken from the archives is that the King, in particular, really did not recognise the need for formalities when meeting heads of state in this wartime situation. Nor did he see performing these tasks as a priority when in France. However, George did understand and acknowledge that he had ongoing duties as head of state as well as performing as head of his country's armed forces, even where the former affected the latter priorities. As Ponsonby told Brigadier General Lowther as part of the planning for the visit in 1916, 'Owing, however, to the President having expressed a wish for the King to visit the French Army and owing to the President's desire to accompany His Majesty when he visits one of the British Armies, the King has

⁴³Field Marshal Foch (1931) *The Memoirs of Marshal Foch* (London: William Heinemann) p444.

⁴⁴RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/WAR/QQ06/03330, Ponsonby to Brigadier General H.C. Lowther, 16 October 1915.

very little time at his disposal.⁴⁵ In his rider to this comment, Ponsonby acknowledged the tension when he insisted on highlighting where the King's heart lay in terms of his priorities: 'He should see as much as possible of the troops at the Front when he goes to France.'⁴⁶

GEORGE ATTENDS A SUMMIT AT THE FRONT

As a result of this diplomatic dimension to the events, and despite the King's desire to keep his meetings with the French President when he visited the Front purely as a matter of formal courtesy, these wartime state visits to France by George V did sometimes provide the opportunity for an impromptu summit. A key example of this occurred after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia in 1917. The French President invited George, whilst he was in France that year, to attend a summit with his Ministers to which he would also be inviting the King of Italy. The French President's advertised aim was to relay important information to his allies about French military strategy in the light of the Tsar's abdication. The content of the following extract from Lloyd George's letter to his French counterpart, Alexandre Ribot, underlines this:

I saw today your informant and took him to the King. The latter occurs in your suggestion that a meeting should be arranged in France between the two Kings and President Poincaré, with their representative ministers. Will you kindly take the necessary steps to invite the Kings of England and Italy to visit the French Front at an early date? In inviting the King of Italy, it might be intimated that President Poincare was anxious to have an immediate discussion on the Russian situation, as to which he had received special information. I fear that unless the King of Italy is told that there is some special object in an early meeting he will postpone it for some weeks, when the opportunity which now offers may have passed away. We want if possible to concentrate our efforts on crushing the German military power.⁴⁷

⁴⁵RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/WAR/QQ06/03330, Ponsonby to Lady Dudley, 19 October 1915.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷David Lloyd George (1938) *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, 2 vols (London: Odhams) p1198.

Clearly this was intended to be an important summit, to enable the French President to explain how, in his view, the situation could actually be used to the advantage of France and her allies.

What is particularly noteworthy about this episode is that it reveals that the French felt that the best way of conveying this urgent message to Britain's government was via the King, rather than directly to the Foreign Secretary or the Prime Minister. Because it plainly was to do with military strategy and planning, the relevant policy-makers in Britain were the members of the War Cabinet. The inclusion of the representative Ministers in the invitation provided a clear sign that the French intended that 'real' diplomatic business would be done at the summit, which could not be done without their presence. Yet, the prime point of contact for the French was still the King. This displays an acknowledgment by the French that the King was, at least in the public eye, at the core of the British war effort. It was also an acknowledgement of French belief in royal influence on British attitudes, thanks to French recognition of George's access to both the War Cabinet and the British military elites.

Therefore, the French position was clearly that by informing the King first, they could be assured that all elements involved in the war effort would be informed of the proposed summit. As already stressed, George's understanding of his constitutional position ensured that he never intended to interfere with the policy dimensions to evolving war strategies and the related issues when it came to the running of the war effort. He acknowledged, through his relations with his Ministers, that this was not his role. In terms of royal diplomacy and state visits, he had also established prior to 1914 that he would follow the precedent established during his father's state visits. This was that no business of any policy substance would be discussed with foreign heads of state without prior consultation with the King's government. Here, what George did provide was the pretext for the summit, in a way that was intended to disguise its potential policy significance. It was expected, for instance, that German spies would take little interest in the British King making yet another of his trips to France to visit his troops, as these had normally had no political dimension of any strategic substance. The hope was that this summit meeting could be held without raising too much suspicion within the enemy states. It was a case of hiding within plain sight, because the King's visit would be widely reported, but with a by now traditional emphasis on his insistence on spending time with his troops, and cutting back on the necessary formalities.

MEDIA REPORTAGE OF THE KING'S VISITS TO THE FRONT

Travelling in the public eye was always a feature of state visits, and this visibility also transferred to the King's visits to his troops on the front line. From the earliest planning stages, the King and his advisors considered it to be vitally important that the King's presence was reported. But as part of that, that reportage was to be by word of mouth amongst the troops themselves, and not just subsequent media coverage. To ensure that, at the time, the King's presence was known to his troops, it was considered vital that his presence amongst his men was instantly recognisable to all, regardless of their status in military ranking, as he passed by. This insistence on accessibility via instant recognition of the figure of the monarch was something which George had long understood, as he had shown in his attitude to his visibility to the Indian crowds during the 1911 Durbar.⁴⁸ It is thus not surprising that it was so prominent an issue in Ponsonby and Lowther's correspondence:

I am sending under separate cover the Royal Standard and Crown which are usually fixed to the King's motor when he goes on industrial tours. If you think they would be suitable, will you have them fixed to His Majesty's car in such a manner as to make The King's presence in the car unmistakable.⁴⁹

It was a clear hint of George's determination of his duty to be a constantly recognisable presence amongst his troops. But as his visits had to be brief, and as there were limits to how much ground one man could cover during his time at the Front, he was limited to how many troops he could encounter personally.

George's solution was to convey images of him amongst the troops to those he did not reach himself in person when on the Front, as well as more widely to his people, via photography. It was not a matter of personal vanity that every time the King went to the front line, a photographer went with him to capture as much as possible of his time there. The explanation for the great number of photographic images and accompanying stories of the King's time on the Front generated during

⁴⁸Glencross, 'George V and the New Royal House', pp39–41.

⁴⁹RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/WAR/QQ06/03330, Ponsonby to Brigadier General H.C. Lowther, 18 October 1915.

each visit, and subsequently published in the British newspapers, lies in this insistence by George on his mass accessibility. That this was consistently an important issue to the Palace is, again, underlined by Wigram's correspondence. In 1918, for instance, he wrote detailed instructions to Major E. Thompson, who was locally responsible for making the arrangements for the royal visit in that year. Wigram referred to previous failures and the need for improvement when, he insisted as a priority (Item 3 in the list):

3. Will you make the necessary arrangements for the Press and Photographers to accompany the King? Last time you will remember something went wrong on the first day.⁵⁰

Of course it must be recognised that the majority of the photographs taken of the King and his troops were staged. But this was due to the demands of military secrecy, rather than any will on the part of the King to avoid genuine involvement with his troops at points of real danger to them (and him). The King did have a number of encounters which were not recorded on film, but were later re-staged for the photographic record. They were never intended to deceive. Instead, they were intended from the start to be for public consumption, portraying the King as a man of the people amongst his people.

There was, consequently, an open recognition that such images also could not reveal anything that could compromise British military strategy. The objective was simply to depict George undertaking a vast array of activities amongst his troops. There were the 'traditional' images one could expect of a monarch, with him inspecting reserve regiments and chatting with injured troops, and offering them tangible comforts like cigarettes. These were generally taken at the time, since they would not reveal anything compromising. However, those showing him walking on duck boards in trenches, inspecting frontline gun positions and manning an observation post were staged away from the actual front line, to reflect what he had done, but in ways that did not reveal anything that it was considered undesirable to show. This would have included the potential damage to both military and civilian morale of showing the reality of the appalling conditions in the trenches as well as providing

⁵⁰Matthew Glencross (2014) 'The Influence of Royal Tours on the Conduct of British Diplomacy' unpublished PhD thesis, King's College, London, p291.

information which might be of use to the enemy of the real frontline landscape. While understanding of the contemporary impact of these images has dwindled, it is important to assess the sheer power both the reality and the images would have had at the time for men and boys from the East End of London for example. Previously, even a fleeting glimpse of earlier monarchs, like Victoria or Edward VII, as they passed by, would have been something to tell the grandchildren. Yet for troops in the muck and misery of the trenches, here was the King himself, George V, actually with them in the trenches. He was walking through mud, sharing cigarettes with them and exchanging military tales. Even his harshest critics could not deny that he was not attempting to live out his most famous quote, spoken while on a visit to France: 'I cannot share your hardships, but my heart is with you every hour of the day'.⁵¹

The deliberate policy at work behind the number of photographs taken of the King with his troops on visits to France is underlined by the fact that the amount was unprecedented, yet photography was far from a new technology, and the use a monarch like Wilhelm II had made of it over the previous two decades had long shown its potential for spreading useful messages.⁵² It was, by 1914, widely recognised by the Palace that photographs in the media were a very effective way of enhancing the popular appeal of state visits and royal tours in general. The bland text found in a court circular was purely informational, but even before the outbreak of war, George V and Mary had understood the power of photographs to accompany media coverage of their visits to various locations around the UK and abroad. That understanding underpinned the emphasis the King placed on the wide dissemination of images taken of those troops who had enjoyed a visit from the King in the aftermath of the visit, to accompany reportage showing how they had reacted so positively to his presence amongst them.

It was a way of emphasising to politicians and possible critics that these state visits were beneficial to the war effort and should continue, by showing tangibly that the troops reacted positively to the message

⁵¹It is not possible to pin this quote down to a specific incident, place or time as recorded in the press or other archive sources. However, it is so frequently cited and referenced in anecdotes of the King in France that it is likely it was a phrase he used many times, which also accounts for the slightly different versions to be found in various memoirs and memories.

⁵²Glencross, *State Visits*, Chapter 2.

the visits conveyed, that they were fighting for a caring King. By using his photographic image to send to troops who could be physically with him George was actually taking a cue from an ancient practice pursued into the twentieth century by the Russian monarchy. The modern British royal family found it odd that the Russian royal family kept a distance from their subjects, with Edward VII in particular observing how they were almost caged away from contact with their people. Instead of personal contact, however, the Russian monarchy relied on the widespread understanding of a mythology which insisted that the Tsar's presence amongst his people was maintained by his manifestation in the shape of an image of him, be it a portrait or photograph or even an image on a coin. This 'reality' of the royal presence amongst the population was taken so seriously that even speaking or acting disrespectfully in front of a royal portrait was accounted a criminal offence.⁵³ George was seeking to evoke a similar consciousness of the reality of a royal presence amongst his troops by promoting a dissemination of images that were quite generic, so that they were recognisable as being on the Western Front. He felt that this distribution of his image could create a sense of his constant interest in them, and remind them of his will to be constantly present amongst them.

Thus as well as publishing images of the King, newspapers would also give greater substance to the reality of the King being there by reporting details of his daily activities on the front line.⁵⁴ This was a distinct difference in the slant usually taken, particularly when it came to tabloid coverage of royal visits, where the lists of local dignitaries were the most prominent. The King's active involvement in the detail of evolving this style of reportage is underlined by the efforts made by the Palace to ensure that the frontline representatives of the newspapers would be received by the King. It demonstrates a greater level of conscious royal cooperation with the press than had previously been seen on royal tours previously. It could even be argued that this was a major transition period, in terms of creating a media-conscious and 'savvy' monarchy:

⁵³Boris Kolonitsky (2013) 'Insulting the Russian Royal Family: Crime, Blame and Its Sources' in Judith Rowbotham, Marianna Muravyeva, and David Nash, eds *Shame, Blame and Culpability: Crime and Violence in the Modern State* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp184–98.

⁵⁴RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/WAR/QQ06/03330, *The Standard*, 29 October 1915.

I think that Russell has already spoken to you about the question as to whether it would be possible for the newspaper correspondents with the British Army to be received by the King. His Majesty last year was graciously pleased to receive the British and Allied correspondents together, and if it should be found possible to repeat the procedure I feel sure it would cause a deep gratification to the press. The correspondents this year have been increased by adding neutrals to the British and Allied but there is only one or two of the latter present here. May I ask you if you will be good enough to put this suggestion forward in case it should be found possible to give effect to it.⁵⁵

However, what created the greatest media sensation in the press was not anything constructed by the Palace it was George's war wound, sustained in 1915.

Having arrived at Hesdigneul by motor car, the King mounted a chestnut mare provided by General Haig and rode towards a detachment of the Royal Flying Corps. For the previous two weeks, the charger had been specially schooled for the task of carrying the sovereign. A senior officer later wrote:

It would rest its head happily all day long against the big drum of a band playing God Save the King. Gunfire did not make it even twitch an ear, I think it would have sat in an aeroplane doing noisy stunts. But what had not been foreseen was the extraordinary noise emitted by 20 flying men trying to cheer. The wretched animal reared up like a rocket and came over backwards.⁵⁶

Strictly speaking, it was not a war wound—but this is how it was portrayed and understood at the time as this extract from the *Daily Sketch* shows.⁵⁷ Its importance was that could be used to hammer home publicly the idea that the King was trying to do his bit. The fact that this happened whilst visiting troops was not lost on the public. It is safe to

⁵⁵RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/WAR/QQ19/07110/4, Earl of Onslow to Major E. G. Thompson, 6 August 1918, Reception of newspaper correspondents; and photographs of visit Earl of Onslow to Major Thompson, 6 August 1918.

⁵⁶Kenneth Rose (2000) *King George V* (London: Phoenix Press) pp180–1.

⁵⁷RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/PS/WAR/QQ06/0330-04602, *Daily Sketch*, 30 October 1915.

say that a similar accident taking place at, say, Sandringham, would not have been received in the same way.

The King's hardiness in the face of danger was also noted in the reportage, as his robust response to being informed of this was widely recounted:

When told that the Commander-in-Chief thought it unsafe for him to remain in the Chateau as the Germans might bomb it, he retorted: 'You can tell him from me to go to hell and stay there. I don't intend to move for any bombs'.⁵⁸

Interestingly, it was around this time the King was asked by politicians to give up his hobbies of shooting and stalking. His slaughter of birds and game, on the Sandringham estate for instance, was regularly reported in the press. George's ministers feared that the lists of his prowess (he was a noted shot) would contrast too heavily with the tallies of slaughter in the battlefields of Europe. The King initially protested, pointing out that he was donating all he killed to local larders. However, when his government insisted the point very heavily, he did agree to give up shooting for the rest of the war. This incident is worth noting, because it suggests that the government did appreciate how important for wartime morale the positive images of the King were, and that they, too, were invested in cultivating these.

TENSION WITH THE PRINCE OF WALES OVER THE LATTER'S ROLE IN FRANCE

George's attitude to his role in the war is interesting also because his core thinking also reflected on how he dealt with his eldest son. The Prince of Wales was sent to the Western Front, serving in Northern France, where he was popular with the troops. George had organised his heir's despatch to the Front with Kitchener. Both men felt convinced that the presence there of the heir to the throne could send an important message to the troops, and the nation more widely, about the genuine commitment of the whole royal family—not just the King—to the war effort. Of course, the Prince of Wales was debarred from active frontline

⁵⁸Rose, *King George V*, p181.

service. Consequently, he had to be located to the rear, supposedly out of danger, but close enough to be an inspiration to the troops. He was supposed to do this by making them feel the reality of a nearby royal involvement in their daily lives in the trenches. But George soon became concerned that his son did not appreciate the symbolic role he had been deputed to assume. It helps to explain why the King was horrified to learn that his son had taken independent action on his own behalf, because the Prince was bored with the restrictions to the ‘merely’ symbolic on his role there. The Prince had consequently been to see Lord Kitchener to try to persuade the latter into giving him a more active and less ceremonial role in the war. Esher recounted:

The King told me that when the Prince of Wales went to see Lord K, and pressed him to be allowed to go abroad, he said to Lord K ‘I have plenty of brothers, so what does it matter if I am killed.’ And Lord K’s reply was ‘Don’t mind you being killed, but I object to your being taken prisoner and you have no experience.’⁵⁹

This indicates fairly clearly that the Prince had failed to comprehend that he was not at the Front to gain personal renown, or to have a good time by engaging in battle, and this was disturbing to a man like George V, with his strong sense of duty.

The issue continued to be a sore spot for both men. The Prince constantly complained of being mistreated by being denied a more active role, indicating that the Prince continued in his failure to appreciate both his own constitutional position and the consequent need for the royal family to act as a powerful symbol of national unity in times of war. Instead, the Prince often attempted to confront his father about his being restricted from active service. Even had the constitutional constrictions permitted that, George’s personal understanding of the responsibilities of the royal family in a war-time context would have meant it was unlikely he would have been swayed by his son’s urgings. There were a number of confrontations as a result, as Esher recalled of one typical encounter:

This evening I went to Buckingham Palace, where I met the Prince of Wales. It has been settled that he is to go to Egypt. He was grieved and

⁵⁹CAC: Esher Papers/ESHR 2/13, Diary, 18 December 1914.

angry at being withdrawn from the Guards Division *so angry that for the first time in his life he replied rather tartly to the King, and refused to speak to him for several days.*⁶⁰

From his Memoirs, it is clear that the Prince did not appreciate his father's perspective. Instead, even years later, he related his stance from the perspective of his own understanding of what was his royal duty, insisting 'The concept of duty was part of my inheritance'. But having established that, he instead used it to explain why he wanted to carve out a different application of his constitutional position, one that related more to being a young man than a Prince: 'Is it surprising, then, that I should have rebelled against being held back in safety while my contemporaries bore the shock of battle?'⁶¹

Despite the Prince's boredom with his symbolic role, George determinedly kept him to those duties, because there was evidence that it was having the public effect that George had envisioned. The many reports coming back from the Front included discussions of the positive impact that the Prince's spending time with the troops was having. Esher recalled: 'The Prince of Wales is doing splendidly, and is popular with everybody, owing to his hardihood and simplicity.'⁶² Queen Mary joined her husband in being pleased about the good work that her son was doing. She had, consequently, high hopes of how the public memory of his image on the front line, and his personal charm and popularity, could have a lasting positive effect on the standing of the British monarchy in the post-war world. Esher recounted his success in explaining this point to her as follows: 'She is proud of the Prince of Wales. I tried to make her see that after the war thrones might be at a discount, and that the Prince of Wales' popularity might be a great asset.'⁶³

There were French concerns over the presence of the Prince of Wales and what his exact role on (or rather, in the rear of) the Front actually was, echoing those expressed in relation to the King. The strategy was

⁶⁰CAC: Esher Papers/ESHR2/15, Diary, 5 March 1916. The italics represent that section of the quote which, while still readable, had been later crossed out in the original diary entry and so, are not included in the published version of the Diaries.

⁶¹Edward, Duke of Windsor (1951) *A King's Story: The Memoirs of HRH the Duke of Windsor*, KG (London: Cassell) p122.

⁶²CAC: Esher Papers/ESHR 2/13, Diary, 18 December 1914.

⁶³CAC: Esher Papers/ESHR 2/15, Diary, 15 October 1915.

to illustrate their point that he was fighting for France by decorating him with various French honours, thereby turning him into a welcome presence. However, the Prince of Wales showed no signs of appreciating this further symbolic dimension to his presence. Instead, he took great pains to keep his uniform as ordinary and unembellished by honours as possible. His point was that he was doing so in order to, as possible, to fit in with the common British soldier (many of whom probably failed to appreciate the Prince's symbolism behind this and would have welcomed him regardless of the nuances of his uniform). But, the Prince of Wales' deliberate lack of ostentation in even refusing to add the decoration ribbons to his simple uniform offended many of the French dignitaries he met, resulting in the following telling off from his father:

Ld Cavan has written to Bigge about your wearing the Legion of Honour. It is very silly of you not doing what I told you at Easter Time, which was to wear the ribbons of the French and Russian Orders that were given you. I know the French order was given you in peace time, but I explained that if you had not had it, you would have been given it for war service, the same as Uncle Nicky sent you his order especially. The French naturally are hurt if you don't wear it. So get both ribbons sewn on your khaki at once...⁶⁴

CONGRATULATING DOUGLAS HAIG

The King's commitment to being a presence with his troops in France caused one final issue with his ministers at the war's conclusion. George appreciated the victory that his men had won and wanted to convey to them personally a message that he felt that the victory was theirs: that they had won the war as a nation and not because they were fighting in his name. Therefore, he felt that if he sat waiting in London, for Haig to come to him to report on his victory, it would send instead a different message: that of a monarch sending his troops to battle in his name, and then waiting for them to win and come back in safety before he congratulated and thanked them, on the nation's behalf. In coming to this conclusion, George is likely to have had a vivid memory of the public outcry that had accompanied his father's request that Asquith visit the King

⁶⁴Windsor, *A King's Story*, p117. The quote the Duke chose to use included the three dots, which is why they have been included here.

where he was, in Biarritz upon becoming Prime Minister. The usual convention would have been for the King to return to London for the ceremony of kissing the ring and Edward VII's 'failure' to do this (because of his poor state of health) had darkened his reputation subsequently.⁶⁵ George, therefore, decided he had to go to France immediately to congratulate Haig and his army on their achievement. Therefore, he began to make plans and sent word of his impending trip as he has had done for all of his previous visits to his troops.

However, when the idea was raised with the French government, via Paul Cambon, they responded this time without enthusiasm. Cambon stated that although he was in favour of the King coming to France for such a purpose, he felt that George should wait until he could go to Paris. Given his understandable perspective on the importance of stressing a French dimension to the victory, Cambon did not welcome the amount of publicity for the British that such an announcement would produce, in terms of the media coverage of the King's presence in France. Balfour consequently informed Stamfordham:

I again spoke to Cambon on Saturday about the King's proposed visit to France. He is going to Paris on Monday and will find out privately and unofficially what the French government think about it and let me know. He did not like to telegraph or write because he says if he does so on a matter of this kind publicity immediately ensues. He himself was strongly in favour of the visit.⁶⁶

This helps to explain why the Palace's response was encapsulated in the following letter from them, explaining that the King's trip to France would not require the pomp and ceremony of a state visit: 'The King wishes me to make it clear to you that this is in no sense a State Visit, and that therefore there will be no necessity of His Majesty to see the *Corps Diplomatique*, or do the various functions which are usually

⁶⁵Although it must be remembered that it was his illnesses which kept Edward VII abroad. This however was kept from the public resulting in an image of laziness. A full account of Edward's exact medical condition and the extent of the public's knowledge of it can be found in 'The Death of King Edward' (1910) *British Medical Journal* 2576, 14 May, pp1183–6.

⁶⁶RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/WAR/QQ20/07484/1, Balfour to Stamfordham, 18 November 1918.

undertaken on such occasions.’⁶⁷ Here, the King’s priorities were laid out quite clearly: this was a visit his troops only, and the sole purpose of his visit was to deliver to them personal congratulations on their victory, from their sovereign, in whose name they had fought.

As this was emphasised as being the King’s only purpose in visiting the Front, the Palace had probably assumed that the usual formalities that had surrounded his previous visits to the Front could be suspended. Cambon’s reaction illustrates that French attitudes to the King’s presence in France were never seen as being devoid of wider diplomatic and political implications for relations between the two states. The result of this French perspective on these events has already been discussed, where the visits of the British King to his troops on the Western Front were announced as full state visits. This established as a diplomatic construct the official position that the King was seeing his troops on French soil as a guest of the President—in line with what were the norms for a state visit. It is true that the precise parameters of what constituted a royal state visit were somewhat flexible at this stage, especially from the British perspective, given that the revival of the overseas versions of these visits had only occurred in 1901.⁶⁸ But regardless, the usual convention was for a royal state visit to incorporate a visit to the capital city of a nation.

There had been recent exceptions, arising out of practical considerations, including British royal state visits involving the Spanish and Russian states.⁶⁹ And, during the war, the issue had been avoided by agreement that for the King to have gone to Paris on his various visits would have been impractical. It would have been an undesirable extension of the time spent by George in France, as well as an undesirable expense to both the British and French governments. As Cambon’s letter on this latest proposed visit illustrates, there was a French appreciation of the positive impact of the King’s prior visits on the frontline troops, something which went beyond engaging with the British army. However, with the war was over, the French clearly saw no reason why normal state visit conventions should not be resumed, with George being received in Paris in full pomp, as was proper for a state visit. Under these circumstances, the prospect of the King’s arrival on French soil, making a

⁶⁷RA: RA/PS/PSO/GV/WAR/QQ20/07484/2, Letter to Monsieur Fleuriau, 22 November 1918.

⁶⁸Glencross, *Edward VII*.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

'private' visit to his troops created a potential diplomatic problem. One core issue for both governments was their tacit recognition that the King would insist on being photographed with his troops, and that these photographs would end up being disseminated not just in British and Empire newspapers, but also in French (and other Allied) titles. There was no question of the King slipping in and out of France without any publicity: that would obviate the point of his visit, in his own eyes.

This being the case, there was a real potential for questions to be asked, especially in the French press, about why the King had not met the President, as he had done on all his previous wartime visits. More, since there was now no good reason for a royal state visit not to involve the capital, questions would be raised by the failure to meet the President actually in Paris. Reflecting back on the factors underpinning original French concerns over the King's presence in France to spend time with his army, one can appreciate the French position. The symbolism of a widely-publicised royal visit to France in the wake of the defeat of Germany which did not include a trip to Paris was not something that would be to France's advantage. Former French fears about British encroachment would re-emerge, even if only in the popular imagination (and media). Faced with these realities, George gave in and abandoned his plans for a purely private and personal visit to his troops, without the trappings of diplomacy. This submission to political realities emphasises that one thing that can be said to have governed George's attitude to his role as constitutional monarch throughout: that he always did what was required of him by his government, regardless of his own personal feelings. His sense of duty to his country overrode all else.

Thus it was agreed by all parties that the King would make a full royal state visit, which would involve travelling to Paris to meet formally with the French President. The compromise was that George would, en route to start the state visit, 'stop off' to see his troops on the way. The first official duty for the King would be his encounter, in Paris, with the French President. This formula avoided a diplomatic rift with the French (who had made it plain that this time, the French President would not travel to meet the King on the French borders) whilst satisfying George's own key objective, spending time with his troops. Also, for George, the fact that he would be seeing his troops first would clearly send them the message that visiting them was in no way an afterthought on his part, reaffirming they were his first priority, even if officially the diplomatic purpose was to congratulate the French nation.

CONCLUSION: TRYING TO AVOID TENSION—SUCCESSFULLY?

George V's visits to France, with their prime advertised intention of engaging with his troops on active service on the Western Front, reflected not just his style of kingship (that of 'an ordinary man' who happened also to be King) but also his driving purpose: using his monarchical role to do his duty to his country in general, and his subjects individually where he could. As a consequence of his sustained commitment to avoiding being actually involved in the development and application of war strategy and battle tactics, the King also largely escaped being included in the long-standing condemnation of the conduct of the war. He was not one of the 'donkeys' in most criticisms of the war leadership.⁷⁰ Instead, the public image was that of a caring king displaying deep sympathy for his people, with only the constitutional embargo on a British monarch (and his heir apparent) preventing him from a more extensive and active involvement, leading his troops actually as well as symbolically.

Yet despite the near-universal contemporary acceptance of the good that his visits did for his troops and the wider British and Empire population, they did not manage to avoid the creation of tension. His determination to create a symbolic leadership of his armed forces via his visits to his troops in France provided a constant source of tension with both his own and the French government, Britain's ally. George's keen constitutional appreciation of his own position as monarch, and its implications for his family as a whole, also led to real tensions with the Prince of Wales, with all the implications that had for how the latter understood his royal duty.

What George appreciated was that the nature of a modern British monarchy was just being formulated at this stage. He firmly believed it had to involve an increasing emphasis on monarchy's symbolic role: monarch as the country personified, but without the intrusion of the individual persona of whoever was on the throne (or heir to it). Thanks to Edward VII's state visits overseas, one thing had become established publicly as an aspect of twentieth century monarchy by the time George

⁷⁰George V did, of course, receive some criticism thanks to the German origins of his family, and the numbers of German princes related to him present in Britain during the war. For more on this, see Glencross, 'George V and the New Royal House'.

came to the throne. This was that, both within the United Kingdom and outside it, the monarch's every action on the public stage represented those of Britain as a whole. This was also understood by the British government. His ministers were, during the Great War, constantly and consciously aware of the need for the King's visits to avoid upsetting the French, because it would be impossible for them to explain convincingly that the monarch's actions were not sanctioned by them without creating a constitutional crisis in trying to resolve a potential diplomatic one.

This meant that they had to take very seriously French sensibilities over the King's presence in France, explaining why they were so strict in insisting that the appearance of diplomatic niceties should be observed, even while suspending several of them in practice. If George felt that such protocols were unnecessary in wartime, his sense of the constitutional proprieties ensured that he complied with demands for their observance in the interests of good relations with both his own government and the nation's allies. It should be remembered, here, that neither the British government nor the French nation could have prevented the King from acting as he desired. The British government could not compel the King to convert his visits into state visits with accompanying formal functions; had he not chosen to meet the French President before going to spend time with his troops, then it would have been up to them to manage the significant diplomatic fallout that would have followed.

As with so much in the British state, all depended on all parts of the system trying to make a set of different priorities and agendas work together. Thus the very fact that George never once publicly went beyond the constitutional proprieties when exploring ways for him to achieve his objective of regular visits to his troops attests to the depth of his understanding of what those proprieties were. It is equally clear that the government appreciated this dimension to their relations with the King. They trusted him to behave correctly when he was confronted with their reasoning, which meant the potential for a constitutional crisis resulting from government need to curb royal actions forcibly never arose. However, if George's commitment to this line enabled the tensions with his government, and by extension, with the French government to be resolved amicably, the same cannot be said for his relations with his heir.

The narrative of the growing disagreements between the King and his eldest son have been shown to have had originated very substantially George's disappointment over the behaviour of the Prince during

the Great War. George was committed to doing his public duty, despite his personal inclinations. This ensured that, despite his naval experience and likely personal inclinations, he never attempted to join in the conflict in any way that would have led to personal gratification and glory. However, the King did not have confidence that the Prince of Wales had the same level of commitment to duty and consequent avoidance of self-gratification. Other scholars have identified from this period the Prince's early dislike of formal duties and ceremonial observances. A growing conviction of this dislike felt by George V was surely behind the King's apparently heavy-handed tactics towards his son in these years.

Finally, the tension caused by George during the Great War, notably via his insistence on visiting the Western Front to engage with troops there, was fundamentally due to his own consciousness of wearing two hats which were potentially incompatible for a modern constitutional monarch. He was both the Supreme Commander of his armed forces, with all the responsibility that carried with it, and the representative symbol of the British state and its policies. Given these two distinct and yet similar roles, it took a King who was consciously aware of both the possibilities and the constrictions of both to walk successfully a line that meant that, overall, he fulfilled his duty to the former role, without breaking the constitutional boundaries of the other. The Great War tested George V as a monarch: the conclusion must be that he emerged from that test successfully, and that the institution itself was also strengthened.

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‘How To Be Useful in War Time’ Queen Mary’s Leadership in the War Effort 1914–1918

Judith Rowbotham

INTRODUCTION: (ROYAL) WOMEN AND WAR

The previous chapter explored the crucial contribution made by George V to the war effort, but as this chapter demonstrates, the women of the British royal family, led by the Queen, provided an important element in public understandings of the institution of monarchy in a time of war. Queen Mary made a number of choices to ensure that, from the time it became clear war was likely, the British public would see that the monarchy was a stable institution and a force for good in the national crisis because the King was being actively sustained by his immediate family in his leadership of the nation. There was, it could be argued, little new in queens consort so doing. Queen Alexandra had done it for Edward VII

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during the Boer War.¹ Elsewhere in the belligerent nations involved in the Great War, queens consort were active in providing visible support for their husbands.² But there was more to Queen Mary's involvement, this chapter will argue, than the traditional supportive role expected of a female consort. Queen Mary's actions fortified the monarchy because she took actions which helped to modernise and so strengthen the British monarchy as an institution.

Queen Mary's initiatives between 1914 and 1918 will be shown to have been essentially practical, with her remedies substantially inspired by her own recollections of the realities of the Boer War. She remembered that conflict in terms of what it had meant both for those on active service and wives and families at home, in terms of their requirements and the need for an efficient delivery service to see that what was required arrived where the demand was. Queen Mary had already been preparing herself for contributing to the domestic aspects of an upcoming conflict, in the shape of the fears of civil war in Ireland. When European events overtook that prospect in late July and the first days of August 1914 she was conscious that, even if it was (as many hoped) a short war and 'over by Christmas', the scale of the impending European conflict would ensure that the impact on those groups would be even more dramatic and, unless carefully managed, chaotic. The wider context of her actions and public statements was, undoubtedly, her desire to demonstrate to nation and Empire that the King's family as a whole, and not just the King himself, were placing themselves at the forefront when it came to providing leadership in the war effort. This chapter considers the expectations of royal women, assessing the extent to which, in the ways in which she chose to support the war effort, the Queen was simply acting in accordance with established conventions about the ways in which royal women showed themselves as being supportive of the national effort in war. However, it also asks whether the particular nature of her participation amounted to something new, in terms of both scale

¹Most notably, she had paid for a fully-equipped hospital ship to go to Africa, and in 1902, founded the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Army Nursing Corps. See, for instance, Geoffrey Wakeford (1971) *Three Consort Queens: Adelaide, Alexandra and Mary* (London: Hale); Julie Piggott (1990) *Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword) pp38–9 in particular.

²For the involvement and contributions of royal women from other states, see notably Chapter 4, p87; and Chapter 9, p251.

and practical activity? Certainly her involvement in various aspects of the management of the Home Front was both extensive in scope and intensive in terms of her sustained and detailed interest in the tasks she assumed. How much of a role, then, did Queen Mary play in demonstrating to her husband's subjects that monarchy was useful and relevant to their lives, and not merely a relic of an outdated symbolism?

TRADITIONAL EXPECTATIONS

As part of the centennial retrospect of the early twenty-first century, surviving ephemera has reminded us of, for instance, the role of George V's daughter, Princess Mary, in coming forward to lend her name to a national fund to provide Christmas gifts for the troops at the Front. The funds raised were used to purchase tins emblazoned with the image of the princess and her name, and filled with perishables such as cigarettes.³ These gifts were often treasured by the recipients for the symbolism they encapsulated as much as for their consumable content, and the tins were consequently kept as souvenirs even after the war. That gesture represents only a small part of the much wider and very public contribution made in a very conscious spirit by the Royal Family to ensure through these tangibly symbolic consumables that the British people were made aware that their patriotism and suffering, and devoted service for King and Country, was appropriately and thoughtfully recognised at regular and reassuring intervals.⁴

Given the precedents set by previous queens and queens consort, the fact that Queen Mary was indubitably a visible figurehead in such efforts, and was also aided in this royal visibility by other women in the family could be said to be a predictable one.⁵ Being useful by being noticeable in the background to the battle action was a long-established model

³ Catriona Pennell (2012) *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p223.

⁴ For more discussion of this, see Heather Jones (2016) 'The Nature of Kingship in the First World War', in Matthew Glencross, Judith Rowbotham and Michael Kandiah, eds *The Windsor Dynasty: Long to Reign Over Us?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) pp194–216.

⁵ See, for instance, the discussions of Queen Victoria's active and sustained interest in the welfare of her soldiers and sailors during military campaigns during her reign in Helen Rappaport (2003) *Queen Victoria: A Biographical Companion* (London: ABC-Clío) p107; Paula Bartley (2016) *Queen Victoria* (Abingdon: Routledge) p287.

for women in wartime, as they have been the classic non-combatants in modern Western history. Those queens (including queens consort) and other elite ladies who have, historically, been actively involved in the combat dimension as leaders and strategists were, by the nineteenth century, the exceptions which tested the rule of females as being normatively adjuncts and non-combatants; something the collected biographies of model historic heroines made plain while lauding the achievements of these exceptional women.⁶

However, despite such inspiring heroines being found in history, by the end of the nineteenth century no explicitly military active role in conflict was envisioned as being appropriate for modern women of any rank. War was essentially understood as a form of sanctioned (and, ideally, well-managed) collective male violence.⁷ Women of all ranks were, as Elshtain has put it, expected to be part of an intimate collaboration with their menfolk, predominantly in the sustaining of patriotic values as part of the pursuit of victory.⁸ Where they demonstrated this, they mainly did it on an individual level by providing comforts for the men in their own families, or as part of small community efforts. This chapter has implications for a more complex understanding of the nature of women's involvement in conflict between 1914 and 1918, and of how this contributed to the advance of British women's political, cultural and socio-economic advancement, especially in terms of women's leadership. The focus here is on the extent to which Queen Mary constituted more than a symbolic figurehead, achieving an acknowledged national leadership by deliberately exploiting her position; and doing so to spearhead a process of identifying and expanding the contributions women were expected to make to the war effort. This enables a conclusion on how far she was stepping outside the boundaries of what would traditionally have been expected of her, both as a woman and as the Queen Consort, adding a further dimension to scholarship exploring the contribution and

⁶See, for example, W. Davenport Adams (1868) *Stories of the Lives of Noble Women* (London: Nelson and Sons); Anna Jameson (1836) *Lives of Celebrated Female Sovereigns and Illustrious Women* (London: Fisher and Sons).

⁷Jean Bethke Elshtain (1998) Preface, *Women and War* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press); Judith Rowbotham (2000) "Only When Drunk": The Stereotyping of Violence in Britain, c1850–1900' in Shani D'Cruze, ed. *Everyday Violence in Britain 1850–1950* (Harlow: Longmans) 155–69, pp55–6.

⁸Elshtain, *Women and War*, px.

relevancy of monarchy and leadership during the Great War in Britain, including its longer term impacts.

WOMEN'S WAR EFFORT IN THE GREAT WAR

From the start of the conflict, the women of Britain generally were very extensively engaged in what was described by the government and the contemporary media as 'useful war work'. Even in the short number of days before the actual declaration of war, the coming conflict was being presented to the nation by the government as one which would require the total engagement of the whole population, civilian as well as military—including women. For most recipients of such messages from government and other prominent public figures, the most recent memory of war on a substantial scale was of the Boer War. It had been 'won' by Britain but at huge cost. There was a widespread expectation that since, as Kipling had put it, Britain had had 'a jolly good lesson' from that experience; that the nation's leaders had subsequently turned that lesson to use.⁹ Some lessons had certainly been learned by them, including a consciousness of the value of an extensive contribution to the war effort from women. Most famously, they had gone out to nurse the wounded on a hitherto unprecedented scale.¹⁰ What is often overlooked is the significant contribution on the domestic front between 1899–1902. During the Boer War British women had demonstrated they could be effective as recruiters to and cheerleaders of the British military effort. More, they had been invaluable fund-raisers as well as providers of essential comforts for the troops—especially the wounded. This summarisation of the memory of the Boer War was encapsulated not just in the reportage of the day but also in various forms of popular culture, which helped to perpetuate and also to mythologise the value of women's work.¹¹

⁹Rudyard Kipling (1903) 'The Lesson'.

¹⁰Piggott, *QARANC*; Anne Summers (1988) *Angels and Citizens: British Women as Military Nurses 1854–1914* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).

¹¹For contemporary reflections on women's roles see, amongst others, Evelyn Everett Green (1904) *The Three Graces* (London: Andrew Melrose) dealing with the domestic front during the Boer War; similarly see Rosa Nouchette Carey (1903) *Passage Perilous* (London: Macmillan); L. T. Meade (1901) *A Sister of the Red Cross. A Tale of the South African War* (London: Nelson). Most recently see Jennifer Doyle (2017) 'Imagined Communities in the First World War: Food, Periodicals and Readers', Unpublished PhD thesis, King's College, London.

Consequently, when (during the last days of July and first days of August 1914), official acceptance of the likelihood of a major conflict grew, war planning included an expectation that a substantive female contribution to the domestic front from the start would emerge. Estimations of the scale and impact of the coming European struggle acknowledged that what was likely to be crucial to sustaining the British war effort was what became known as the Home Front, something which would require a ‘total involvement’ by the ‘stay-at-homes’, including women.¹² The media was used to disseminate as widely as possible this anticipation of a female contribution to the war effort, emanating from a domestic locale. But equally, while there was some explicit speculation that war would mean that extra responsibilities would consequently rest upon women, for the mainly masculine discussants this was anticipated as being only as an emergency measure and for the duration of the conflict only. When it came to any battle-front, there was, officially, a only a limited expectation of female involvement, via the Queen Alexandra’s Imperial Military Nursing Service and the Royal Yeomanry Nursing Corps, both tested and established as valuable background adjuncts to male military action during the Boer War.¹³

The tone of the official comments thus conveyed an implicit message to the population that there was to be only a temporary divergence from ‘normal’ domestic duties and not a permanent shift in women’s roles; and this was a perspective disseminated clearly in the mass print media of the day.¹⁴ The Ladies’ Page of the *Illustrated London News*

¹²See, for example, Maggie Andrews and Janis Lomas, eds (2014) *The Home Front in Britain: Images, Myths and Forgotten Experiences Since 1904* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

¹³As histories of nursing show, as the war progressed, many more women became involved in nursing the wounded and sick servicemen than were members of the Army medical services. Civilian nurses on hospital ships and in hospitals at home, as well as the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs). See Summers, *Angels and Citizens*; Vivien Newman (2014) *We Also Served: The Forgotten Women of the First World War* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword) Chapter 2.

¹⁴The extent to which women’s domestic duties to home and family were considered paramount is underlined by Vera Brittain’s experience. Men could not expect to be relieved from war duties because they were needed at home; women were expected to demonstrate their traditional feminine instincts by putting these first, as Vera did when her father summoned her home in March 1918, because her mother had collapsed under the strain of running a war-time household. Vera returned home in April 1918, and took up home duties, if resentfully. See Mark Bostridge (2015) *Vera Brittain and the First World War: The Story of Testament of Youth* (London: Bloomsbury) pp99–100.

had pointed out to its readership on 25 July that 'women are capable of intense national and patriotic feeling' at times of national emergency and those sentiments were never called on 'in vain'. But the emphasis was on the concept of it being an emergency. Interestingly, the context for such comments made in the British press in June and July 1914 related not to a potential European conflict, but instead to a more domestic concern: the real fear of imminent civil war over Irish Home Rule. The *Illustrated News* of 25 July went on to share Lady Londonderry's announcement that 3520 women had joined the Voluntary Aid Detachments in Ulster to provide nursing and 'other war services' if called on.¹⁵ This underlines that there was a conscious preparedness in the minds of many British women of a coming need for them to take supportive involvement in a forthcoming conflict, even if it was not the one that actually materialised in the days following 27 July 1914.

INSPIRING BRITAIN'S WOMEN IN THE WAR EFFORT

In researching this chapter, it has become clear that though much has been written on the topic of the female contribution to World War I for all combatant countries, the extent and nature of the involvement in the Great War of the women of the British royal family has remained substantially under-explored territory. A survey of both serious historical works and more frivolous ones on the topic of British female war efforts is interesting. It results in a conclusion that there has been, deservedly, an increasing amount of scholarship devoted to the women who volunteered for war work in various ways outside their homes. However, the framework for understanding the structure of that contribution, especially in terms of identifying the female leadership inspiring it, has not been well understood. As part of this, the 'war effort' of women who did not leave their homes needs to be considered and understood in relation to women's work in general. Current historiography has been shaped primarily by the emphasis on the more general histories of women's advances from the late Victorian era through to the interwar period, which has led to an assumption that key suffrage figures including Millicent Fawcett, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, were the key

¹⁵'Ladies Page', *Illustrated London News*, 25 July 1914.

inspiration for women's substantial and whole-hearted volunteering to become involved in the war effort.

Consequently, the emphasis in the scholarship has been on the different work opportunities opened to women which, as the war progressed, were enthusiastically seized upon by the membership of both the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) and the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). A substantial contribution was indeed made by very many women suffrage campaigners; women who fought hard to be allowed to make a real and valuable contribution to the British war effort.¹⁶ Many individual and small groups of supporters did contribute to the women's war effort in a number of active and important ways. Louisa Anderson and Flora Murray, for example, formed the Women's Hospital Corps (WHC) in September 1914, to provide from the ranks of qualified suffragists both doctors and nurses for the conflict in the face of considerable hostility from the British authorities. So great was that hostility that initially the WHC worked on what became the Western Front under the French Red Cross. Fortunately, the value of the WHC was recognised by the War Office eventually, and in May 1915, the WHC was asked to take over management of the Endell Street Military Hospital.¹⁷ Equally, the formation of the Women's Police Service was initially a private citizen initiative from a group of suffragettes before becoming adopted by the authorities.¹⁸ However, apart from encouragement to men and women to volunteer for war work, there was at the start of the conflict no clearly-led organisational impetus for women's work from the various suffrage leaders at national level.

The most visible war-related national event organised by a suffragette was the Women's March Through London, with banners reading 'We Demand the Right to Serve'; but that did not come until

¹⁶Not all suffragists, or suffragettes, however, felt able to support the war directly because of their personal pacifist beliefs. Sylvia Pankhurst's pacifism is well-known, but other figures including the suffragists Catherine Marshall and Maude Royden continued to agitate for peace. For more on this, including the Women's International League and its activities during and just after the war, see David Patterson (2012) *The Search for Negotiated Peace: Women's Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp233–4.

¹⁷Susan Greyzel (2013) *Women and the First World War* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp37–38; Newman, *We Also Served*.

¹⁸Helen Jones (2014) *Women in British Public Life 1914–1950: Gender, Power and Social Policy* (Abingdon: Routledge) p32.

21 July 1915. It had been organised by Emmeline Pankhurst—working in collaboration with Lloyd George, who gave a grant of £3000 to enable the thirty-thousand strong march.¹⁹ This widely-approved suffragette-led initiative, interestingly enough, was instigated by the King, who had read an article by Christabel Pankhurst in the *Observer*, and suggested to Lloyd George that utilising the Pankhursts might be a useful way of demonstrating the modernity of thought underpinning the war's moral aims from the British perspective.²⁰ Assessments of their contributions have been framed by knowledge of the claimed outcome of that work in the shape of the granting of women's suffrage, as Christabel Pankhurst maintained in her speech justifying the patriotic stance of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).²¹ However, the belief that the cessation of militancy by suffrage leaders and the accompanying vocally-expressed support of the suffragists and suffragettes for the British cause in the war was the crucial factor in women coming forward to aid the war effort is an insufficient interpretation of how and why British women came forward to be 'useful' in wartime. The reality was much more complex.

Part of the complexity lies in the reality that the leaders of both the suffragists and the suffragettes were at a real disadvantage in coming forward to offer leadership to women at a national level in the days before the outbreak of war, and the weeks immediately following it. Millicent Fawcett publicly voiced her opposition to war as late as 2 August 1914, though in the wake of declaration of war, and especially in reaction to the sufferings of Belgian refugees, she encouraged members of the NUWSS to use the opportunities provided by the conflict to demonstrate their citizenship.²² Mrs Pankhurst and her daughters,

¹⁹See Antonia Raeburn (1973) *The Militant Suffragettes* (London: Michael Joseph), see also June Purvis (2003) *Emmeline Pankhurst. A Biography* (London: Routledge) pp275–9.

²⁰Ibid. See also 'The Women's March Through London', *The Times*, 22 July 1915.

²¹Many general and specialist texts on the period highlight Christabel Pankhurst's claim that victory won with British women's aid would advance the suffrage cause for women. See, for instance, George Robb (2014) *British Culture and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan); Sandra Houlton and June Purvis, eds (2002) *Votes for Women* (London: Routledge).

²²Peter Grant (2014) *Philanthropy and Voluntary Action in the First World War: Mobilising Charity* (Basingstoke: Routledge) p50. Mrs Fawcett made no attempt to dissuade other NUWSS members to share her internationalist views which made it difficult for her to emulate Mrs Pankhurst in taking part in recruitment activities etc. However, both condemned the International Congress of Women, meeting at the Hague in 1915, as giving comfort to the enemy. See Purvis, *Emmeline Pankhurst*, p274.

Christabel and Sylvia, had vehemently opposed the Boer War, that earlier test of popular patriotism which had concluded a mere dozen years beforehand. In 1914, Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel swiftly came out in support of the war, but they were in St Malo, France on 4 August. Christabel drafted an article to appear on 7 August in the *Suffragette*, in which she voiced her and her mother's support for the British side in the war as a matter of humanitarian principle.²³ But other WSPU leaders in Britain were more confused in their reactions, especially as numbers of their more prominent members were in prison as a result of their militant activity. On 10 August, by which time Mrs Pankhurst and Christabel had returned to Britain and made it plain they supported the war effort, the Home Secretary cancelled the sentences of suffragette prisoners and on 13 August, Mrs Pankhurst formally announced the suspension of militant activity.²⁴

However, in assessing the impact on the majority of British women of the support voiced by these prominent women activists for the patriotic cause, that support needs to be framed in the broader context of levels of support for women's suffrage activity in the population in general, and amongst women in particular. Membership of the more numerous NUWSS stood at around 50,000 with about 500 different branches through the country. Membership of the WSPU was smaller, at a mere 5000. While there was also support for the cause from those who were not members, it has to be recognised that the women's suffrage cause was actually unpopular with a substantial number of British women, as well as men. More, the initial confusion and hostility to the war emanating from figures like Millicent Fawcett did not aid them in being seen immediately as the obvious national leaders in orchestrating women's wartime activities. It was different within their own membership, of course. *The Times* was typical of press reaction in commenting unfavourably on the 'irresponsible section of the suffragists' who were, amongst other actions, responsible for 'particularly humiliating scenes' at

²³Jacqueline de Vries (2003) 'Gendering Patriotism: Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst and World War One', in Sybil Oldfield, ed. *This Working Day World: Women's Lives and Culture(s) in Britain 1914-1945* (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press).

²⁴Ibid. By contrast, Sylvia came out formally as a pacifist and split with her mother and sister to form the Workers Suffrage Federation. See Grant, *Philanthropy*, p50.

Westminster Abbey and St Pauls, where services were being held to prepare the nation for war, should it come.²⁵

Women suffrage leaders were thus unable to establish a national leadership role that was widely recognised and responded to by the majority of British women, in either managing or defining women's appropriate contribution to the war effort. While *The Times* announced briefly on 17 August 1914 that the NUWSS had 'organised a Women's Active Service Corps', few details were given and there was little subsequent mention of this. Equally, the Women's Suffrage National Aid Corps, organised by the Women's Freedom League was described as working to deliver help 'chiefly to the women and children of the nation', but its activities were substantially subsumed in the work of other groups, including the Queen's Work for Women Fund (discussed later).²⁶ It was not until towards the end of the war that this changed to an extent. Millicent Fawcett had continued to lobby for votes for women behind the scene, and in late 1916, when the Speaker of the House of Commons summoned a conference to consider franchise reform, she was a prominent voice.²⁷ From late 1917 into 1918, against the backdrop of a changed political landscape in the aftermath of the government decision to grant a limited franchise to women, the political organisational experience of the leaders of the NUWSS and the WSPU finally became important and regularly reported on. This enabled Emmeline Pankhurst in particular to achieve the prominence in a national wartime role that had eluded her earlier.²⁸

However, from the start, patriotic women did want and look for leadership within their own sex to inspire and shape their war efforts. This provided a real opportunity for the royal family, and particularly the Queen. The lack of a clear alternative in the shape of female leaders at the start of the conflict has already been touched on, but what is often not recognised is the lack of an alternative to the Queen, just as there was a lack of alternative in terms of male leadership to the King amongst the

²⁵'A Nation at Prayer', *The Times*, 3 August 1914.

²⁶'Women's Work', *The Times*, 17 August 1914.

²⁷This activity was not, however, either lengthily or extensively reported. See 'Women's Future Status', *The Times*, 29 March 1916; 'The Future of the Suffrage', *The Times*, 16 May 1916; 'War Work and Votes. The Demands of Women Suffragists', *The Times*, 21 February 1917.

²⁸Purvis, *Emmeline Pankhurst*, p309.

politicians of the day. Whereas in terms of acknowledged national leadership during World War Two, Winston Churchill certainly shared the media limelight with the then King and Queen, even superseding them in importance as the key media spokesman for what the British thought and felt during the war, this reality does not hold for the Great War. Instead, George V and the Queen were the most widely and most regularly seen and reported individuals when it came to giving a lead to the nation's war effort. There were two key reasons for this. First was the established expectation of leadership from the royal family which would always have made it very difficult for any other woman to challenge Queen Mary for dominance between 1914 and 1918. Second, from the start the Queen was on the spot and personally determined to take the initiative, as well as being in a position to do so effectively because of her access to a significant number of already existing women's networks, and the readiness of those networks to accept this royal leadership.

This latter reality must not be underestimated, in terms of its importance as a factor enabling the Queen to take so immediate and effective a leadership of war efforts on what came to be known as the Home Front, especially those emanating from women. Reflecting on the suffragists' contribution during the war, Millicent Fawcett had emphasised the importance of the NUWSS representing 'a tolerably large band of organised women' and so in a position to offer 'organising and money-raising skills' to the patriotic cause.²⁹ It has been substantially assumed that the NUWSS and WUSPU took a lead because they had strong and coherent structures on which to capitalise, and the first histories of women's involvement did not challenge this.³⁰ The older scholarship focused on women's 1914–1918 activities in direct war work such as nursing and key factory work including munitions, has in recent years expanded to look at how they helped to sustain agriculture and forestry as well as in a number of public services, including police and transport.³¹ Such scholarship has ensured that, rightly, such contributions now form an integral part of Great War historiography.³² But though more work has been

²⁹Millicent Fawcett (1923) *The Women's Victory—And After. Personal Reminiscences 1911–1918* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson) p87.

³⁰See, for instance, Grant, *Philanthropy*, pp50–4.

³¹Notably Newman, *We Also Served*; Jones, *Women*; Grayzel, *Women*.

³²See for instance Robb, *British Culture*; Adrian Gregory (2008) *The Last Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

done in recent years on the Home Front, what still needs to be tackled extensively is the complex landscape provided by a long tradition of women's philanthropic but apolitical voluntary organisations and a range of other imagined communities relating to, for instance, magazine readership and the correspondence that generated.³³ It was through such networks and communities that huge numbers of British (and colonial) women were accessed and then encouraged and informed about how to be 'useful in war time'. Queen Mary was both part of the network of voluntary organisations (she had been from childhood) and aware of the power of the periodical press and so in an ideal position to capitalise on both dimensions. And being Queen Consort gave a platform from which to organise a national leadership initiative.

ROYAL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

During the early decades of the twentieth century, the emphasis being placed on monarchical leadership in Britain at times of crisis and conflict is very plain in British media reportage. In the summer of 1914, leading up to the outbreak of the Great War, royal activities and comment was widely reflected on. In the spring and summer of 1914, for instance, despite the threat of both suffragette and Irish violence directed against them and other prominent figures, the King and Queen had resolutely continued with a series of visits to English towns and cities, such as Nottingham.³⁴ Underlining this expectation of royal leadership, *The Times*, along with other papers, made it plain that it then expected that any resolution of the Ulster Crisis that might avoid conflict there would depend on intervention by the King as a mediator between his government and the other political interests and agendas involved.³⁵ Though the Conference broke down due to the 'intransigence' of the politicians

³³Recently, an admirable PhD thesis has begun to remedy this: Doyle, 'Imagined Communities'.

³⁴The royal visit to Nottingham took place on 24 June 1914; that morning a militant suffragette, Eileen Casey, was arrested in an attempt to plant explosives under the platform the King and Queen would stand on in Market Square. 'King and Queen's Visit to Nottingham', *The Times*, 25 June 1914; 'Police News', *Nottingham Guardian*, 26 June 1914.

³⁵See 'The King's Stroke for Irish Peace, the Ulster Conference', *Illustrated London News*, 25 July 1914; 'The King's Speech', *The Times*, 25 July 1914. The Buckingham Palace Conference failed, but the role of the King was generally applauded in the media.

involved, the King was held generally to have done his duty as a national leader.³⁶ However, events on the European stage ensured that the focus on the King shifted away from his responsibility for resolving the Ulster Crisis to his responsibility for taking a lead in resolving, if possible, the European Crisis instead. As it became more likely that a major European war would break out in the closing days of July 1914, forcing Britain to make a decision about involvement or abstention from involvement, the King was again to the forefront in the media commentary. *The Times* on 1 August reflected that war was ‘an act of government for which the responsibility rests in the first place upon the Crown’.³⁷ Though, as another article on the same day underlined, it was accepted that he would be advised and guided by his Ministers, the responsibility and the emphasis was on the Crown.³⁸

As other comments in the press on succeeding days underline, while the King was the key figure in the monarchy as institution, the focus on the Crown included expectations of the Royal Family as a whole, including its women members. For one thing, there were hopes to the last that war might be avoided, and women were traditionally seen as peace-makers. The *Sunday Times*, for instance, voicing continuing hopes for peace on 2 August, insisted that the advice given to the King by his mother, the Dowager Queen Alexandra, had been ‘almost invaluable’, because of ‘influence that Queen Alexandra has on the Chancelleries of Europe today’.³⁹ While the extent of her insights and the real impact of her influence can be questioned, to do so misses the point that what this newspaper was doing was providing national comfort at a time of crisis. That it took the form of assuring its readers that the Royal Family, its women included, was taking the lead in seeking to resolve the conflict is telling. It was not that leading British politicians were not being mentioned.⁴⁰

³⁶In the face of attacks by the radical press on the King’s intervention and its tone, the mainstream press robustly refuted any suggestion of constitutional impropriety, see ‘Mr Asquith’s Vindication of the King’, *The Times*, 23 July 1914.

³⁷‘England’s Duty’, *The Times*, 1 August 1914.

³⁸‘The King’s Intervention’, *The Times*, 1 August 1914.

³⁹‘Court and Society’, *The Times*, 2 August 1914. There is also an interesting echo in the use of the Dowager Duchess of Parma as a channel for ‘behind-the-scenes’ diplomacy, in Chapter 4.

⁴⁰‘Cabinet Today’, *The Times*, 2 August 1914, which noted the large crowds assembled outside Downing Street, to watch the arrival of the full membership of the Cabinet. See also ‘The Nation and the Government’, *The Times*, 4 August 1914.

However, overall that their role and significance in developments was downplayed, even subordinated, to the emphasis on the King, and his family, as the national leaders at this time of crisis. Huge attendance was reported at Sunday services on 2 August, 'from the Monarchy downwards'.⁴¹ The newspapers also depicted how, on the evening of the declaration of war on 4 August, the greatest crowds in London gathered outside Buckingham Palace, not outside Parliament, or Downing Street. The King and Queen had to appear no less than three times in response to cheering from the crowds.⁴²

CONTEXTUALISING QUEEN MARY—THE VICTORIAN TREND

As Frank Prochaska has pointed out, traditionally 'Royal women ... reflected and reinforced the prevailing idea that the female sex had a particular calling or social purpose' in charitable enterprises in peacetime.⁴³ If, by 1914, the key women in the British royal family were already experienced and practical philanthropists, with substantial organisational experience in fund-raising behind them, the trend-setter for the modern royal family, and one of the leading figures in this royal philanthropy was Queen Victoria herself. She understood, very early in her reign, that one of the first arenas of war-related activity for royal women was the philanthropic one. She had taken an active interest in the Crimean War, showing care and concern for the wounded, and setting the trend of knitting and making comforts for soldiers.⁴⁴ During the Boer War, most recently, and especially with members of her family involved in the war, Victoria's claim to personal concern for her troops had an even greater ring of truth to it. After all, her much-loved grandson, Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein, shared the fate of so many other officers and men

⁴¹'A Nation at Prayer', *The Times*, 3 August 1914.

⁴²See, for instance, 'London and the Declaration of War. Impressive Midnight Scene: The King and His People', *The Times*, 5 August 1914.

⁴³Frank Prochaska (1995) *Royal Bounty: The Making of a Welfare Monarchy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press) p75.

⁴⁴John Plunkett (2003) *Queen Victoria—First Media Monarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p61. See also Helen Rappaport (2003) *Queen Victoria. A Biographical Companion*, (London: ABC Clío) p110.

when he died of enteric fever in Pretoria, in October 1900.⁴⁵ It underlined the fact that, when at war, her campaigns had an ‘eminently representative character’, involving sacrifice, duty in the name of service to Queen and Country from all ranks in society.⁴⁶

Victoria’s prominence in leading the nation’s support at home for her soldiers and sailors had set a new standard of expectation for the women of the royal family. The nation was reminded of this when, despite her advanced years and failing health, the Queen came out of the retirement that had marked her widowhood to take a lead in reviewing the troops in her service as they departed for South Africa, and in visiting the hospitals where the wounded had been taken on their return. It was Victoria who revived the idea of making a personal gift to the men in her service, with gifts of chocolate in tins, sent out to the Cape between December 1899 and March 1900. She also, again, worked to provide comforts for the troops, to inspire her women subjects to do the same. This time, she symbolically knitted with her own hands items bearing her monogram (VRI) for five men, identified as being representative of her brave soldiers.⁴⁷

The nature of philanthropy changed over the last half of the nineteenth century, and increasingly, state-provided welfare initiatives began to be established in the early twentieth century. However, it was still an everyday reality that charitable fund-raising was a necessity to ameliorate the harshness of daily life for many, and Victoria understood that women, not men, were still expected to take the lead in such philanthropically-inspired fund-raising.⁴⁸ She trained up her daughters to be active and noted philanthropists as well and they developed a huge range of philanthropic interests.⁴⁹ Victoria also expected that her daughters-in-law would follow suit, and the same held true for her expectations of the more minor royals related to British royalty who were fully or mainly British domiciled,

⁴⁵ ‘He has given his life for his Queen and Country’, Editorial, *Western Mail*, 30 October 1900.

⁴⁶ ‘Prince and Peasant’, *Western Mail*, 31 October 1900.

⁴⁷ Valerie Parkhouse (2015) *Memorialising the Anglo-Boer War 1899–1902* (Leicester: Troubador Publishing) Chapter 3, on the royal family’s involvement.

⁴⁸ See, for instance, James Macaulay (1904) *Queen Victoria and Other Excellent Women* (London: Religious Tract Society).

⁴⁹ Anne Anderson (2002) ‘Queen Victoria’s Daughters and “The Tide of Fashionable Philanthropy”’, *Women’s History Magazine*, 41, pp10–15.

given her realisation that the attendance of even a minor royal lent cachet to an event which significantly promoted the totals raised.⁵⁰ As a result, thanks to Queen Victoria's practical philanthropic sympathies, British royal women had, by 1914, not only 55 years of experience of co-ordinating home based fund-raising efforts, but also of being involved with (and patrons of) army nursing both at home and abroad. There was, then, a pool of royal women with substantial experience in managing domestic philanthropic endeavours. Boer War in particular had honed that experience for the royal family and prepared them well for the Great War.

One of the reasons why Queen Victoria had identified her first cousin once removed, Princess Victoria Mary of Teck, as a suitable bride for her unsatisfactorily rackety heir apparent, the Duke of Clarence, had been because she was known in the Royal Family for her activism in charitable works. May, as she was known, was an enthusiastic follower in the footsteps of her mother, affectionately dubbed 'Fat Mary'. Victoria had later endorsed her marrying the new and inexperienced heir apparent, the new Duke of York and future George V, because of this adjudged suitability.⁵¹ But Mary had, however, more than experience of making the right kind of philanthropic gesture—she was a naturally talented organiser and a firm manager.⁵² During the Boer War, she had also (like Victoria) had a personal stake in the war. Mary's brother, Prince Alexander of Teck, was in the British Army and was involved in the relief of Mafeking. This was widely known, and so when the Duke and Duchess of York toured the country on behalf of the Queen, sympathy was regularly expressed with her anxieties.⁵³ As a result of her Boer War experience, she certainly felt herself both ready and able to take up the challenge of supporting her husband as King of a country at war in a very active way.

⁵⁰Frank Prochaska (1988) *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p35.

⁵¹See, for instance, Sir Clement Kinloch-Cooke (1900) *A Memory of Her Royal Highness, Princess Mary Adelaide, Duchess of Teck* (New York: Scribners).

⁵²Charlotte Cavendish (1930) *The Biography of H. M. Queen Mary* (New York: A.E. Marriot) pp171–2.

⁵³The Duke and Duchess also toured the colonies, and similar sympathy and enthusiasm was demonstrated there. See 'News of the Day', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 24 July 1900; 'Women's Chat', *Ipswich Journal* 19 December 1900; 'The Royal Tour', *The Times*, 29 May 1901.

It must be stressed that the efforts of British royal women was intended to compliment, not to challenge, what British royal males were doing for the national cause. As Glencross's chapter underlines, the King regularly met with not only his government ministers but also his generals and admirals and this was something that newspapers took care to publicise.⁵⁴ It was reported in considerable detail that the Prince of Wales, already in the Navy, joined the army as well.⁵⁵ Duke of Connaught was reported as co-ordinating and inspiring the Canadian war effort.⁵⁶ A quick examination of the reportage of the Queen's activities reveals that she, apparently by contrast, was focusing on the appropriate and traditionally feminine aspects of the war effort.

WOMANLY DUTY—CARING FOR THE WOUNDED

One of the major activities of the Queen, from the start, was to assist the King in his own war work, and where needed, to co-ordinate her female relatives to help out as well. Their Majesties regularly received wounded soldiers (officers and men) at Buckingham Palace to invest them with awards for bravery. They also regularly visited the wounded in hospitals in London, and the surrounding area—visiting Brighton, Southampton, and Dover for example to achieve the widest possible spread. She even deputed for him on one visit to Aldershot in 1915, when George V was recovering from his fall at the Front. During the war years, the King and Queen regularly went on morale-boosting domestic royal tours, where they visited the factories and institutions working for the war effort. One such trip was to Liverpool and the North West in May 1917 which, typically, was widely and enthusiastically reported in the local and national press. Tribute was regularly paid to the 'intimate and friendly' way in which they spoke (more likely George V) but also to the 'practical and informed interest' in people's lives (most likely Mary) that they demonstrated on such trips.⁵⁷ In addition, the Queen organised for her

⁵⁴'The King at War', *The Times*, 5 August 1914.

⁵⁵See, for instance, 'The King Salutes His Son's Regiment: Grenadiers in War Kit', *Illustrated London News*, 15 August 1914.

⁵⁶'The Canadian Force. The Duke of Connaught to Go Into Camp', *The Times*, 12 August 1914.

⁵⁷See, for instance, 'The Royal Tour', *The Times*, 15 May 1917.

husband a number of 'King's Parties', held at Buckingham Palace, to entertain wounded soldiers. At the one held on 21 March 1916, it was reported that eight or nine hundred were entertained to tea and a special programme of entertainment., where six sets of tables were presided over by senior royal women, including Princess Arthur of Connaught and Princess Maud, with senior aristocrats including the Duchesses of Devonshire, Buccleuch and Sutherland acting as waitresses. The occasion was described as 'friendly and homely'⁵⁸

Nowhere, however, is this traditional expectation of the Queen doing what women were expected to do in times of war more obviously visible than in the usage of her as a recruitment symbol. The Queen only consented to become an icon for recruitment efforts because it had a direct practical impact on the war effort. At the start of the war, the popular lyricist, Paul Ruben, wrote a song for women to use to aid recruitment—*Your King and Country Want You*, with those familiar lines 'We don't want to lose you, but we think you ought to go'.⁵⁹ Performed *without* fee by popular music-hall figures like Vesta Tilley, it was considered to be a hugely valuable tool in the first eighteen months of the war, until the introduction of conscription. However, it was announced from the start that the funds from the sale of the sheet music would be donated by Paul Rubens and the publishers, Messrs Chappell and Co., to one of the Queen's new funding initiatives, the Queen's Work for Women Fund.⁶⁰ Though initially reluctant, the Queen finally accepted the composer's offer that the song to be officially dedicated to her, recognising that her public endorsement would heighten the profile both of the song and her Fund.

QUEEN MARY AS FUND-RAISER: THE INITIAL MOBILISATION OF PHILANTHROPY

When thinking about the nature of women's contributions to the success of the national cause, this meant, for most contemporaries, various philanthropic endeavours, and above all, fund-raising for aspects of the war

⁵⁸ 'Wounded Men at the Palace', *The Times*, 22 March 1916.

⁵⁹ For the full lyrics, see <http://www.firstworldwar.com/audio/yourkingandcountrywan-you.htm>, accessed 23 July 2015.

⁶⁰ 'A Woman's Recruiting Song', *Daily Mail*, 14 September 1914.

effort where the government was not held to have a role in providing it.⁶¹ Under Queen Mary's leadership, British royal women swung rapidly into action by taking a lead in organising fund-raising efforts. Initially—predictably—those efforts can seem essentially traditional in imagination and scope. A grand national bazaar at Olympia, for instance, was announced on 5 August and further details emerged over following days. It was advertised as being intended to raise money for 'military comforts', organised by Queens Mary and Alexandra along with 'the whole of the remainder of the ladies of our Royal Family' for November 1914.⁶² However, behind this apparently traditional approach to fund-raising was a different tenor and scale. The Queen was substantially responsible for this, in the way that she came forward, with her mother-in-law, daughter and other relatives, to ensure that there was a greater central co-ordination of such efforts than had been seen previously. In both local and national reportage, events such as the proposed bazaar largely faded into the background in favour of other, more useful and targeted appeals led by the Queen, using the names also of her mother-in-law and daughter as well as her eldest son.

Importantly, on 6 August, Queen Alexandra issued a national appeal, in her capacity as President of the Soldiers and Sailors Family Association (SSFA) for funds to help the families of the soldiers and sailors on active service, exhorting them to remember their generosity during the South African War. She did the same for the Red Cross, as she was also President of this (with Queen Mary as one of the patrons).⁶³ That same day, she was reportedly almost mobbed by an enthusiastically cheering crowd, when returning to Marlborough House.⁶⁴ More interestingly, a National Relief Fund was launched in the name of the Prince of Wales—but the hand of his mother was all over that appeal, in terms of the organisation and tone of the appeal. Its launch was contextualised by the Queen's 'message to the women of the country' to accompany the appeal of her 'dear son', providing an acknowledgement of who

⁶¹There had been a considerable scope for wartime philanthropy since the Crimean War. See Matthew Hendley (2012) *Organised Patriotism and the Crucible of War* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press); Grant, *Philanthropy*.

⁶²'Court and Society', *The Times*, 9 August 1914.

⁶³'Queen's Appeal', *The Times*, 7 August 1914; 'Queen Alexandra's Appeal', *The Times*, 8 August 1914.

⁶⁴'The War Day by Day', *The Times*, 8 August 1914.

would be the key fundraisers.⁶⁵ The example of generosity was then set for the nation with a set of carefully graduated donations from the Royal Family, with the King donating £5000, the Prince of Wales gave £3000, and Queen Mary gave £1500, while Queen Alexandra added £500, with a further £750 coming from the Princess Royal and Princess Victoria. Within 36 hours, over £250,000 had been raised. This was achieved because of the way that it was organised. Experienced local women volunteers were asked by the Queen to co-ordinate giving in their districts: they were then asked to forward the results to her at Buckingham Palace. All envelopes with money, orders and cheques were sent to the office she established at the Palace, and each donation, no matter how small, received a receipt. The message was that the men were busy with conflict preparations: this was women's work.⁶⁶ The system, and the women, worked well. By 4 September, a month after the declaration of war, the Fund had reached £2,063,000. True some of that had come from substantial individual or institutional donations—the Co-operative Union gave £1720 18 s 6d, and the Lord Provost of Aberdeen £5000, while the Church of England diverted £100,000 from dedicated Church collections. The majority, however, came from collections organised by women locally and forwarded to the Palace to be distributed nationally.⁶⁷

Under the Queen's management, though in her son's name, the National Relief Fund continued to draw in donations throughout the war. But other national schemes with royal leadership were also announced promptly. In September 1914, Princess Mary's League was announced, where the young Princess 'with the approval of her mother' became Patron of the new League of Young Patriots, which included amongst its patriotic activities fund-raising via events such as school concerts for the Prince of Wales Fund. Again, the funds raised were to be administered centrally, to ensure maximum efficiency of use.⁶⁸ Along with generating monies for the Red Cross, which funded—amongst

⁶⁵ 'The Prince of Wales' Fund, *The Times*, 8 August 1914.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ 'Prince of Wales Appeal: £2,063,000', *Daily Mail*, 4 September 1914. While there was some criticism over the administration and fears that it was not being promptly dispensed, Balfour provided detailed assurances this was not the case. See 'The Prince of Wales Fund', *The Times*, 14 September 1914.

⁶⁸ 'Princess Mary's League', *Daily Mail*, 2 September 1914; see also Grant, *Philanthropy*, pp40–41.

other things—the VAD nursing movement, the Fund remained one of the Queen’s top priorities in war work until the end of 1918. There was regular media reportage reminding readers of the needs for funds for these worthy objectives, accompanied by continual examples of royal generosity as setting the example through their attendance at or other involvement in a wide range of events, from art exhibitions to charity theatrical performances.⁶⁹ The pride taken by local branches of the League in precisely how much they produced for the war effort is evident in a range of books and memoirs detailing local efforts.⁷⁰ But recognition of their essential role should not obscure the importance of the central organisation of the distribution of their efforts, under the leadership of the Queen and her family. The Queen was also busy with other war-related activities intended to inspire the womenfolk of Britain—and the Empire—to similar energy.

QUEEN MARY AND PRACTICAL CHARITY: NEEDLEWORK AND KNITTING

One area of considerable activity related to that traditional arena for women in time of war: sewing, knitting and otherwise manufacturing items of clothing for the comfort of men on active service, and later, the bandages and dressings and other materials for tending the wounded.⁷¹ Mary had long experience here, thanks to her mother. From the 1880s, the Duchess of Teck had been Patron of the London Needlework Guild, dedicated to providing clothing for the children of various orphanages. Having inducted her daughter into the charity in her youth, the Duchess passed that duty wholly on to her in 1897. Even then, Mary had set about expanding it, to supply hospitals and parishes all over London (it benefitted from her personal supervision, and was said to be her favourite charity).⁷² On 9 August 1914, it was publicly announced that the Queen’s Committee had been summoned to meet by the Queen, and that the focus of the Guild would change, for the wartime period,

⁶⁹See, for instance, ‘Royal War Relief Purchases’, *Daily Mail*, 6 January 1914.

⁷⁰Newman, *We Also Served*, rightly dedicates a substantial amount of coverage to women’s fund-raising.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, Chapter 1.

⁷²David Llewellyn (2010) *The First Lady of Mulberry Walk: The Life and Times of Irish Sculptress Anne Aheson* (Leicester: Matador Press).

to provision of items of clothing for soldiers and sailors. It would also become a national, and not simply a London, charity.⁷³ At the meeting, the name was changed to Queen Mary's Needlework Guild (QMNG), and women across the Empire—not just in the UK—were invited to set up branches and become part of an overall central hierarchy for co-ordinating and distributing its products.

The Admiralty and War Office, in settling their financial plans for supplying the navy and the army, did not budget for things considered to be non-essential and 'extra' comforts for the troops (which included spare socks, vests, gloves, scarves, balaclava helmets). It was considered to be up to their womenfolk to provide, through their stitchery and their knitting, any deficiencies in the official provision, as in previous wars such as the Boer War. One thing Queen Mary would have remembered from the Boer War is the swings from over-supply of needed comforts in times of enthusiasm, to the dearth of supplies at times when fatigue and confusion set in as a result of the proliferation of too many women of social prominence coming forward to lead their own fund-raising initiatives.⁷⁴ The importance of Queen Mary's initiative is therefore that she had realised, reflecting back on the Boer War, that many of the parcels sent by individual mothers, sisters and sweethearts had not reached the men they were intended for. She understood that it would need a vast and centrally co-ordinated effort to make sure that the distribution of comforts to those on active service was efficient and balanced, and that this was where the QMNG could act. All women with skills in needlework and knitting (which in practice meant all respectable women of all classes) were appealed to by the Queen to join the needlework guilds that existed throughout the kingdom.⁷⁵ Her invitation was enthusiastically taken up, including throughout the Empire, from India to the Dominions.

The Queen set up a central co-ordinating office, initially for all London branches of the Guild and then expanded nationally. Based in St James' Palace, its role was to receive and distribute the contributions appropriately, through the organisations that could access the service men most efficiently. Thus the Guild worked with the Red Cross,

⁷³'Queen's Committee', *The Times*, 9 August 1914.

⁷⁴See for instance, Julia Bush (2000) *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (London: A & C Black) pp43–5.

⁷⁵'Queen Mary's Needlework Guild', *The Times*, 10 August 1914.

SSFA,⁷⁶ and the Territorials in order to deliver to army depots and ports, where the War Office and the Admiralty then took on responsibility for distribution to those on active service. As the details were announced, with the instruction that QMNG local branches should collect the things made by women in their district and forward them direct to Buckingham Palace, she added that she hoped that this organisational pattern would be followed widely.⁷⁷ As a result, the imperial submissions also ended up at Buckingham Palace, or at offshoot depots managed by the Royal Household. By June 1915, it was reported that the Guild had a registered membership in London alone of over 60,000 and had supplied over 200,000 items of clothing via Buckingham Palace.⁷⁸ More than that, the Queen also realised that buying the materials for such a mass needlework and knitting initiative would be beyond the financial reach of many potential volunteers, and from the start, the appeal was to middle and upper class ladies both to provide the financial support for the QMNG, in the shape of subscriptions for both 'the cost of materials' and to 'pay those women who cannot afford to give their time'.⁷⁹

The evidence is that, substantially, the system worked.⁸⁰ Lord Kitchener's letter of gratitude to the Queen, published throughout the national press, assured both Her Majesty and the women of the Empire that their gifts of knitted or woven belts and socks (300,000 belts; 300,000 pairs of socks) had been received and 'careful instructions' had been made to ensure their successful distribution to the troops in France.⁸¹ Subsequent reportage over the following years commented on the sustained huge response that her regularly re-stated appeal to the women of the Empire generated, and at the Queen's request (and with her design input) a badge was created for those working

⁷⁶Then the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association; now Soldiers, Sailors and Airman Families Association, SSAFA.

⁷⁷'Her Majesty's Appeal', *The Times*, 10 August 1914.

⁷⁸'What Women Are Doing', *Daily Mail*, 3 June 1915. There were many other women associated with the work of the Guild informally, of course.

⁷⁹'Women's Work', *The Times*, 17 August 1914. Daughter of the Dean of Westminster and author of several royal biographies, Mrs Alexander Murray Smith was the identified co-ordinator of this aspect of the QMNG, appealing also for women to come forward to act as local organisers, distributing materials, setting up working parties etc.

⁸⁰Anon (1919) *Queen Mary's Needlework Guild: Its Work During the Great War* (London: St James' Palace); Grant, *Philanthropy*, p74.

⁸¹'Lord Kitchener's Letter of Gratitude to the Queen', *Daily Mail*, 15 December 1915.

for the QMNG.⁸² Over the years of the war, the QMNG played a key role in keeping British and Empire troops in garments and accessories warm for winter and appropriate for summer heat, as well as sewing and knitting (and weaving and stuffing) nightshirts, dressing gowns, feather pillows, bandages and lint etc.⁸³ Again, this indicates that the Queen's direct involvement in the management of the Guild and its subsidiary arms went beyond providing an inspirational figurehead and was, in practical terms, both consistent and deep in ways that had not previously been usual for royal philanthropy. Mary was publicly (and subsequently, anecdotally) credited with her 'thoroughness' in appreciating that the work of the Guild had, if it was to be consistently useful, to be flexible enough to be both seasonal and responsive to demands such as for extra bandages and dressings because of rises in casualty figures for example.⁸⁴

THE QUEEN'S 'BUSY-NESS'

The range of the Queen's vision of what could constitute war work for women that was appropriate and needed was exhaustive, even exhausting. Again her practical skills, but also her imaginative approach to what could be done were visible. Made aware of a need through correspondence in *The Times*, she helped to fund the Free Refreshment Buffet for Soldiers at Victoria Station, to be open at the hours that trains were coming or going, so men arriving or departing could get a comforting cuppa! She later visited it, with Princess Mary in tow, and reportedly, was pleased to see 'the attractive appearance' of the stall.⁸⁵ It was also Queen

⁸²'The Queen's Appeal. Widespread Response from All Ranks', *The Times*, 14 August 1914.

⁸³Set up in 1914 under the auspices of the Guild was the Surgical Requisites Association, based at Mulberry Walk, Chelsea, which particularly concentrated on the medical necessities needed for nursing the wounded. Initially concentrating on dressings, bandages etc., it went on to work on more 'sculptural' aids, from cages to plaster casts. For more details of its work, Llewellyn, *First Lady of Mulberry Walk*.

⁸⁴'Her Majesty's Quest', *The Times*, 28 March 1915; Anon, *QMNG*. The importance of the sustained anecdotal tributes to her involvement is that those paying tribute had no reason, post-1918, to give tribute where it was not due: so this suggests that her involvement made an enduring impact on ordinary Guild members.

⁸⁵'The Queen', *The Times*, 28 March 1915. By all accounts, her habit of turning up to check on operations could be slightly off-putting to returning servicemen, when confronted by her immaculately-clad and imposing figure as they were consuming sandwiches or hot drinks, and then being exhorted by her to carry on consuming!

Mary who was publicly given credit for suggesting to the War Office that it would be ‘much appreciated’ if—‘so far as is possible’—recovering sailors and soldiers could be located in convalescent homes ‘nearest to their own localities’.⁸⁶ According to *The Times* as it assessed the nation after the first four months of war, ‘Queen Mary has been unsparing in her work, not only for the soldiers and sailors at the front, but still more for their dependents and for all to whom the war has brought poverty and affliction and for the sick and wounded’.⁸⁷

As already indicated, she was active in supporting nursing organisations, but much of that was left by her to other royal women. Including Queen Alexandra, they were taking charge of the effort to find home-based accommodation for wounded men returning to Britain, for instance. They were also active as patrons and in fund-raising for nursing and hospitals, and ambulances on the front. Princess Henry of Battenberg had the leading role in the British Water Ambulance Brigade. This, plus a note on 9 August 1914 that ‘Princess Louise of Schleswig-Holstein’ had given the ‘working-girls’ club in Jamaica-Road, Bermondsey, fully equipped for use as a hospital’, underlines the reality that not all British royals who had also a German royal alter ego chose to side with the German cause.⁸⁸ There was a pretty universal involvement of British royal women and no one was considered too old or young to help. Queen Alexandra’s name was regularly invoked, and under her mother’s tutelage, Princess Mary—just emerging into adulthood—also took named roles in various enterprises. These ranged from her eponymous Princess Mary’s Christmas Gift Fund, launched in October 1914, to the *Princess Mary’s Gift Book* series, published annually to raise funds for her mother’s ‘Work for Women Fund’ from December 1914 on.

But the evidence is that the Queen looked beyond mere patronage and sought out less usual paths in which to assume leadership in her effort to be useful in wartime. Certainly the Queen’s initiatives looking to the unusual were an inspiration to others. Miss Edith Storey, for instance, sent *The Times* an approving personal letter she had just received from the Queen; which was contextualised with her story of how she had been inspired to send cases of Bovril to the front. She had

⁸⁶‘The Queen and the Wounded. A Sympathetic Suggestion’, *The Times*, 22 August 1914.

⁸⁷‘The King’s Return’, Editorial, *The Times*, 7 December 1914.

⁸⁸‘Care of the Wounded’, *The Times*, 9 August 1914.

done this because she had wished to follow the example of the Queen in doing something practical, but had informed the Palace because of the constant message from there about the importance of centralising these efforts to avoid duplication so that the work of aiding the troops might continue effectively.⁸⁹ As this attests, the impact of the Queen's emphasis on central co-ordination was very obvious in a number of areas. Nor is this a single anecdote: similar initiatives and the importance of central co-ordination has been uncovered through Doyle's important recent study on the use of periodicals by government and fund-raisers to inform local communities and share news about new ideas to help the men on active service.⁹⁰

CARING FOR WOMEN

One particularly crucial leadership role assumed by the Queen related to women themselves, very directly. When the QMNG first started its work, its enthusiastic workers started making all kinds of garments, including those that were provided free for soldiers and sailors as part of their uniform issue by the Admiralty and War Office. Leading trade union activists fighting for women's interests, notably the socialist and suffragist 'Red' Mary Macarthur, of the National Federation of Women's Workers were outraged. Macarthur (personally an opponent of the war but who joined and became Secretary of the Ministry of Labour's Central Committee on Women's Employment) wrote directly to the Queen to represent the interests of the seamstresses and women tailors. She protested that the QMNG's wholesale efforts were putting these women out of work at a time when many women were anyway facing problems with gaining regular employment in a number of trades, thanks to the war.⁹¹ The Queen's response was equally prompt and comprehensive. She immediately instructed the Guild to make sure that they did not, in their voluntary work, compete with those women who, as part of their paid employment, produced garments for the War Office and Admiralty—ensuring thereby that neither could try to cut costs by reducing the free uniform allowance because so much of it was being

⁸⁹'The Queen and the Army', *The Times*, 24 February 1915.

⁹⁰Doyle, 'Imagined Communities'.

⁹¹Grant, *Philanthropy*, p38.

provided charitably.⁹² This exchange led to an unlikely collaboration between these two very different women, based on mutual respect and even, one suspects, liking. Both were strong women, capable of taking leadership roles and genuinely concerned for social welfare issues, even if they did not agree on their political views.⁹³

However, the contact with Mary Macarthur, and the information she provided, aroused the Queen to a real concern over the plight of women who had been thrown out of work in a number of areas by the new focus on the war and on domestic thrift and economy as a key part of the war effort. This had a real impact on trades associated with women's dress, from the dressmakers and milliners to those manufacturing fashionable accessories. Again using Lady Crewe alongside Mary Macarthur, she organised investigations into the situation facing women who fell outside the remit of the SSFA, the Prince of Wales Fund and similar charitable resources aimed at women whose husbands were on active service. The information gathered led to her decision to set up the Queen's Work for Women Fund, aiming to help 'distressed' women whose wage-earning opportunities had been affected by the war. Its motto was 'Women's Help for Women'.⁹⁴ In announcing this new initiative, her personal message to the nation emphasised her 'firm belief that prevention of distress is better than relief, and that employment is better than charity'.⁹⁵ Working with the Workers National Committee, the funds raised established the Queen Mary's Workshops for such women.⁹⁶

⁹²'Voluntary Workers', *The Times*, 22 August 1914.

⁹³It was the Queen who took the initiative in setting up a meeting, via Lady Crewe initially. See David Duff (1985) *Queen Mary* (London: Collins) p161.

⁹⁴'Women's Work for Women Fund', Editorial, *Daily Mail*, 4 September 1914; Deborah Thom (2010) *Nice Girls and Rude Girls* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p30. Out of the QWWF emerged the Central Committee on Women's Work and Training, also actively supported by the Queen and involving Mary Macarthur.

⁹⁵'The Queen's Work for Women Fund. Message from Her Majesty. Employment Better Than Charity', *Daily Mail*, 4 September 1914.

⁹⁶It is easy to criticise the low wages paid in these Workshops—but the aim was to employ as many as possible, and it was at least employment. The contemporary evidence is that many of the women employed were grateful for that overall and things improved, at least marginally, as government contracts began to be directed to the Workshops. Equally, Mary Macarthur continued to campaign for minimum wages and overall improved pay rates and conditions for women throughout the war. See Gerry Holloway (2007) *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp131–2; Gail Braybon (2012) *Women Workers in the First World War* (Abingdon: Routledge) pp44–5.

Throughout this enterprise, Mary Macarthur was her key advisor, regularly taking tea at Buckingham Palace during the war.⁹⁷ These two apparently unlikely collaborators proved to be very effective when it came to identifying and implementing the practicalities of providing work and promoting welfare for women, with the Queen happily taking Red Mary's advice as to what was most needed for the working women they both most wanted to help.⁹⁸

THE QUEEN AROUND THE COUNTRY

As well as raising funds, Queen Mary was determined to show women workers for the war effort that their contribution was appreciated. She visited widely, on her own account, both in and around London, the factories and workshops which her Fund was helping to support.⁹⁹ Also, when the King went to inspect dockyards and army depots around the country, she went with him—but while George V examined the military arrangements, she focused on the munition factories and the lofts and other, often very uncomfortable, surroundings in which women were working. On her trip to Liverpool, for instance, it is estimated that—dressed in her usual elegance—the indomitable Queen walked approximately three miles, in blazing heat. She interspersed her walk with climbing up and down steep stairs in order to get into the frequently cramped work spaces to which women workers were confined—and (unlike her ladies-in-waiting) refusing to show signs of exhaustion.¹⁰⁰

The Queen even accompanied the King on his fourth visit to the Front, in July 1917, where she felt she was acting as the 'representative' of those women who could not, themselves, go to visit their wounded, so she was a symbol of the wives and mothers on the Home Front, longing to see their loved ones. She did therefore, as expected, visit the field hospitals to talk to wounded soldiers and nurses working behind the front lines. But she also went out of her way to support working women there. Specifically, she visited the other, less visible and glamorous,

⁹⁷Thom, *Nice Girls*, pp30–1. See also 'Women Breadwinners: Useful Work of the Queen's Fund', *Daily Mail*, 26 October 1914.

⁹⁸The association continued after the ending of the Great War, ending only with Mary Macarthur's early death in 1921.

⁹⁹'Queen Visits East End Factories', *Daily Mail*, 15 October 1914.

¹⁰⁰'King and Queen Visit Liverpool', *Daily Mail*, 10 June 1916.

women war workers to be found just behind the front lines.¹⁰¹ In particular, she took an interest in those who were working to repair the machineries of war, from guns to tanks and lorries, as part of the still substantially unofficial Auxiliary Army Corps.¹⁰² There she gained insights into not only into the practicalities of what these women (mainly drawn from the working and lower middle classes) were doing and how essential was their contribution to the war effort. She also understood the extent to which their unofficial status left them vulnerable should they be wounded, for instance—and this was a real danger given their proximity to the Front.¹⁰³ Her visits engendered in her a determination that their work should be properly recognised. She understood that this would require that they should achieve an official status, with all the formal acknowledgement of their work that that would provide, as well as access to support and protection if they were wounded or killed.

There were already discussions under way within the War Office to regularise the position of women, abroad as well as at home, who were substituting for men in army-related duties, but these had not been accorded much urgency. Queen Mary's active interest changed that. Very shortly after her return from France, the women attached to the Auxiliary Army Corps became instead members of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC). She became Commandant of the WAAC before the end of the year, and thereafter, Commander in Chief of what was, from April 1918, known as Queen Mary's Women's Army Auxiliary Corps.¹⁰⁴ She took her commandant role very seriously. When wounded

¹⁰¹There were a number of these, in both domestic and industrial roles, as is revealed in contemporary fiction. See, in particular, C. N. and A. M. Williamson (1917) *Everyman's Land* (London: Hutchinson) with its description of life on the front line immediately behind the trenches. While the focus is on the fighting forces, there are vivid depictions of the women working here as well.

¹⁰²'Queen's Visit to France', *The Times*, 19 July 1917. The origins of the Corps lay in the suggestion that a volunteer force of uniformed women be established to free up men from the need to serve in subsidiary support roles behind the Front lines—recognising the extent to which more informally, this was already going on. See Samantha Philo-Gill (2017) *The Women's Auxiliary Army Corps in France 1917–21. Women Urgently Wanted* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword) Chapter 1.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴'Queen Mary's Army Named', *Daily Mail*, 20 April 1918, advertised as giving the Corps 'the royal recognition it deserved'. This was part of an attempt led by the Queen to redeem the racy reputation that the WAAC had rapidly acquired, which was reflected

WAACs came home, she made a point of visiting them and ensuring their comfort and happiness.¹⁰⁵ Demobilisation of these women was another area she ensured was not forgotten, initiating the setting up emergency hostels for women war workers released from the WAAC (along with nurses and VADS, Land Army girls etc.).¹⁰⁶ The Queen also made sure these women were not simply forgotten amidst the national celebrations and expressions of gratitude at the end of the war.¹⁰⁷

CONCLUSION

Overall, Queen Mary showed her husband's subjects how it was possible, in very practical ways, to 'keep the home fires burning' in the traditional sense. Her leadership in these areas ensured good media coverage of women's efforts, and enabled individuals and communities of women throughout Britain and its Empire to know they were doing genuinely useful war work. The picture gleaned from the media, and also from many of the memoirs of those who were members of the Needlework Guild, as well as those who benefitted from the Fund for Women, indicates clearly that it was the Queen, and other royal women, to whom they looked for leadership. These royal women acted as their role models in their war efforts. When it came to inspiring their fellow British women to be 'useful' in the war, the symbolic role possessed by the Queen was consciously and deliberately exploited by her to enable her to go beyond usual expectations of feminine involvement, and to encourage others to do likewise. In supporting women who stepped outside their usual domestic roles and into less glamorous occupations in war-related factory labour or as troop supporters behind the Front, she ensured that they attained a public profile that would almost certainly have eluded them otherwise.

regularly in the media of the day. See Janet Watson (2004) *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory and the First World War in Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp36–40.

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, 'Wounded WAACs', *The Times*, 10 June 1918.

¹⁰⁶ 'A Hostel for Demobilised War Workers', *Daily Mail*, 21 January 1919.

¹⁰⁷ 'Queen Filmed for Film on Women's Work', *Daily Mail*, 3 December 1918; 'The Queen's Cup for Women', *Daily Mail*, 2 April 1919. See also Watson, *Fighting Different Wars*.

In terms of the Queen's ability to communicate widely to the women of Britain and the Empire, the relative invisibility of the suffrage leaders in the media during the Great War is particularly telling. Mrs Pankhurst was directly mentioned positively in *The Times*, for instance, a total of thirty times between 1 August 1914 and 31 December 1918 and Millicent Fawcett, forty-one times. Moreover, the vast majority of those mentions date from January 1918, with the revision to the franchise to include women already in view. The WSPU, and other suffrage organisations were directly invoked in connection with war work for women a total of 83 times in the same period in that newspaper. This contrasts with a mention of the Queen on over 6000 occasions, with other royal figures like Princess Mary were also prominent. Princess Mary garnered over a thousand mentions; Queen Alexandra over two thousand. It was the royal women, above all Queen Mary, who acted as the consistently prominent exemplars, demonstrating to British women not only that they *could* be 'useful in wartime', but also how to achieve this practically. Above all, this was done not just in terms of their symbolic role and promotion through that of the public acknowledgement of women's actual practical contributions. These were very practical initiatives, largely thanks to the sustained involvement of the Queen. She understood the need for co-ordination of women's efforts, to demonstrate their scale, as well as their value. This chapter has been able only to touch on the full scope of the Queen's activities and involvement, and more needs to be done to flesh this out and estimate the extent of its significance in empowering women post-war. This a reality that historians of women's contributions to World War One need to take seriously to reveal the full reality of women's lives in war between 1914 and 1918.

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The Victorious King: The Role of Victor Emmanuel III in the Great War

Valentina Villa

Undoubtedly the long reign of Victor Emmanuel III was defined by the King's involvement with Benito Mussolini and his contribution to the Fascist regime. His merits (some of them undisputed even by his fiercest critics) have consequently been overshadowed by the decisions undertaken during the last twenty years of his life, those after the ending of the Great War.¹ In exile, the former monarch complained drily in an interview shortly before his death: 'They do not recall anything about my life but the night of 8 September [1943]'.² Yet before the rise of Fascism, Victor Emmanuel had been identified by his subjects as an influential and successful sovereign. The Great War, in particular, was the episode in Italian history that served to demonstrate to his people that he had

¹All Italian quotes used have been translated into English for ease of reading. The translations used here are those of the author.

²Nino Bolla (1949) *Colloqui con Umberto II. E in appendice: Colloqui con Vittorio Emanuele III* (Rome: Fantera) p98.

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an extraordinary ability to hold the fate of Italy in his hands. After the war Victor Emmanuel III had been saluted by Italians as ‘the Soldier King’ and ‘Victor the Victorious’.³ This chapter will reconstruct his now largely forgotten Great War role to demonstrate its significance for the impact on the institution of monarchy in Italy. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first three outline the narrative of the king’s involvement in the conflict, the last section analyses the symbolical role played by the Italian King during this time and its implications for the survival and character of the post-war monarchy within Italy.

ITALY’S ENTRY INTO THE GREAT WAR: THE BACKGROUND

Italian policy during the months leading up to the country’s entry into the Great War reveals the increasing influence of Victor Emmanuel on developments. He decided early to side with a relative minority of Italians: those in favour of war. It must be remembered that, when the conflict had officially started in 1914, Italy had initially declared its neutrality and despite pressure, chose not to join its Allies, Germany and Austria, on the battlefield.⁴ At the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914, the Italian political elite as a whole had been uncertain about the benefits of demonstrating loyalty to their partners in the Triple Alliance. In addition, their decision to remain neutral was generally welcomed by the Italian population. There was a recognition that immediate participation in military action would come at a time when the Italian state (including the army) would have been completely unprepared for this development.⁵

However, the irredentist and nationalist political movements in Italy went further and actually wished to withdraw from the Triple Alliance, which had been signed in 1882 by Umberto I. Instead they wanted Italy

³Giuseppe Volpe (2015) *Storia costituzionale degli italiani. Il popolo delle scimmie (1915–1945)*, 2 vols (Turin: Giappichelli) p13.

⁴Even though Italy was part of the Triple Alliance, the Italian government did not feel compelled to enter the war with Austria as the Alliance had a defensive purpose, whereas Austria-Hungary had attacked the Kingdom of Serbia under the pretext of her complicity in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914. A. Spinosa (1991) *Vittorio Emanuele III. Le astuzie di un re* (Milan: Mondadori) p142.

⁵A major consideration was that Italy had only recently emerged (theoretically victorious) from the very expensive Italo-Turkish War of 1911–12, see Charles Sand (2014) *A Box of Sand: The Italo-Ottoman War 1911–1912* (Ticehurst: Tattered Flag Press).

to enter the war against the Central Powers, on the side of the Triple Entente, placing them on the side of the United Kingdom and France, along with Russia. For supporters of the irredentist and nationalist movements, this conflict was seen as providing a means towards the final fulfilment of the Italian struggle for independence that had been initiated with the *Risorgimento*. An acknowledgement of this is that some historians of modern Italy still speak of the Great War as ‘the fourth Italian war of independence’, seeing it as following on after the first three wars of independence occurring in 1848, 1859 and 1866.⁶

The contemporary historian Sidney Low (1857–1932) was perhaps the first commentator to understand the implicit and symbolic connections between the Italian *Risorgimento* and the subsequent wars of independence occurring during the reign of Victor Emmanuel II, and the twentieth century conflict under Victor Emmanuel III. As early as 1917, in his book *Italy in the War*, he was to describe the Italian involvement in the Great War situation in the following terms: ‘They are fighting now for the vision of a Greater Italy under another Victor Emmanuel, a soldier as ardent and as keen as the *Re Galantuomo*’.⁷

The interventionist politicians in favour of a war against Austria justified the legitimacy of their arguments by referring back to the ‘natural geographical borders’ to Italy within the Alps. They called for a ‘holy war’, reaching out to a spirit of national unity through which they sought to revive the poetics of the Italian claims to areas still under Austrian control, a common claim even before the formal start of the *Risorgimento*.⁸ The interventionists, who included Benito Mussolini (1883–1945) and the poet Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863–1938), besought the Crown to reassert its political leadership, and decision-making powers. Thus they were consciously seeking to use the monarchy as an instrument to advance their own nationalistic claims. The King’s answer turned out to be more than supportive, and as Sidney

⁶P. Genovesi (2009) *Il manuale di storia in Italia. Dal fascismo alla Repubblica* (Milan: FrancoAngeli) p41.

⁷Sidney Low (1917) *Italy in the War* (London: Longmans, Green and Company) p159. The translation of the Italian in this extract is the ‘Gentleman King’, Victor Emmanuel II.

⁸The expression ‘holy war’ refers to a famous speech by Prime Minister Antonio Salandra. Anon (1912) *Annuario del Regio Archivio di Stato in Milano* (Perugia: Unione Tipografico Cooperative) p12.

Low reflected: 'Victor Emmanuel rose to the emergency, and showed that he had inherited the spirit and the courage of his grandfather'.⁹

Victor Emmanuel III's influence on Italy's decision to enter the Great War was significant. Without the King's support, or without at the very least his conscious if otherwise tacit assent, Italy would have stayed out of the conflict. Effectively, Italy's entry into the war was not a topic discussed by the Italian Parliament but was, rather, more of a 'behind-the-scenes' decision which reflected the personal perspectives of leading members of the executive, working with the King. It was, in particular, subtly engineered by the Prime Minister of the day, Antonio Salandra, along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sidney Sonnino, both working in collusion with Victor Emmanuel III. Clearly, the King's conduct on this occasion would not, by modern understanding, have counted as being appropriately 'constitutional' behaviour. However, it was very much in line with the way that the government of Italy was carried on in the early twentieth century. Though officially a constitutional monarch, the Italian monarch was able to take a highly 'personal' line on foreign policy development. This was possible thanks to a literal interpretation of Article 5 of the Albertine Statute, which, at the time it became law, formed the constitution of the Kingdom of Sardinia. It was subsequently adopted, with little or no amendment, as the constitution of the Kingdom of Italy. Article 5 stated:

Executive power is reserved to the King alone. He is the supreme head of the state; he commands all the armed forces on land and sea; he declares war, makes treaties of peace, of alliance, of commerce, and of other kinds, giving notice of them to the Parliamentary Chambers if the interest and security of the state allow, and accompanying such notice with opportune explanation.¹⁰

Acting on Article 5, as Victor Emmanuel clearly did in 1915, clearly demonstrates that the Italian monarch had continued to maintain his ultimate royal prerogative in full into the twentieth century. In this, the Italian constitutional monarchy differed significantly from

⁹Low, *Italy in the War*, p298.

¹⁰M. Fioravanti (2014) *Appunti di storia delle costituzioni moderne. Le libertà fondamentali* (Turin: Giappichelli) p193.

the British monarchy for example, as discussed in Glencross' chapter. Constitutionally, the Italian monarchy also retained its full powers over its military resources; so again (unlike the British monarchy) the Italian Parliament had very little say there in relation to the King's exercise of control over his army and navy.¹¹ Gordon Brook-Shepherd summarised this as follows:

these [monarchical] powers were authoritarian to the point of absolutism. Supreme executive as well as legislative and political functions were vested in the king alone. He was the head of state and the commander-in-chief of all forces on land and sea. He alone could sanction and promulgate all laws. He alone could convene, postpone or dissolve sessions of parliament, nominate and dismiss ministers. The grip for a very firm royal hand indeed had been established.¹²

However, the political position in Italy in 1915 was rather different and more complex.

The realities of government were, in practice, more complex. In actual fact, the responsibility of making a decision on entering the war weighed more heavily on the Prime Minister than on the King himself. On this occasion, Victor Emmanuel chose not to exert his royal powers to the fullest extent. Indeed, his reluctance to do so meant that numbers of Italian politicians went so far as to accuse him of showing indecisiveness in the very early stages of the war itself. Regardless of this, however, the King did choose to prioritise his role as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and to exercise his authority there. He made a clear distinction between his political role and his military one, and consequently, he appointed his maternal uncle, the Duke of Genoa, to act politically as Regent in his place for the duration of his absence on military service.

Many factors came into play in the King's decision to enter the war. First of all, he felt the necessity of being successfully involved in the ongoing conflict, to keep alive the military and historical tradition of the House of Savoy. In 1915, the only actual war in which the newly-established Kingdom of Italy had been involved had been the minor

¹¹P. Colombo (1999) *Il Re d'Italia. Prerogative costituzionali e potere politico della Corona (1848–1922)* (Milan: FrancoAngeli) pp306–19.

¹²Gordon Brook-Shepherd (1989) *Il tramonto delle monarchie* (Milan: Rizzoli) p210.

Libyan war against the Ottoman Empire in 1911.¹³ Considering his options in 1915, Victor Emmanuel allegedly commented retrospectively that: 'The House of Savoy has been trying to take up the challenge for centuries; in 1915 there were the favourable circumstances for war and I could not have found better ones'.¹⁴ Another probable factor that would account for his decision both to enter the war and to do so on the Allied side, rather than siding with the Triple Alliance, was Victor Emmanuel's personal antipathy to Franz Joseph, the Austro-Hungarian Emperor. The bad blood between the two dynasties had long historical roots, but it was also at this point in time both mutual and personal. Franz Joseph had not returned the 1881 state visit made to Vienna by Umberto I, Victor Emmanuel III's father.¹⁵ Consequently, a resentful Victor Emmanuel had deliberately avoided visiting Austria-Hungary during his first royal tour of Europe in 1902.¹⁶ This provides the background to the signing of a secret treaty with the Entente powers on 26 April 1915, something accomplished by Sidney Sonnino, the Foreign Minister, but with the full consent of the King and with the knowledge and permission of the Prime Minister. It had been Sonnino who had orchestrated the talks leading to the Treaty, in collusion with Salandra, the Prime Minister, but the King was fully informed throughout.¹⁷ All three were also complicit in the decision to take this action without consulting the Italian Parliament. This treaty, commonly referred to as the Treaty of London laid down, in Article 2, that 'On her part, Italy undertakes by all means at her disposal to conduct the campaign in union with France, Great Britain, and Russia against all the powers at war with them'.¹⁸ The benefits for Italy of this commitment to war were contained in Article 4: Italy was to receive the districts of Trentino; the whole of the South Tyrol

¹³Sand, *Box of Sand*.

¹⁴G. Artieri (1951) *Il re, i soldati e il generale che vinse* (Bologna: Cappelli) pp13–4.

¹⁵This was, in diplomatic terms, a considerable discourtesy, implying a lack of respect. See Johannes Paulmann (2000) *Pomp und Politik. Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn: Schöningh); and Matthew Glencross (2015) *The State Visits of Edward VII: Reinventing Royal Diplomacy for the Twentieth Century* (London: Palgrave Macmillan).

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p 27.

¹⁷L. Ceva (2005) *Teatri di guerra: comandi, soldati e scrittori nei conflitti europei* (Milan: FrancoAngeli) p42.

¹⁸C. A. McCurdy (1918) *The Truth About the 'Secret Treaties'* (London: W. H. Smith and Son) p19.

up to its natural geographical borders; the city and district of Trieste; the county of Gorizia and Gradisca; the entire Istria up to Kvarner and other small islands. The Treaty was kept secret from even the Italian Parliament, which remained in the dark about it until it was revealed in 1917 as a result of the Russian Revolution in November of that year. In the aftermath of the Bolshevik seizure of power, they had published all the secret treaties signed by the Tsar, Nicholas II. The Treaty of London first appeared in *Izvestia*, the official newspaper of the Soviet government, but it was rapidly picked up and translated by many other foreign newspapers.

The month immediately after the Treaty had been ratified by these three men was a particularly demanding one for with the King in particular. He did not cease his behind-the-scenes work to strengthen the case for the Italian entry into war. Finally, on 5 May 1915, two days after the formal repeal of the Triple Alliance, Victor Emmanuel used the occasion of the anniversary of the Expedition of the Thousand, led by Giuseppe Garibaldi in 1860, to send a public message hinting at war. This was addressed to the people who had gathered from all over Italy for the celebrations in Quarto (a district of Genoa). Because of the volatile political situation, the King did not attend the celebrations personally, but his message was understood by many of those present as a clear call to arms. The 'absent yet present' monarch, as he was described by fervently patriotic poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, proclaimed his confidence in the glorious future of Italy.¹⁹

During the following week, the King met Giovanni Giolitti, the most prominent supporter of neutrality. Giolitti again explained the reasons behind his total aversion to Italy's entry into the ongoing conflict. He failed to change the King's mind, even though by this time new, and more favourable, terms for a continuation of Italian neutrality had been offered by Austria-Hungary. Instead, with growing public support for war, Victor Emmanuel continued his support for the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. In an elaborate piece of parliamentary manoeuvring, Salandra resigned, along with the Cabinet on 13 May, with the opening of the Italian Parliament merely days away. The obvious alternative was Giolitti. However, with a clear lack of support from the King (as well as having full knowledge of the growing popularity of the case for war

¹⁹V. Salierno (1988) *D'Annunzio e Mussolini: storia di una cordiale inimicizia* (Milan: Mursia) p7.

in the Italian press) he felt unable to form a government. On this basis, on 16 May Victor Emmanuel III refused to accept Salandra's resignation and announced that he, himself, would abdicate if Parliament did not vote in accordance with the Prime Minister's policy. On 21 May 1915, Victor Emmanuel appeared on the balcony of the Quirinale, the Royal Palace in Rome, waving the national flag and praising his country with the cry of 'Long Live Italy!'. That Italy would be going to war against its old enemy, Austria-Hungary, was officially confirmed two days later, with the formal declaration of war being issued on 24 May. The text of the Declaration was one of the few personally composed by the King.²⁰ In it, he exploited the appeal of traditional interventionist propaganda, by repeating its terminology, spoke of 'the sacred limits that nature had created as a border for our homeland'.²¹ Finally, the war had started.

ON THE FRONT LINE

On 26 May 1915, Victor Emmanuel III left Rome by train to reach the Italian Front in the north of the kingdom. He would remain there until Christmas 1918, apart from a few short interruptions when he was forced to return to Rome because of some domestic political crisis in the government that required his direct intervention. In effect, the King was to spend almost three consecutive years on the Italian front line, a choice which stands out as probably the most important one of his reign. From the beginning of Italy's participation in the war until October 1917, the King's headquarters were situated in Torreano di Martignacco, a small farming village a few miles west of Udine. After the Battle of Caporetto, when that area was occupied by Germans and Austrians, he would move behind the barrier of the River Piave. In Torreano, the King was accommodated in the house of a local lawyer, Villa Linussa, which was consequently renamed Villa Italia because of the King's presence.²²

The choice of Villa Linussa, a medium-sized house in an area full of splendid Palladian palaces and villas, was one intended to send a high profile message to the Italian people about the reality of Victor

²⁰Spinosa, *Vittorio Emanuele III*, p163.

²¹G. Tomasoni and C. Nuvoli (2004) *La Grande Guerra raccontata dalle cartoline* (Lavis: Arca Edizioni) p89.

²²G. Viola and M. Zenatelli (2007) *Una guerra da Re. Vittorio Emanuele III nel Friuli della Grande Guerra* (Udine: Gaspari) p19.

Emmanuel's involvement in the conflict. His lifestyle there was extremely simple and even rather austere, and it was deliberately chosen to demonstrate the King's genuine sympathy with and closeness to his subjects. It was also very much in line with the frugality for which Victor Emmanuel had already become well-known during the first decade of his reign. On coming to the throne, Victor Emmanuel III had no interest in continuing the luxurious royal parties and lavish expenditure of his father, Umberto I. Now, in an interesting echo of the conduct of both the UK's King, George V, and the Belgian monarch, Albert I, Victor Emmanuel chose to share the hardships of his subjects. This extended to the times when he was required to return to Rome. Instead of living in the official royal residence, the Quirinale, the wartime King chose to occupy a modest house outside the centre of Rome, the Villa Ada, later called the Villa Savoia. From there he travelled daily to the Quirinale, as if going to work like a regular civil servant.²³

On the Front, the King's energetic involvement in the daily conduct of the war was very visible. He started his duties early in the morning, and when at the Front, there was not a day when he did not go out to meet some regiments or support a battalion of soldiers. As one observer commented, 'It is a mystery when he sleeps, when he naps, how he eats. The *Alpini* [mountain warfare troops] have started to look at the King as a fantastic being'.²⁴ Certainly by being on the front line with his army in this way, the King managed to earn not only the respect of his own Italian troops but also that of the foreign correspondents. One of them, Sidney Low, commented with a high degree of admiration, on his involvement in the following terms:

Sometimes, when the fire is thickest, the soldier in the trenches, behind some breastwork splintering under the shell, will see beside him an officer, not of his own regiment, an officer without orders or badges, dressed in the same plain grey uniform as himself. It is the King, who has a habit of finding out the worst danger points and going to them, unattended and alone.²⁵

²³S. Scaroni (1954) *Con Vittorio Emanuele III* (Milan: Mondadori) p37.

²⁴R. Bracalini (1980) *Il re 'vittorioso'. La vita, il regno e l'esilio di Vittorio Emanuele III* (Milan: Feltrinelli) p116.

²⁵Low, *Italy in the War*, p159.

The King normally travelled about the Front on foot or by car. When using his car, he would always drive it himself, accompanied by his aide-de-camp, though he would also take the train alongside the ordinary troops for long transfers. The car, however, truly characterised the King's never-failing presence on the front line. Even in Rome, motoring had been his favourite way of transport (Victor Emmanuel disliked riding horses because of his short legs). When on the front line in the Alps, Victor Emmanuel's grey car became one the *topos* of the Great War in Italy, the 'living symbol' of royal authority.²⁶ Indeed, the soldiers grew to recognise the characteristic roar of his car's engine. When there in 1917 as one of the commentators on the war on the Italian Front, Rudyard Kipling noticed that feature, and wrote about it in a *Daily Telegraph* article:

Then a motor-horn with a distinctive note rang fierce and piercing. 'That's the King's bugle,' some one said. 'He may be coming here. Listen. No... he's going on to look at some of the new batteries. You never know where he'll turn up, but he's always somewhere along the line, and he never leaves anything unseen'.²⁷

Ernest Hemingway was another who remembered the King's habit of arriving suddenly by car, something he described in the opening pages of his novel *A Farewell to Arms*. These memories demonstrate powerfully how this tangible royal presence genuinely affected those who encountered him on the frontline. The American novelist wrote:

There were small gray motor-cars that passed going very fast; usually there was an officer on the seat with the driver and more officers in the back seat. They splashed more mud than the camions even and if one of the officers in the back was very small and sitting between two generals, he himself so small that you could not see his face but only the top of his cap and his narrow back, and if the car went especially fast it was probably the

²⁶E. Signori (2004) 'La Grande guerra e la monarchia italiana: il mito del "re soldato"' in M. Tesoro ed. *Monarchia, tradizione, identità nazionale: Germania, Giappone e Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Milan: Mondadori) pp183–214, 208.

²⁷Rudyard Kipling 'The War in the Mountains', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 June 1917; see Rudyard Kipling (1917) *The War in the Mountains* (New York: Doubleday).

King. He lived in Udine and came out in this way nearly every day to see how things were going, and things went very badly.²⁸

Another of the particularly time-consuming duties of a monarch while in the war zone was visiting local field hospitals. It has long been accepted—and still is, in both modern monarchies and the majority of republics—that those in a state of suffering can be helped by words of sympathy and support uttered by a head of state's 'sacred lips'. When visiting wounded soldiers, Victor Emmanuel always took great pride in remembering precisely the exact locations where someone had been wounded. He would have been watching incidents where soldiers were wounded from his observation points high above, and then have written down the names of those who deserved a medal or a special allowance because of their bravery or any resulting disability such as loss of limbs or sight. One of the regular tasks of the King's aide-de-camp, along with senior military figures, was to highlight to the King in advance the most remarkable examples of bravery and endurance that he might encounter on a hospital visit, to ensure that that the King would speak to them. It is not surprising, then, that one of the soldiers visited by Victor Emmanuel was Benito Mussolini, the future *duce* of Italy.

After all, Mussolini had already been active on the Italian political scene in the year before Italy's entry into the Great War, when he had been one of the most violent and vehement supporters of the idea of an Italian military intervention against the Central Powers. In February 1917, Mussolini, then an NCO in a regiment of fusiliers, was recovering from minor injuries in the hospital in Ronchi. Colonel Francis of Azzoni Avogadro, the King's aide-de-camp, recorded the encounter between the two men in his diary:

[Victor Emmanuel] then proceeds to interview the wounded in the next bed, who is the sergeant Benito Mussolini, the famous trouble-maker. He is still a bit dazed by the several wounds caused by a bomb; the wounds apparently number fourteen. He says he clearly remembers how many shards he took. The pipe bomb lance was very hot, thanks to the numerous shots that had already been fired but he did not think of that while he was loading it, and so, as soon as the bomb was in contact with the

²⁸ Ernest Hemingway (1929) *A Farewell to Arms* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons) p4.

heated walls of the launch-pipe, it exploded, wounding him as a result. The appearance of the injured is good, he is already steadily recovering, has a keen and clever eye, while the olive colour of his skin helps to conjure up the idea of a warm and passionate character.²⁹

According to Raffaele Garinei, a correspondent for the Milan daily newspaper *Il Secolo*, Victor Emmanuel had deliberately timed the visit to the hospital in Ronchi in order to meet Mussolini: 'The King ... had shown the desire to visit Benito Mussolini and the other hospitalised wounded soldiers'. The journalist later recalled what, allegedly, the conversation was between the two men. However, its historical credibility in terms of the precise detail is doubtful, given that it was not published until 1923, by which time Mussolini was already Prime Minister. Yet, it remains a fascinating text: 'How are you, Mussolini? Not very well, Majesty. You are probably suffering a lot, despite being so strong, in this painful stillness! It is a torture, Majesty, but patience is what I need.' Then, after being given the details of the accident, the King allegedly continued:

I saw you six months ago at the hospital of Cividale, remember?
I remember clearly, then I was there for observation.
And today – the King interrupted – after many proofs of courage, you have been wounded. Bravo Mussolini! Bear with acceptance the inaction and the pain.

From a historical point of view, what is even more interesting is the confidential comment that Mussolini, then a strong Republican, supposedly made to Garinei after the meeting; 'I am very happy with the display of kindness by the King, and with his encouraging words towards me and my comrades'.³⁰

While acting as Supreme Commander of his army, and alongside expected monarchical activities like the hospital visits, the King had also still to perform a variety of political duties (including, for example, giving royal ratification to all military decisions). Additionally, despite being on the Front, Victor Emmanuel also managed to undertake personally

²⁹ Archivio di Stato di Torino (Turin State Archive, hereafter AST), Fondo di S. M. Umberto II, Diario di Guerra di Francesco Avogadro Degli Azzoni. 1915–1917, 3 vols, III: March 1917.

³⁰ Benito Mussolini (1923) *Il mio diario di guerra. 1915–1917* (Milan: Imperia) pp221–4.

a considerable amount of intense diplomatic activity. From his headquarters in northern Italy, the King kept in direct contact with all the Allied governments. He also held meetings there with various prominent European political figures. In direct contrast to what occurred during the Fascist era, the King was clearly continuing to be involved in a substantial amount of international diplomatic activity, something which had powerful political implications for his country and its international status during the first fifteen years of his reign. Back in 1903, in Rome, he had hosted Edward VII's state visit to Italy. Edward VII, after meeting him, had commented that Victor Emmanuel III 'certainly had all Italian politics in his hands'. During the Great War he had meetings with, amongst others, the French President, Raymond Poincaré (with whom he also travelled to visit the French Front); the Prince of Wales, and the Duke of Connaught (George V's uncle). He also had a meeting in 1917 with Albert I, the King of Belgium, taking him to visit the Italian trenches.³¹

In the years following the Great War, the legend surrounding the presence of the King on the frontline during the conflict was to be enlarged and romanticised almost beyond measure. The pamphlets published to mark the various celebrations of anniversaries of events during the conflict—especially those in 1928, marking the first tenth anniversary of the Allied victory—were full of revealing and edifying episodes featuring Victor Emmanuel III as the central character. These ranged from stories about the King sharing his small packed lunch with an infantryman he met on his daily patrols of the frontline to the King suggesting a better line of fire to a sniper. These jostled for attention alongside descriptions of the King sleeping on the ground in the same shack as other ordinary soldiers, and the King personally posting letters to their families from the troops in order to make them arrive earlier, amongst others. There were also innumerable tales told about the King's 'surprise visits' to injured soldiers in the field hospitals. In these tales, despite their mutilating wounds or their terrible sufferings, the wounded were depicted as being cheered and happy to see the King. The common message was

³¹Furthermore, the meeting with King Albert, the Belgian monarch, gave Victor Emmanuel the chance to speak to him for the first time about the planned future wedding of Crown Prince Umberto, the Italian heir to the throne, to the young Belgian princess, Maria José. Then aged 13 and 11 respectively, they eventually married in 1930, becoming briefly King and Queen of Italy in 1945, and thereafter living in exile. The marriage, sadly, was not a happy one.

that a royal meeting had been a high-value reward to those men for all the sufferings brought about by the war.

The subsequent rhetorical value of these episodes for the Italian state as well as its monarchy is undeniable. The King was presented to his subjects in a very obviously paternal way, as a loving father who took good care of his sons, the soldiers. However, it is important to remember that the basis for these laudatory tales was strongly rooted in the reality of the daily experiences of the life of Italian soldiers on the Front. Their King really had been a constant presence in the Italian trenches. Indeed, his efforts at the Front were recognised and almost unanimously applauded by foreign as well as Italian observers. One of the most comprehensive testaments to this was the report written by the US Ambassador to Italy during the Great War. A close and valued associate of President Wilson, Thomas Nelson Page made considerable efforts to improve American-Italian relations and was, to a degree, successful. Though from a republic rather than a monarchy, he comprehensively and accurately summed up the importance to the Italian war effort of the activities undertaken as monarch by Victor Emmanuel:

From this time till the war was ended, he was always at the Front, living simply, with his Headquarters in some modest country-house which, wherever it was, was known as the Villa d'Italia; spending his days at the Front among the men, inspecting the lines; receiving in the evenings Government Officials or national guests, who were lodged much more luxuriously than the Royal host.... there can be no question that his presence among his soldiers, where he was often to be found in such exposed places as to bring protests from those in charge of the lines, was a moral factor in Italy's stubborn resistance and an effective contribution to the final success that cannot be measured. Stories about the Spartan simplicity of his life; the fearlessness with which he exposed himself when not prevented by those responsible for the safety of his person; his unaffected and fatherly interest in the comfort of the soldiers; his tireless devotion to duty; his knowledge and understanding of conditions, were current among all ranks, and were treasured in the hearts of the men in a way which no attempt at regal splendour could have accomplished.³²

³²Thomas Nelson Page (1920) *Italy and the World War* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons) pp230–1.

It was a very positive message being sent to a wider audience, as well as to a domestic one.

THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF THE PESCHIERA CONFERENCE

During the first two years of Italy's involvement in the Great War, Victor Emmanuel did not intervene in a substantive way to alter the policy governing the conduct of Italy's military strategy as drawn up by its senior military commanders. Despite being the Army's Commander-in-Chief and locating himself on the frontline, he was in the first period of the war simply a nominal Commander in terms of the drawing up of military strategy, in line with his sense of being a constitutional monarch. All the major military decisions were made by the highest-ranking army officials and he saw himself as being there merely to approve them and to demonstrate his support for them by his presence. However, even though he did not interfere with the drawing up of military strategy, one side effect of his constant presence on the frontline was that the King was always well informed about the disposition of the Italian army and the results of the military decisions. This meant that, after the notorious retreat of that army at the Battle of Caporetto on 24 October 1917, Victor Emmanuel was the only one qualified to assess the situation facing the Italian army in an objective and even-handed way. This meant also that he was the only figure of authority able to give hope to a physically exhausted and dangerously demoralised army, something of particular importance when that army was further humiliated by a shameful bulletin written by General Cadorna.

Cardorna, a man who has been fairly described by David Stevenson as 'one of the most callous and incompetent of First World War commanders', had as his main priority when reporting the battle avoiding taking personal responsibility for the defeat.³³ Consequently, on 29 October 1917, Cardorna falsely claimed that the Austrians had won because of the failures of parts of the Italian army. He blamed, amongst other things, 'the inadequate resistance of certain units, some of which surrendered ignobly while others took to flight in a cowardly manner' for the outcome, in what has gone down in Italian history and popular

³³David Stevenson (2011) *With Our Backs to the Wall. Victory and Defeat in 1918* (London: Allen Lane) p101.

memory as a disastrous defeat.³⁴ Recalling the moment when he had read Cadorna's bulletin on the Battle of Caporetto, Victor Emmanuel commented later:

That dispatch by Cadorna was really a stupid thing for him to have done: you do not insult an Army, which is as much as to say you insult a Nation. When I saw that dispatch, I immediately ordered that its publication be halted. The newspapers did not publish it but news of its content had already spread abroad. It was nasty of him. And it was not true that the soldiers simply had not fought for victory. It was not true!.³⁵

Victor Emmanuel was one of the few people in Italy to be in a position to make such comments. Years later, in conversation with his then aide-de-camp, Silvio Scaroni, the King identified the real factors behind the Italian defeat: 'Caporetto was caused by many factors: captains too young and troops too old, a long war, the propaganda, the fog favouring the enemy'.³⁶ What, both at the time and retrospectively, the King consistently resisted doing was to blame the Italian army. He genuinely believed that the army was, to use the famous metaphor coined by the passionate patriot Luigi Settembrini, 'the iron wire that held Italy together'.³⁷ He also felt very strongly that a core legacy inherited by him, as head of the House of Savoy, was a powerful connection to his Piedmontese soldiers.³⁸

As a result of this, it can be said that one of the most undoubtedly meritorious actions taken by Victor Emmanuel was the action he took to discredit General Cadorna's version of the tragedy at Caporetto. With the army labelled in Cadorna's Report as being guilty of both cowardice and insubordination, the King first halted its publication. He then followed it up by issuing a new, and unequivocally supportive message to

³⁴F. Martini (1966) *Diario 1914–1918* (Milan: Mondadori) p1023.

³⁵Silvio Scaroni (1954) *Con Vittorio Emanuele III* (Milan: Mondadori) p134.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p76.

³⁷Settembrini wrote: 'The Army is the iron wire that sewed Italy up and keeps the country together; and when I see a soldier, I would hug him like a son'. See Luigi Settembrini (1880) *Scritti vari di letteratura, politica, ed arte*, 2 vols (Naples: Morano) II, p433.

³⁸To explore further the relationship between the House of Savoy and the army see Massimo De Leonardis (2005) *L'Italia e il suo esercito: una storia di soldati dal Risorgimento ad oggi* (Rome, RAI-ERI); Massimo De Leonardis (1999) 'Monarchia, famiglia reale e forze armate nell'Italia unita', *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 86, 177–202.

both his troops and the Italian people as a whole. In it, he praised the efforts of the army and reaffirmed his trust in Italy's fate: 'Be faithful to me, just as I am faithful to Italy'. At Victor Emmanuel's behest, this message was disseminated with great pomp and ceremony to add to its impact and authority.³⁹

He subsequently went on to take a highly significant personal decision, and one of his most important war-related ones, when he ordered General Cadorna's dismissal as Chief of General Staff and his replacement with Armando Diaz. Diaz was a younger but highly-esteemed and experienced army general, who was already known to be unenthusiastic about the brutal disciplinary methods used by Cadorna on the army.⁴⁰ This included the resort to summary execution by firing party of those alleged to have been guilty of defecting. The King, who had already noticed through his first-hand observations the problems caused by Cadorna's authoritarian leadership style during the first eighteen months of Italy's involvement in the war, fought hard to ensure the success of his choice of Diaz as Cadorna's replacement. In a conversation years later, Victor Emmanuel fairly took full credit for his identification of General Diaz as Cadorna's ideal replacement. He recalled: 'That Diaz, I really wanted him! I succeeded in getting him appointed despite the manipulations of those who did not want him. He was my discovery!'⁴¹

Without any doubt, the Battle of Caporetto marked one of the most important moments in Victor Emmanuel's reign. This was not only because of the King's radical change of direction in terms of his attitude

³⁹University Library of Alessandria, at <http://www.14-18.it/>, an online archive making available many interesting documents from World War I, see http://www.14-18.it/foglio/RML0349476_01?search=f62a0fb76d5a82032fad9f54b9be09b9&searchPos=9. Date accessed 1 July 2016.

⁴⁰Diaz had started his army career in 1894, and by 1917 had a string of military successes behind him. He remained Chief of General Staff of the Italian army until August 1919, thereafter moving into politics. He served briefly in Mussolini's first government as Minister of War from 1922 until his retirement on grounds of health in 1924, dying in 1928.

⁴¹Scaroni, *Con Vittorio Emanuele III*, p139. General Diaz lived up to the considerable trust that Victor Emmanuel had placed in him. For the rest of the war, he regularly lunched with the King, usually twice a week, when he took pride in passing on to the King the latest news. See M. Isnenghi and G. Rochat (2000) *La grande guerra: 1914–1918* (Milan: La nuova Italia) p444. The Prime Minister, Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, also praised the quality and success of his collaboration with the new Chief of Staff of the Army, see V. E. Orlando (1960) *Memorie (1915–1919)* (Milan: Rizzoli) p508.

towards his responsibility for management of the Italian army. It was also because of the way that it laid the foundations for his success at the subsequent Convention held in Peschiera del Garda. This event brought together all the Allied powers to discuss formally and ratify the decisions taken three days previously in Rapallo, near Genoa, a small town on the shores of Lake Garda. On 8 November 1917, at the meeting with the British and French Prime Ministers, as well as that of Italy, present, it was the King who played the pivotal role. Amongst his successes he obtained more in the way of promises of military help for Italy from its Allies. Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, the then Italian Prime Minister, confirmed subsequently that he barely spoke at all. Subsequently, Orlando claimed that the King had been ‘truly the most prominent speaker’ at the Convention. Victor Emmanuel had a perfect command of both English and French, and his oratory in communicating his ideas impressed his audience. He achieved this by explaining to them, using those languages, and showing both incredible presence of mind and technical mastery of the military position, the factors explaining the Italian defeat at Caporetto. He then went on to outline his strategy for a swift counteroffensive and victory.

This demonstration of his expertise and strategic competence was not an isolated one. In reality, no one else in Italy understood the military situation better than the King. Victor Emmanuel himself, in an unusual display of self-congratulation, commented on the extraordinary efforts he had made at this meeting, and all for the sake of Italy:

[In Peschiera] I had spoken for two hours in front of foreign leaders who appeared initially to be not exactly hostile but certainly full of doubts. I told them that I had full trust in our soldiers, who I have been following for more than two years, witnessing the pressures they had experienced and their achievements. Lloyd George was the first to openly admit he agreed with me!⁴²

Britain’s Prime Minister was, indeed, mesmerised by the gaunt and serious monarch, Lloyd George later wrote in his memoirs,

Physically he is not a commanding figure, but I was impressed by the calm fortitude he showed. When the reputation of the Italian army was at its

⁴²Bolla, *Colloqui con Umberto II*, p98.

lowest, the King was able, almost single-handedly, to save it. If, to his allies, Victor Emmanuel had emerged from the Peschiera conference as an exceptionally impressive figure, to his soldiers he was a tenacious defender, at a time when it was fashionable to blame [the fighting man] for the causes of the military upset.⁴³

In his praise of the Italian king, Lloyd George even drew a parallel between the third Italian monarch from the House of Savoy and two of the most influent protagonists of the *Risorgimento*. According to Lloyd George, Victor Emmanuel showed ‘the fervour of [Giuseppe] Mazzini and the clairvoyance of [Camillo Benso, Count of] Cavour’.⁴⁴ To misquote the famous words attributed to Walter Bagehot, it is undeniable that in the traumatic days after the retreat of Caporetto the King ruled, not reigned, and he did so impeccably.⁴⁵

THE KING’S SYMBOLIC ROLE

Following on from a consideration of the sustained and intense efforts undertaken by Victor Emmanuel III throughout Italy’s participation in the Great War and, in particular, during the crucial Peschiera conference, it is important to reflect on his symbolic role during the conflict. Undoubtedly, in the interwar years, the King became identified as the ‘living symbol’ of his country. He was a powerful unifying force, something important for a young nation which had just come through its first major international conflict—a nation which was at one level a united one, but which was also still divided by many socio-economic factors. In this period, the monarch as a living symbol of the country was a common topic, becoming almost a worn-out expression in Italian newspapers and journals of the day. What is also significant is that the phrase was even used by Benito Mussolini in 1925. Speaking to his *Camicie nere* (the Blackshirts, the paramilitary wing of the National Fascist Party) on

⁴³David Lloyd George (2017) *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, 2 vols (Boston: Little, Brown) p498.

⁴⁴F. Lucifero, ed. (1978) *Il re dall’esilio* (Milan: Mursia) p174. Both these men were familiar to Lloyd George because they were presented to British schoolboys as part of their curriculum and were also included in popular biographies for boys.

⁴⁵Walter Bagehot (1867) *The English Constitution* (London: Chapman and Hall).

the twenty-fifth anniversary of Victor Emmanuel's accession, the *Duce* claimed, with his usual magniloquence, that:

the Soldier King, on [Italian] battlefields of daring and glory, shared every dangers with the soldiers, inciting them to the most heroic of endeavours, ... he was a shining example of every military value and today he is the living symbol of the warlike glory of the nation.⁴⁶

Given this, what were the factors explaining why Victor Emmanuel became such a potent national symbol?

After all, this development occurred fifteen years into a reign where, before 1915, Victor Emmanuel had failed to win the hearts of his citizens. Ironically his lack of popularity seems to rest substantially in the fact that as a King, he had in the first years of his reign simply behaved in exactly the same modest and restrained manner which was to characterise his wartime behaviour. One factor is that during the period 1901–1910 in Italy, there had been a shortage of genuinely charismatic leaders, both politically and in terms of people capable of capturing the people's imagination. During *Risorgimento* era, men like Cavour and Garibaldi had been prominent in people's imaginations as well as in politics. Cavour had shown himself to be both a cunning politician and gifted diplomat, while Garibaldi had become the symbolic hero of both the destitute and the passionate Italian nationalists. Even Victor Emmanuel III's two predecessors as monarchs of Italy had been characters who had stood out. Victor Emmanuel II had been both passionate and a populist, while Umberto I had been a stylish womaniser. Memorable characters like these were hard to find in Italy during the first decade of the twentieth century. It was, therefore, partly because of this personality vacuum—the lack of any other figures possessed of high levels of personal charisma allied to great leadership abilities—that Victor Emmanuel III's reputation rose naturally as he had the opportunity to show himself to his people in the character of a military king. It was the result of changing circumstances, and came about almost without effort, and unwittingly in terms of pre-planning by the King. He simply remained the man he had been before 1915. However, it has also to be acknowledged that it came about thanks to the normal requirements of positive wartime

⁴⁶Benito Mussolini (1956) *Opera omnia*, 21 vols, ed. E. and D. Susmel (Florence: La Fenice), 21: *Dal delitto Matteotti all'attentato Zaniboni*, p504.

propaganda, which ensured mass dissemination of the King in this new character.

The war connected the Italian people to Victor Emmanuel III in ways that had not been possible in peacetime. He was confirmed as the 'Soldier King' especially in the wake of the Italian victories at the Battle of River Piave in June 1918, followed by the Battle of Vittorio Veneto, concluding with the Italian armistice on 4 November 1918. This label, in reality, only suited him partially. In some respects, this appellation could have been more appropriately applied to his predecessors. Victor Emmanuel's father had, when a young man, fought gallantly on the hills in the Villafranca episode in 1866, while Victor Emmanuel II's bravery at the Battle of Palestro in 1859 was renowned.⁴⁷ Effectively, as already pointed out in this chapter, Victor Emmanuel III was physically both clumsy and ill-suited for fighting. He gained his title not for actual gallantry on the battlefield, physically leading his troops against the enemy, but for his tireless presence on the frontline, including his invaluable contribution to keeping up the morale of the Italian soldiers. That contribution had included his indefatigable reviewing of a different army division every day during the war years, his habit of personally rewarding those identified as having been the bravest on the battlefield, his reputation for sharing his lunch with his troops, alongside the more usual duties of visiting the wounded in the field hospitals. These rather humble actions, because they were so consistently sustained throughout the war, earned him the admiration of the Italian people. But this was only because they were made aware of it as a high profile theme in the reportage of the war, thanks to a strenuous propaganda effort on the part of Italian newspapers and other print outputs that promoted this interpretation of the King's activities.

Thus a presentation of what were labelled the 'heroic' achievements of 'Italy's first soldier' were a regular feature of the Italian media's coverage

⁴⁷Victor Emmanuel II's heroic behaviour at the Battle of Palestro on 31 May 1859 was widely celebrated by his contemporaries. It had, amongst other things, gained him an appointment as Honorary Corporal of the Third Regiment of French Zouaves, the distinguished unit of light infantry that had led the attack against the Austrians at Palestro. See F. Santi (1860) *Il caporale degli Zuavi, ovvero, Il re galantuomo Vittorio Emanuele* (Milan: Francesco Pagnoni) pp110–12.

of the conflict. Amongst the various accounts in circulation, the most influential voice speaking to promote the King's reputation was that of Gabriele D'Annunzio. The epic Decadent poet, who had been an ardent interventionist in the period leading to conflict, wrote at length about the King. According to D'Annunzio, Victor Emmanuel III, 'truly and faithfully personified the new Italy'. On 19 December 1915, he went so far as to write a widely-disseminated prayer, entitled 'For the King'. In it, he begged God to protect the monarch who 'struggles in the trench... who shares his black bread with the soldier ... who soothes the shivers of pain by the pure strength of his firm gaze... who bends over every beautiful wound'.⁴⁸ Such panegyrics might be expected of Italian journalists, but what is telling is that even foreign columnists, at times, seemed also to attain similar poetic heights when discussing the King of Italy. Thomas Nelson Page, for example, wrote that:

He was a King according to the modern image, the true Chief and Captain of his people, and Italy knew it. On occasion he issued a ringing message to his people which resounded like a trumpet; but for the most part he effaced himself personally and left the applause to others, content to feel that Italy was reaping the fruit of his devotion.⁴⁹

This all makes it evident that World War I contributed powerfully to the rise of a new image of the King, who became, as a result, associated positively with the success and strength of Italy.

The war offered the House of Savoy a high degree of popular national recognition which had not manifested itself after the official unity of the Kingdom of Italy had been created.⁵⁰ In a publication issued towards the end of the conflict (and so, significantly, before the victories of 1918) today's audiences can read that 'the war not only revealed Italy to the world, but also revealed a great King to Italy and to the world', followed by the statement that 'the war had reshaped a man of flesh and given to

⁴⁸Gabriele D'Annunzio (2006) *Versi d'amore e di gloria*, ed. A. Andreoli and N. Lorenzini (Milan: Montadori).

⁴⁹Page, *Italy and the World War*, p231.

⁵⁰See, amongst others, F. Mazzonis (2002) *La Monarchia e il Risorgimento* (Bologna: Il Mulino); and F. Mazzonis (1992) *Divertimento italiano. Problemi di storia e questioni storiografiche dell'unificazione* (Milan: FrancoAngeli).

history instead a man of bronze'.⁵¹ Furthermore, a relationship between the Italian monarchy, led by a monarch from the House of Savoy, and a national Italian Army was created for the first time, one which developed within and because of Italy's participation in the Great War.

The myth of the Soldier King endured for a long time among the Italian army (lasting into the first years of World War II even). Indeed, some people referred to that myth as being the root cause of most of the events which occurred after the tragic date of 8 September 1943. They ascribed them as deriving essentially from a return to the oath of loyalty pledged by the Italian army to their King, Victor Emmanuel III. This was something which had continued, despite Fascist attempts to destroy the image of a monarch who, inconveniently, still enjoyed a higher position than Mussolini within his own state. Once more, it is useful to look at the endorsements of Victor Emmanuel's role during the Great War from the foreign press. It is particularly telling when understanding the popular impact of the King's wartime contribution to the establishment of the soldier King myth which Mussolini found so problematic.

Alfred George Gardiner, editor of the British newspaper, the *Daily News*, was also the author of a collection of his own essays assessing the qualities of the political protagonists of the Great War. He dedicated a whole essay in *The War Lords*, to an exploration of the Italian monarch: 'King Victor Emmanuel and the Spirit of Italy'. The opinions he expressed in that demonstrates clearly that there was widespread international as well as national appreciation of the Italian King:

Italy is happy in the possession of a King whose temper is as liberal as that of his people. He is in many ways the most remarkable monarch on a European throne. His eminence is not physical, for in that respect he is the least of men. He is very little over five feet in height and even under the new minimum standard would hardly succeed in passing muster for the Kitchener Army. But though Victor Emmanuel is inconspicuous in stature he is in character a man of quite unusual significance.⁵²

After having described the King's intellectual talents, Gardiner continued by stressing that 'He is the antithesis of the aggressive personalism of the Kaiser. One feels that here is a man who has realised the modern conception of Kingship as it has never been realised before'. And, referring

⁵¹ B. Astori (1918) *Il re alla guerra* (Florence: Bemporad) p7.

⁵² A. G. Gardiner (1915) *The War Lords* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons) pp151–3; 159.

to the King's part in Italy's decision to enter the war, Gardiner provided a summary that Victor Emmanuel III was 'as he has always been, the embodiment of the national spirit of the country'.⁵³ This international reputation also fed into the Italian's own perspective on their King.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has indicated very clearly that, at the end of the Great War, the Italian monarchy emerged as an institution which was at least as strong as it had been in 1915, and arguably stronger, because of the way that Victor Emmanuel III had enhanced the reputation of the monarchy within his kingdom. He did it in a way that was very much his own, where he was guided by his own understanding of what it took to be a monarch at war, and also by his instinctive sense of what the expectations were of his subjects at a time of such crisis. This meant that he was very conscious of the historical role of monarchs in leading their troops into battle, and the very recent examples provided by his father and grandfather, and great-uncle, Victor Emmanuel I of Piedmont-Savoy. What he felt was needed was to transform and make Italian, not just Piedmontese, a sense of monarchical military leadership. As this chapter has shown, it did give an Italian army which had never before been tested on a national scale an identity which was Italian, and not one (as previously) based on regional troops fighting together under individual officers, also drawn from their own regions.

Victor Emmanuel looked beyond his own Piedmontese traditions (and those of the House of Savoy in the longer historical perspective) to create a consciousness of Italian military traditions for the first time. It meant that his military and symbolic leadership of his army and his nation created a sense of loyalty to an Italian monarchy that was forged within the Great War. It established a legend for the Italian monarchy that meant that even the rise of Fascism did not undermine it. Mussolini, as this chapter has also shown, felt it necessary to negotiate with the King, and not just to dispense with the institution of monarchy. Thus, far from weakening the Italian monarchy, participation in the Great War endeared the institution to Italians, and gave it a meaning that it had not possessed before. Later events, and monarchical choices, were to see the ending of the Italian monarchy—but not until events in a Second World War.

⁵³Ibid., p159.

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CHAPTER 9

Albert I, King of the Belgians: A ‘Neutral’ Sovereign and Commander

William Philpott

INTRODUCTION

It was not incongruous that King Albert of the Belgians took personal command of his army when his country was invaded in August 1914. While the First World War was in many ways a very modern war, much was traditional in the values and practices of the societies that waged it. One such convention, deeply rooted in the past, was that of monarchs leading their armies in war. The Emperors of Germany and Austria–Hungary were nominally, to use Kaiser Wilhelm II’s portentous title, ‘supreme warlords’ although they designated the day-to-day practicalities of command as something for military professionals. The German Emperor’s son and heir, Crown Prince Wilhelm, took up a senior field command in 1914 at the age of 32, which he held throughout the war. Again, the day-to-day military routine was carefully managed by his General Staff. Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria and Duke Albrecht of Wurttemberg, heirs to two of the German empire’s territories that

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retained their own armies, pursued similar wartime careers, though as Boff's chapter in this volume shows, Prince Rupprecht was an active field commander. Later in the war, Tsar Nicholas II would take command of Russia's forces (from one of his royal cousins), rashly staking his dynasty's future on the outcome of the war as it turned out.

As monarch of a liberal rather than an autocratic state, Albert was a more reluctant warrior than the Kaiser or the Tsar. But he was obliged to don uniform for more than ceremonial purposes and to wear it for four-and-a-half years, during which time his country went through the traumas of invasion and occupation, the trials of unwished-for alliance, and the deliverance of liberation. In his twin role of monarch-commander that obliged him to be at times diplomat and soldier, sovereign and popular figurehead, Albert proved adept and won respect from his people and his allies. How he fulfilled these functions, and how his reputation was shaped as the war went on, are the themes of this chapter.

Albert I came to the Belgian throne in 1909 aged 34, and would reign until his death in a mountaineering accident in 1934. A nephew of his predecessor Leopold II, Albert had not been born to rule, but had, aged sixteen, become heir presumptive after the death of his elder brother in 1891, and then first in line of succession following his father's death in 1905.¹ He was Commander-in-Chief of the Belgian armed forces as well as constitutional sovereign of Belgium. Essentially a peaceful and peacetime King, he is remembered a century later for the role he played in Belgium's unwanted war. Between 1914 and 1918 his state and people were torn asunder. The national territory was invaded and fought over; civilians were subjected to notorious (if at the time over-exaggerated) atrocities by invading German forces; the army was decimated and demoralised by retreat, if not broken. Nevertheless, during this fraught period Belgium remained extant, due largely to the indomitable spirit and shrewd statesmanship of her sovereign.

¹There is an interesting echo here of George V, who only became heir presumptive on his elder brother's death, though George was older and had already established a career, see Chapter 5, this volume.

THE BELGIAN POSITION IN 1914

Belgium occupied a unique position in the international system in 1914. Unlike that of her smaller and also-invaded neighbour Luxembourg, Belgium's sovereignty was guaranteed by international treaty, the Treaty of London 1839, and her neutrality was written into that agreement.² The invasion and rapine of a supposedly neutral country by one of its guarantor powers, Prussia–Germany, brought wavering Britain into the war, as well as giving moral weight to the Allied cause. Yet the rapid expansion of the war brought Belgium little practical assistance. Albert's first act as an unwilling belligerent sovereign was to appeal to the other guarantor powers for support (in practice to Britain and France since Austria was on the other side and Russia, although allied to France, could furnish no effective help). The neighbouring guarantor powers might bring military aid to Belgium's small army, taking up positions to block the German masses that had chosen Belgium as the most direct route by which to invade France. At best the Belgian forces could fight a delaying action until French reinforcements arrived, although forming a defensive line across Belgium, as Albert suggested, was not part of French Commander-in-Chief Joseph Joffre's counter-offensive plan.³ In early August, Joffre sent a cavalry corps into Belgium to offer moral support and to scout for the advancing enemy, but the horsemen did little of either before retiring exhausted to join the French main body concentrating along the Franco-Belgian border. The British only had the small British Expeditionary Force, which on its own could not save Belgium. There had been considerable pre-war discussion in Britain of a 'Belgian option' for sending that force to support the Belgian army directly in the event of a German invasion, and the possibility was considered on the outbreak of hostilities. However, after deliberation the British government instead defaulted to pre-war staff arrangements to send the force to extend the French army's left wing.⁴ British troops got into Belgium at Mons towards the end of August, but soon scurried out

²For the background see D. H. Thomas (1983) *The Guarantee of Belgian Independence and Neutrality in European diplomacy, 1830s–1930s* (Kingston, RI: D. H. Thomas Publishing).

³William Philpott (1996) *Anglo-French Relations and Strategy on the Western Front, 1914–1918* (London: Macmillan) pp19–21.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp2–12.

again, hotly pursued by Germans. Although not on its own in August 1914, it became clear early on in the conflict that Belgium would have to look after herself and that her future sovereignty would depend upon the outcome of events elsewhere. Albert would shape Belgian policy accordingly.

ALBERT'S DILEMMA

While Belgium needed military assistance, Albert was conscious that this might come at a price. He was conscious of the pre-war 'armed neutrality' hypothesis, where inviting foreign armies onto the neutral nation's soil was considered provocation only a step down from their crossing the border uninvited.⁵ If one guarantor power had unilaterally torn up the Treaty of London, what guarantee was there that the others would continue to respect Belgian sovereignty and neutrality whatever the outcome of the war? The principle of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' applied in August 1914, but Belgium's protectors belonged to the same gang of rapacious imperial powers that had plunged Europe into war, and Albert was determined not to jump from the frying pan into the fire if he could help it. He was not responsible for Belgium's position in August 1914—that was a fault of geography and diplomacy—but he was fully answerable for rescuing Belgium from it.

Colonel John Seely was representing the British Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Sir John French, in the mess that was the siege of Antwerp. He recorded an interview with 'a very brave man, but the saddest man I have ever met', in which Albert laid out his appreciation of Belgium's difficult situation:

He said that all would not be lost when Antwerp fell, even if the whole of his country were over-run and every building destroyed, provided always that there was a Belgian army in the field at the end. He said, 'However long the war goes on there must be peace at last, and if, when the combatants sit round the table, I or my representative is there, representing the Belgian Army still fighting, my country will survive; otherwise it will be dead.'⁶

⁵However, the Belgian army did mobilise against Germany in July 1914, once it became clear what the latter's plans were.

⁶Maj-Gen. The Rt. Hon. J. E. B. Seely (1930) *Adventure* (London: William Heinemann) p188.

Thus, within a few months of the outbreak of war, the tenets of Albert's strategic policy were established. Politically, Belgium's sovereignty would be paramount: both defending it during the war and restoring it at the peace table. Opposing one invader only to fall into the power of erst-while friends was a fate to be feared and avoided. Albert would work with the Allies, but would never formally be one of them. His army would be in the field, but it would be constrained in its fight. After it was driven from all but a corner of the country by the end of 1914, husbanding the army as the remaining manifestation of an independent Belgium was vital. Its commander could not afford to sacrifice it in the sort of long, attritional and indecisive battles that would come to characterise the campaign on the Western Front.

Such a policy made sense in the diplomatic and military circumstances of 1914. However, as the war ground on and its ideological scope and diplomatic complexity increased, Albert's 'neutral' stance, while not untenable, became increasingly problematic in a protracted war. He had staked his country's future on an Allied victory although he was not above considering a separate peace with the Central Powers should that restore national sovereignty. He was increasingly dependent on his allies' goodwill and money to maintain some semblance of an independent Belgium (and on neutrals to keep his people fed) but he resisted his allies' pressure to fight more actively, or to turn Belgian soil into a battlefield. Between November 1914 and September 1918, therefore, Albert and Belgium were 'in' the war, but some might legitimately question whether they were actually 'at' war in the way the other belligerents were. Albert always pursued dual-tracked (some might say two-faced) diplomacy alongside a constant military policy that integrated 'armed neutrality' with national defence in the small parcel of unoccupied Belgian territory. Ultimately, however, his triumphant conclusion to Belgium's campaign, leading an Allied army group in the liberation of his county in the last two months of hostilities, would reconcile Albert's contrary stance and justify his actions. He bided his time, he defended his nation's right to exist, he nurtured his army and he won a reputation as a statesman, sovereign and soldier. If the war was fought for the rights of small nations, Albert was the champion and embodiment of this principle and would firmly demonstrate that those nations knew and would defend their rights.

ALBERT'S WAR CHALLENGE

Albert was a King with an army but without a state (although the Belgian Congo, which in 1914–1915 would be a peripheral theatre in the African war, remained under Belgian authority). By the end of 1914 'Belgium' constituted a small unoccupied area of the country between Nieupoort on the Channel coast and Ypres—the Yser sector of the Western Front—defended by the remnants of the Belgian army entrenched behind inundations that stretched from Dixmude to the coast, which was closely supported by allied French forces on either flank. Belgium was never formally part of the Allied coalition, but to use a terminology from later in the war, its status was that of an 'associated' nation, whose fate at any peace negotiation would be dependent on the outcome of a war conducted elsewhere by other armies and governments. In practice, however, Albert and his army were dependent on their allies for all practical needs, a material obligation that had to be reconciled with his determination to maintain independence as both sovereign and military contingent commander. Belgium was also an occupied country. True the King had no say in the government of the majority of his people, and their welfare under German occupation. But redress and reparation for their losses and sufferings was a major concern for him. Related to this was the welfare of Belgian refugees, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons who sought refuge in France and Britain. This touched Albert on a personal level: his own children were taken in by his friends Lord and Lady Curzon at their country house and later found places at English public schools.⁷ Such were the parameters within which Albert acted, and the issues that he had to manage, while the Great War continued.

Albert's first task was to establish Belgium's international rights and credentials when caught up in the quarrels of bigger powers. Belgium never declared war against Germany (or vice versa). As the King stated in a *Daily Telegraph* interview in October 1914, 'Belgium has been scrupulously exact in carrying out its obligations as a neutral country... It has never been our policy to interfere in international politics.' His own policy objective was stated bluntly: 'Belgium was fighting to defend

⁷The Marchioness Curzon of Kedleston (1955) *Reminiscences* (London: Hutchinson) p90.

her neutrality, and she will fight as long as that neutrality is invaded.⁸ This was a just and worthy objective, which was to be taken up in the court of international opinion.⁹ Albert himself, the King without a country, would come to embody this *cause célèbre* in an ever-widening war, as the leader and voice of a martyred nation. With Belgium all-but occupied, Albert was making a powerful case for fighting on until his state was liberated. Of course Belgium was not militarily strong enough to liberate herself, so to achieve this objective either the Allies had to defeat Germany or Germany had voluntarily to evacuate Belgium. How long this would take to achieve, or whether it was even possible, was impossible to predict as the early stages of campaigning settled into stalemate. Belgium had been forced into a conventional sort of war, between empires fighting for territory and status, but was now caught in the grinding processes of industrialised attritional conflict. The last protracted battles of 1914 took place on the Yser and around the Belgian market town of Ypres, gaining it a notoriety and symbolism that would only grow as the war dragged on.¹⁰ Albert would try as far as possible to remain a spectator as great empires tore each other apart, but since his nation's fate would be determined by the outcome of this struggle, and Flanders was one of its battlefields like the other belligerents he would have to adapt to circumstances.

ALBERT'S STRATEGY

Although Albert had not been born to rule, he proved studious and conscientious in his duties as King, something for which he had been preparing from the age of sixteen.¹¹ His core values, perhaps unsurprisingly,

⁸Quoted, Granville Fortescue (1915) *At the Front with Three Armies: My Adventures in the Great War* (London: Andrew Melrose Limited) p241.

⁹As an example see the pamphlet, Anonymous (1914) *The Case of Belgium in the Present War: An Account of the Violation of the Neutrality of Belgium and of the Laws of War on Belgian Territory* (New York: Macmillan and Company, for the Belgian delegates to the United States).

¹⁰W. J. Philpott (2014) *Attrition: Fighting the First World War* (London: Little, Brown) pp61–6.

¹¹In sharp contrast to his uncle Leopold II, whose crown-sponsored rapaciousness in the Congo had provoked an international outcry. See A. Hochschild (1999) *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (London: Macmillan).

were Catholic, conservative and monarchist. He was determined to rule Belgium rather than simply to reign. He probably had more personal sympathy with the political methods and values of his Hohenzollern and Habsburg enemies than with the parliamentary principles of his own liberal ministers and of Belgium's allies. However, he found that his destiny lay on the liberal side of politics and war. At the same time, his personal style was very much that of a 'bourgeois' King: he was a family man, modest in his living habits and use of ceremonial. He had a genuine interest in the social situation in Belgium, showing concern for the conditions of the working class and supporting progressive social reforms. In character, he was a man of principle, of fixed opinions but also of quiet determination. His resolve would be tested often during the war, but he would rarely waver once his mind was made up.

Albert had succeeded to the throne in December 1909, just as Europe was moving into the period of intensifying competitive arms races that preceded the outbreak of war. His ministers pushed the new King (not entirely successfully) to improve Belgium's defences and modernise the army. The nation possessed a militia army that was reformed after 1908 into a conscript force; and in 1910 a General Staff was created to direct it. Although this would give Belgium a more modern defence force when war came, the requirements of Belgium's political neutrality obliged the King to reject overtures to align with one or other of the rival camps that divided Europe or to take pre-emptive collaborative measures for the nation's defence. After the 1911 Agadir Crisis, Britain suggested joint staff talks with a view to their coming to Belgium's assistance in the event of a German invasion, but these were rebuffed.¹²

A refusal to compromise political neutrality did not, however, make Belgium a sitting duck: in response to Germany's ultimatum to let German armies pass through Belgium to attack France, Albert supposedly stated bluntly, 'Belgium is a country, not a road.'¹³ Belgium could potentially block that route while awaiting assistance. Her strategy was based on defence of her fortresses (at Liège and Namur on the Meuse, and the national redoubt at Antwerp) backed by a small mobile field

¹²S. R. Williamson (1969) *The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War, 1904-1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) p216; Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations*, p6.

¹³This has been often repeated, but there is no solid provenance for those actual words, though clearly they represent the spirit of what Albert thought.

army that would act as army of observation until her allies came to her aid. Hence the appeal made by the King on 3 August to France and Britain as guarantor powers was worded to stress Belgium's own commitment to the physical defence of Belgian sovereignty: Belgium would be responsible for the defence of her fortresses.¹⁴ If the Germans chose to violate the 1839 Treaty and Belgian neutrality, Belgium was not therefore simply throwing herself into the hands of the other guarantor powers.

However, the French and British, intent on executing their own pre-conceived strategic plans, did not provide the quick, effective support that was needed to respond to the Germans' wide flanking manoeuvre through Belgium.¹⁵ At the same time, German armies battered through the Belgian field army's defensive lines and broke their fortress barrier on the Meuse with unexpected rapidity, obliging retreat to the national refuge.¹⁶ French defeat on the frontiers left the Belgian army isolated in Antwerp until the manoeuvre for position that followed the Allied counterstroke on the Marne brought the focus of fighting back to the northern flank in early October. The Germans then turned their heavy siege artillery on the fortress, while once again the Allies failed to bring effective assistance. The Belgian field army was obliged to retreat along the coast, eventually taking up defensive positions on the extreme Allied left behind the river Yser. This was more or less Belgium's military contribution to the war, beyond holding their line, until the advance to victory was underway four years later. In the interim, the King had to lead his army, inspire his people and satisfy his allies of convenience while maintaining a firm and consistent line of policy.

The King was, to an extent, prepared to lead his army, although international diplomacy was a new challenge for him. Albert had been educated at Belgium's military academy, so he was not ignorant of military matters or the principles of military leadership. While studying there he had met Émile Galet, an aspiring army officer who was to become his pre-war military mentor, aide-de-camp and closest confidant during the war years, and the amanuensis of his wartime command.¹⁷ Galet was a

¹⁴Lt-Gen. E. J. Galet (1931) *Albert, King of the Belgians in the Great War*, trans. Maj-Gen. Sir E. Swinton (London: Putnam) p62.

¹⁵See Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations*, pp18–22.

¹⁶See C. Donnell (2013) *Breaking the Fortress Line, 1914* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword).

¹⁷Marie-Rose Thielemans, ed. (2012) *Émile Galet, Conseiller militaire du Roi: Journal de campagne, 26 Octobre 1914–11 Novembre 1918. Le Commandement de l'armée belge et la*

future Chief of the Belgian General Staff, although during wartime he was more an *éminence grise* of Belgian military affairs. The officers of the army complained that Galet had the King's ear and that he was the real determiner of military policy and senior appointments, rather than the monarch.¹⁸ Certainly Albert came to rely on Galet's advice and intervention to support his line of action, although as with many such pairings it is difficult to judge where the leader's will stopped and the advisor's influence started. Galet's published diary suggests that he and the King viewed Belgium's role and policy from a shared perspective.¹⁹ After the war Galet was to write a strongly justificatory account of Albert's role in the war.²⁰ During the war he helped to shape the narrative of Belgium's early military actions that were later laid down for posterity in this history.²¹

CREATING THE HEROIC IMAGE OF THE KING

This story was crafted around the personality of the King and the actions of the army he led in 1914. Albert's personal leadership in the defence of Antwerp and the subsequent retreat made him both a national hero and a symbolic Allied figurehead. He had a 'good war' in 1914, even if his country did not. The Belgian army had given a much better account of itself on the battlefield than anyone—enemy or ally—expected. It delayed the German advance into France for three weeks and then drew German forces away from the Marne by its sorties from Antwerp that assisted the French victory in September. Therefore, having 'done their bit', indeed more than might be expected of a neutral state with a small army, Belgium could justly await liberation and restoration by her allies. Galet drew up the first draft of this legend on Albert's direction in spring 1915.²² Albert was the hero of this narrative, and in consequence

question de la paix (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, Commission royale d'histoire) pp2, 32–5.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp41–2.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Galet, *Albert, King of the Belgians*.

²¹ Thielemans, *Émile Galet*, pp37–9.

²² Ibid.

deserved his allies' support and respect. When crafted in early 1915 in the expectation of a relatively short and victorious war, this self-justificatory tale had some credibility and political weight. Whether it was sustainable as the war dragged on was to be tested. Nevertheless, it certainly evoked sympathy and had enduring currency.²³ One American officer remembered a conversation after he had deployed to the Western Front:

One of our officers has been criticising Belgium, saying it is not playing its part. 'Belgium not playing its part!' Belgium – twenty miles long by six miles wide – all under bombardment – holding the line as Russia did not. Belgium, ground to atoms under the heel of Germany because it did not 'play its part' and fought like a tiger against overwhelming odds until a battle of the Marne could be fought, and a world saved!²⁴

This narrative was consciously crafted for political purposes. The King would have to justify the stance that he took as the war went on, to allies and to onlookers in particular. His noble actions in 1914 had won him plaudits and the Allied media would actively promote him as a figure-head of righteousness in juxtaposition to German perfidy. The most significant manifestation of Allied sympathy was *King Albert's Book*, a *Daily Telegraph* sponsored collection of paeans from statesmen and public figures published at the end of 1914 to raise money for the relief of Belgian refugees.²⁵ Formally, this fabricated image was to be sustained. Perhaps Albert played up to it for public consumption although it also reflected his character, as the French President, Raymond Poincaré, suggested when he met the King in April 1915:

²³The report, originally published in French, was translated and published as (1915) *The War of 1914. Military Operations of Belgium in Defence of the Country, and to Uphold her Neutrality. Report Compiled by the Commander-in-Chief of the Belgian Army, for the Period July 31st to December 31st, 1914* (London: W. H. and L. Collingridge).

²⁴Charles G. Dawes (1930) *A Journal of the Great War* (London: Allen and Unwin) 9 December 1917, p64.

²⁵Hall Caine, ed. (1914) *King Albert's Book: A Tribute to the Belgian King and People from Representative Men and Women Throughout the World* (London: Hodder and Stoughton).

always reserved and a little sad, gentle yet smiling in his gloom, sustaining with a heroic sense of purpose the indefinite continuation of the tragic challenge which he faced willingly out of a sense of loyalty and patriotism, he invited me into his humble living space.²⁶

On a tour of inspection of French troops in August Poincaré praised Albert as ‘a symbol of honour, rectitude and loyalty’.²⁷ When he and the President were to visit the town of Nancy Albert demurred, explaining that he would not be feted by another nation’s people while his own were under enemy occupation: ‘we bowed to these noble scruples’ Poincaré noted.²⁸

Outside the public spotlight, however, Albert’s determination, self-interestedness and uncertain dependability were manifesting themselves. Although Albert and his army had performed heroically in the first phase of the war, once they drew up alongside the Allies their situation became more problematic. After the attritional war set in, Albert and the Belgians would be a weak link in the Allied line, militarily and politically. The immediate fear after the army had evacuated Antwerp was that its morale was broken and that it would withdraw into France. French commander-in-chief Joseph Joffre had appointed General Ferdinand Foch to coordinate Allied operations on the northern end of the line, with a particular mission to ensure that the Belgian army stayed in the field. Foch’s force of personality, and the promise of French reinforcements, supposedly persuaded the King to stand and fight in the last corner of unoccupied Belgian territory.²⁹ Yet there was resolution on both sides. At their first meeting on 16 October Foch recounted that the King was determined to hold on to the last vestige of his country, for if it disappeared from the map he asked as a key question ‘was it sure that it could be given a new birth in the treaty of peace?’³⁰ The rallied Belgian army would contribute to this mission. Less remembered than the struggle

²⁶Raymond Poincaré (1931) *Au Service de la France: Neuf années de souvenirs*, 10 vols, VI: *Les Tranchées*, 1915 (Paris: Librairie Plon) 12 April 1915, p155.

²⁷Thielemans, *Émile Galet*, Diary, 23 August 1915, p152.

²⁸Poincaré, *Au Service*, VII: *Guerre de siège*, 1915, 24 August 1915, p56.

²⁹Maréchal Joseph Joffre (1932) *The Memoirs of Marshal Joffre*, trans. T. Bentley Mott (London: Geoffrey Bles) pp309–10; Maréchal Ferdinand Foch (1931) *The Memoirs of Marshal Foch*, trans. T. Bentley Mott (London: William Heinemann) p126.

³⁰Foch, *Memoirs*, p150.

around Ypres further south, the Franco-Belgian defence of the line of the river Yser in late 1914 was equally important for stemming the German outflanking movement and stabilising the front.

ALBERT'S ONGOING DILEMMA

The King seemed to accept his place and role with resignation. Joffre remembered visiting him on 21 October 1914 as French reinforcements arrived to buttress his shaky army. He recalled: 'The King's countenance, though calm, bore an expression of indefinable sadness,' perhaps due to the fate of his country; but more immediately due to his anxiety about loss of military and potentially political independence.³¹ Such a sense of dejection is understandable in the circumstances of October 1914, although after the German advance was halted determination and resolve returned, in dealings with ally and enemy alike. For Albert's allies the overriding political issue was whether Belgium could be relied on militarily and diplomatically. Could the army hold the line against a determined German assault (in fact this was never to be tested); and could the King stay the course of a long and uncertain war? It soon became clear that the Belgian army was disinclined to attack. To safeguard the defence the French kept supporting formations alongside the Belgians throughout the war,³² which allowed them to exert influence while also ensuring a greater degree of military security in a vulnerable sector of the front.³³ Diplomatically, though, Albert was a loose cannon, momentarily caught between powerful empires whose futures were to be decided in an escalating trial of strength. Once Joffre's 1915 offensives stalled, Albert came to doubt the ability of the Allies to liberate Belgium by force of arms.³⁴ With the war prolonging and its outcome uncertain he judged it necessary to set out Belgium's stance to both sides: 'Make it known to Germany that we fought for our neutrality and despite everything we

³¹Joffre, *Memoirs*, p311.

³²At least until spring 1918, when the German offensive obliged the French to trust the Belgians to hold their sector alone.

³³See William Philpott (1999) 'Britain, France and the Belgian Army' in B. J. Bond, ed. *Look to Your Front: Essays on the First World War Prepared by the British Commission for Military History* (Staplehurst: Spellmount) pp121–36.

³⁴Marie-Rose Thielemans, ed. (1991) *Albert Ier: Carnets et correspondance de guerre, 1914–1918* (Paris: Éditions Duculot) Diary, 17 November 1915, p234.

intend to remain neutral, towards France and England as well as towards Germany.³⁵

Theoretically, from such a position Albert could have negotiated a peace settlement with Germany that restored Belgian independence and neutrality and withdrawn from the war. In autumn 1915, there were German approaches that might have advanced this, but these came to nothing. Partly it was because Albert felt a moral obligation to those states which had helped Belgium, but mainly it was because Germany, which envisaged post-war control of much of Belgium, would not countenance full territorial restoration and a return to neutrality. Since a separate peace with the invader proved impossible, Albert favoured a negotiated settlement, which seemed more and more likely as the war settled into stalemate. As a devout Roman Catholic, he supported Pope Benedict XV's peace overtures, not least because the Pope had stressed the restoration of Belgium as a prerequisite for his arbitration.³⁶ Moreover, as a neutral sovereign, Albert tried to encourage all parties to the negotiating table, without success. This self-interested and skittish diplomacy naturally worried Belgium's comrades in arms, however. Their response was the February 1916 declaration of Sainte-Adresse by which France, Britain and Russia guaranteed not to make peace until Belgium was restored and indemnified for war damages (a reality which tied the Belgian cause more closely to that of the Entente powers, since in return Belgium pledged not to seek a separate peace with any of the Central Powers).³⁷ Indeed the Allies always retained considerable leverage over Belgium, since they controlled military supplies and essentially funded the Belgian war effort.

As the Allies organised for a long war, and the issues that had dominated its early phase lost their prominence, Albert's status and diplomatic influence waned. He started to feel increasingly marginalised in the development of Allied strategy and policy. He asked for a British deputation (comprising his friend Lord Curzon and the British Commander-in-Chief, General Sir Douglas Haig) to visit him in February 1916. This was because, Haig suggested: 'It appears that the King of the Belgians

³⁵Thielemans, *Emile Galet*, Diary, 21 August 1915, p151.

³⁶Thielemans, *Albert Ier*, Diary, 13 December 1915, p237.

³⁷Michael Palo (1980) 'Belgium's Response to the Peace Initiatives of December 1916: An Exercise in Diplomatic Self-Determination', *The Historian* 42, pp583–97, 587 including n14.

feels his isolation and considers that his opinion has seldom been asked on important problems which closely concern his country'.³⁸ When 1916's campaign was planned he was not consulted. At the inter-Allied military conference called by Joffre in early December 1915 to organise 1916's General Allied Offensive, the Belgians were represented by the army Chief of Staff, General Maximilien Wielemans, whose only recorded intervention was to state, in line with royal policy, that the Belgian army did not have the manpower reserves to engage in sustained offensive operations.³⁹ Such a stance dictated Albert's response to the plan for an Allied general offensive, and further soured his relations with his military allies. Haig had met the King with a view to persuading him to support a British attack from the Ypres salient against the Flanders coast, which the King rejected out of hand since it would entail turning Belgium into a battlefield. Haig reflected he was 'quite astonished that he should have taken such a purely selfish view of the case. Much better to regain one's country even with damaged houses than not to regain it at all, in my opinion.'⁴⁰ It was Haig's first meeting with the King, but others would not have been so surprised. There was a consistency in Albert's stance when dealing with Allied requests for military cooperation. In October 1915, Galet listed proudly all the times the King had rejected Allied requests to take action, sticking to his core principles of following Belgian interests and pursuing peace in the interest of his people via his stance of neutrality.⁴¹

³⁸R. Blake, ed. (1952) *The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, 1914-1919* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode) Diary, 4 February 1916, p127.

³⁹War Ministry (1922-1939) *Les armées françaises dans la Grande guerre* (Paris: Ministère de la guerre, état-major de l'armée, service historique), 11 vols, IV/1: *Verdun et la Somme* (1926) Procès-verbal de la conférence tenu à Chantilly: 2^e séance, 7 décembre 1915', Annexes vol. 1, annexe 47, pp99-103. According to Douglas Haig, who was often casually dismissive of senior Allied generals, Wielemans was 'a nice kindly old man, but quite stupid, and I should say, also very lazy' which was why the dynamic Belgian War Minister chose him for the job, in Haig's opinion. Blake, *Douglas Haig*, Diary, 12 March 1916, p136. In fact the King, advised by Galet, retained a veto over senior appointments recommended by the Minister. See for example Thielemans, *Émile Galet*, Diary, 7-11 August 1915, pp148-9.

⁴⁰National Library of Scotland, Acc. 3155/104, Field Marshal Earl Haig of Bemersyde Papers, Diary, 7 February 1916. The King's rationale is explained in Thielmans, *Albert Ier*, Diary, 7 February 1916, pp248-9.

⁴¹Thielemans, *Émile Galet*, Diary, 30 October 1915, pp173-4.

Such a line was determined by the fact that Albert was also an army commander, who led his soldiers, commanded his generals, and decided on appropriate military operations within the political parameters he had laid down. If her Allies wanted the Belgians to do something they would have to treat directly with the King (as sovereign as well as Commander-in-Chief), not his Chief of Staff, since military decisions were likely to have political consequences for Belgium. When asked by Foch to stand on the Yser he visited each demoralised division to inspire the troops to make what he judged to be a necessary effort and sacrifice: 'He reminded them that the Belgian army was now disputing the last parcel of their country's territory and that they must die rather than give way.' Separately, he informed their commanders that if they retreated further without formal orders they would be immediately dismissed.⁴² The army's Chief of the General Staff was responsible for day-to-day operations, but the King visited military headquarters every day and was influential in strategic and operational decision-making.⁴³ Not that there were many decisions to make. Beyond the security of the Belgian line, military policy consisted of occasional local demonstrations to support Allied operations elsewhere. Overall, the broad parameters of Allied offensive attritional strategy did not suit Belgium, which did not have the manpower reserves to replace the losses such a strategy entailed. By 1916, the King had come to doubt the likelihood of a military decision in the West.⁴⁴ Hence his rejection of Haig's approach in the spring and his general pessimism about that year's Somme offensive:

The Anglo-French offensive continues with daily gains loudly trumpeted. The general staffs declare that they are not pursuing strategic objectives,

⁴²Foch, *Memoirs*, p151.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p227. The army got through four Chiefs of Staff during the war, Generals de Selliers de Moranville, Wielemans, Ruquoy and Gillain. De Selliers de Moranville and Ruquoy were dismissed, the latter because the King 'claims to no longer be able to influence him, that he tells him nothing, which amounts to the same thing; he no longer commands. There have been some heated exchanges.' See Thielemans, *Emile Galet*, Diary, 10 April 1918, p405. Wielemans died suddenly while in post. Between de Selliers de Moranville's dismissal in September 1914 and Wieleman's promotion in August 1915, there was no Chief of Staff, Wielemans acting as Assistant Chief while the army was directed by a War Council chaired by the King, Thielemans, *Albert Ier*, p30.

⁴⁴This is a regular refrain in his journal that year. See for example Thielemans, *Albert Ier*, Diary, 21 May; 10 June 1916, pp269, 271.

but only the attrition of the enemy. There is a singular contradiction between the mediocre method and the immense purpose that the jingoists promote, that is to say the total destruction of the Central Powers.⁴⁵

He had similar reservations when Haig launched an offensive in Flanders, the Third Battle of Ypres, in summer 1917.⁴⁶ An attack along the coast served British, not Belgian, interests and when Joffre's replacement as Commander-in-Chief, General Robert Nivelle, supported the idea, Albert felt the French and British were uniting against him. 'It shows how much the small states must defy the big ones, even when these call themselves allies', he noted in self-justification.⁴⁷ Since he expected a negotiated peace of exhaustion, Albert remained determined that Belgium would still be there to negotiate.

MARGINALISATION AND DETERMINATION

An increasingly marginalised figure in Allied strategy and policy, Albert remained the head of state and leader of his nation. This entailed managing the government and addressing the welfare of his people under German occupation or in exile. Albert's relations with his Ministers were not always easy. In particular, Charles de Broqueville, Head of the Ministry and War Minister until 1917, and the most powerful Belgian statesman after the King, often found himself in conflict with the monarch on matters of policy.⁴⁸ While Albert adhered to strict neutrality, de Broqueville and other ministers argued that in the event of victory Belgium should seek some sort of territorial compensation and financial compensation from Germany. Belgium's stance and desiderata should there be a negotiated peace remained a constant source of debate and

⁴⁵Ibid., Diary, 11 September 1916, p281. In fact, at the moment Albert was writing, the Somme offensive was reaching its climax after two-and-a-half months and the German defence was almost at breaking point. See William Philpott (2009) *Bloody Victory: The Sacrifice on the Somme and the Making of the Twentieth Century* (London: Little, Brown) especially pp345–84.

⁴⁶Philpott, *Anglo-French Relations*, p139.

⁴⁷Thielemans, *Albert Ier*, Diary, 3 February 1917, p299.

⁴⁸The fullest exposition of Albert's wartime relations with his government is to be found in the introductions to Thielemans, *Albert Ier*; Marie-Rose Thielemans and Émile Vandewoud, eds (1982) *Le Roi Albert au travers de ses lettres inédites, 1882–1916* (Brussels: Office International de Librairie).

disagreement.⁴⁹ However, it was not at such a level that it led to a falling out between the King and his main political supporter, who remained in post until June 1918 when he lost the support of his ministerial colleagues. Albert accepted his resignation with regret.⁵⁰

Albert, the 'King of the Belgians', was always deeply involved with the welfare of his people, whether refugees in Britain and France or living under German occupation. Albert had wanted Belgian refugees to work rather than to be a burden on his allies.⁵¹ In reality, and increasingly, Belgians at home and abroad became reliant on international aid, most notably that provided through the Commission for Relief in Belgium managed by the American businessman and future President, Herbert Hoover. Albert took an active role in the early stages of humanitarian relief. He met, for example, the journalist Granville Fortescue who was organising the *Daily Telegraph's* Belgian Christmas Relief Fund. Fortescue, an American and a cousin of Theodore Roosevelt, could raise awareness of Belgium's plight in the United States. He stressed in his reports the King's concern for the welfare and livelihood of his people, reinforcing the image of a principled and compassionate monarch swept along by events.⁵² The sympathy of the most powerful neutral state offered political as well as humanitarian advantages.

Beside this determined monarch stood a strong consort, who assumed increasing responsibility for the relief effort as the war went on. Queen Elizabeth was a Bavarian Wittelsbach princess, but proved devoted to her husband, her adopted country and its people. She became in her own right a symbol of Belgian resistance as well as an indefatigable organiser of charity work and soldiers' welfare. She organised fund-raising events such as the London concert in July 1918 at the Albert Hall. This widely-publicised event was attended by three Queens, Queen Elizabeth herself with Queen Mary as well as the Dowager Queen Alexandra, plus King Albert and King George and other members of both royal families. Lord Curzon gave a speech on the 'Glory of Belgium' and the band of the Belgian army, especially selected by Queen Elizabeth, was airlifted to

⁴⁹See for example Thielemans, *Albert Ier*, Letter, Albert to de Broqueville, 2 January 1918, pp435–6; Palo, 'Belgium's Response' is a case study of one abortive peace initiative.

⁵⁰Ibid., Letter, Albert to de Broqueville, 29 May 1918, p475.

⁵¹Fortescue, *At the Front*, p240.

⁵²Ibid., p239.

London to play.⁵³ Such high-profile events and publicity stunts had very positive effects, because they kept the plight of the Belgian people in the public eye abroad as well as sustaining support for her refugees as the war dragged on.

For Albert himself, bearing the burden of leadership and national identity proved a strain. He did not enjoy the constant dealing with Allies, while his own politicians tried his patience. ‘What complicates the task of head of state somewhat is that if things go well one congratulates the ministers, while once they go badly, one blames the sovereign or President’, he once lamented to Poincaré, perhaps in an attempt to find some common ground.⁵⁴ On a later occasion he complained that if he took action he was accused of infringing on the role of the government, whereas if he did nothing he was reproached for inaction.⁵⁵ Practical communication could on occasion be a problem. He ‘speaks English perfectly but slowly’, Fortescue reported.⁵⁶ Douglas Haig was less impressed. ‘Does the King express himself as badly in French as in English? I couldn’t understand anything he said,’ he remarked disdainfully to his French liaison officer, Pierre des Vallières, on his return from his fruitless trip to La Panne in February 1916.⁵⁷ It was a lonely life at the top, and Albert took little rest from his royal duties. Visits to England to see his children were a rare break, and at such times he sought escape in long, solitary walks around London, to the concern of the Curzons, his hosts.⁵⁸ ‘The King is more and more melancholy and quiet,’ Poincaré noted after a lunch to award the Queen the *croix de guerre* for her humanitarian work, adding: ‘The queen sustained the conversation.’ On that occasion, he was complaining about the English, who seemed to be settling down for a long stay in northern France.⁵⁹ Perhaps sowing dissent between his two allies was one more strategy for defending Belgium’s independence? If so, it backfired, for these allies

⁵³Curzon, *Reminiscences*, p91; ‘Albert Hall Concert’, *The Times*, 11 July 1918. See also Chapter 4, p87.

⁵⁴Poincaré, *Au Service*, VII, *Guerre de siège*, 23 August 1915, pp52–3. Poincaré noted that George V had said the same to him.

⁵⁵Ibid., VIII: *Verdun*, 1916 (1931) 13 March 1916, p119.

⁵⁶Fortescue, *At the Front*, p240.

⁵⁷Curzon, *Reminiscences*, p143.

⁵⁸Ibid., p90.

⁵⁹Poincaré, *Au Service*, VIII, 21 May 1916, pp230–1.

increasingly marginalised him. By 1918, when Poincaré enquired if he would like to know how Foch came to be appointed Allied generalissimo, he reportedly answered curtly: ‘certainly...in a polite but perhaps piqued, certainly upset, tone. I would be pleased to be informed because I am not always. At least, I am not often’.⁶⁰

THE CHANGE OF PACE IN 1918

Such was the course of Belgian policy, set and steered by the King until 1918, when Albert’s expectation that the war would end with a negotiated peace of exhaustion was overtaken by events. In the spring, a reinvigorated Germany seemed to have Belgium’s allies on the ropes and then, from the summer, Foch, now Allied generalissimo, was driving the armies under his direction towards a decisive military victory. Albert had to trim his sails to navigate these sudden squalls. Belgian military policy had to become more active and the army’s Commander had to accommodate himself to new ways of doing things. As the prospect of victory and national liberation appeared, Albert determined to play his destined part and to lead his forces in personal triumph.

After an uncertain start in autumn 1914, Albert and Foch had formed a strong bond. Albert reportedly admired Foch’s ‘integrity, energy and frankness’.⁶¹ Foch himself appreciated that he had ‘no right to command; nothing was put on paper. ...[In 1914] I was in command [control?] of the Belgians...but I gave them no orders...nevertheless I gave them some hard tasks’.⁶² This principle guided Foch’s dealing with France’s allies thereafter. Foch, who remained responsible for coordinating Allied operations on the northern end of the Front through 1915 and 1916, frequently visited the King at his headquarters at La Panne. Although Albert generally said no to his French supervisor in response to any request for more active involvement, still he got to know and came to respect the most coalition-minded of the Allies’ generals. Thus, when the time came for them to act together in 1918, Albert trusted Foch to act with the right motives when drawing the Belgian

⁶⁰Ibid., *X: Victorie et armistice* (1933) 17 April 1918, p127.

⁶¹Elizabeth Greenhalgh (2011) *Foch in Command: The Forging of a First World War General* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp94–5.

⁶²Quoted, Maj.-Gen. Sir George Aston (1929) *The Biography of the Late Marshal Foch* (London: Hutchinson and Company) p130.

army into battle. So strong did their relationship become that Albert made a special trip to Paris to honour Foch's passing in 1929.⁶³

As an independent sovereign, the Commander of the Belgian army did not adhere to the April 1918 Beauvais Agreement that confirmed Foch as Allied generalissimo. Similarly, Belgium had not appointed a delegate to the Allied Supreme War Council set up in Versailles in November 1917, although on occasion Albert was represented at its meetings by the Belgian Chief of Staff. Albert acknowledged Foch's overall directing authority, although he resisted Allied pressure to formally adhere to the Agreement.⁶⁴ His forces cooperated in the defensive battle in spring and early summer, extending the Belgian Front when asked to free up Allied divisions for the battle elsewhere. So well had the Belgian army been husbanded that, in 1918, it was able to reorganise its divisions on a new nine-battalion structure (by now standard in other armies), effectively doubling its size from six to twelve divisions. Yet after four years of static warfare Albert's army still lacked the resources and skill for mounting sustained offensive operations.

As the fortunes of battle turned, so did Albert's mind-set. After Foch's first successful counter-attack in July 1918, the King came to sense that victory was on the horizon, and that Belgium should prepare to liberate herself when the time was right. As for when that would be, Albert trusted Foch's military judgement while Foch respected the need for Belgium to liberate herself. The mood changed in September, once the Allied armies had reoccupied the ground lost in the German spring offensive. Foch had a plan to end the war that year, which would require the full effort of all the armies under his authority. The change of policy was prepared politically by the French Prime Minister, Georges Clemenceau, who visited La Panne on 7 September, while the practicalities were arranged between Albert and Foch in person on 9 September. Foch set in place appropriate structures and practical military support, which would respect Albert's sovereign prerogative while ensuring military effectiveness and that the Belgians would operate within the parameters of the generalissimo's broader strategic plan. Albert would command a Belgian–French–British army group in the final offensive, one effectively managed by a French army commander (General Jean-Marie

⁶³Ibid., p305.

⁶⁴Poincaré, *Au Service*, X, 17 April 1918, pp128–9; Thielemans, *Albert Ier*, pp156–8.

Degoutte) as army group Chief of Staff.⁶⁵ Under royal leadership and closely supported by militarily effective Allied forces, the Belgians would advance from their entrenchments and be close to retaking their capital, Brussels by Armistice Day.

This would be Belgium's victory and Albert's personal vindication; but would Belgium's effort be subsumed amid the wider issues of the Great War in the peace that would follow? Even as his armies pushed forwards, Albert opined to Lord Curzon, his closest British friend, 'that the great powers, at the hour of settlement, will not forget the great services rendered by my people at the price of terrible sufferings and total ruin.'⁶⁶ It was a long time since 1914, Albert's finest hour and the moment when 'brave little Belgium' had stepped onto the world's stage. Whether Belgium could resume her old place as a neutral liberal monarchy in the new and uncertain world made by the Great War remained to be seen. Albert's international diplomacy, his concern with 'certain questions interesting the future of Belgium', would not cease with the end of hostilities.⁶⁷

CONCLUSION

Between 1914 and 1918, caught between allies, enemy and his own politicians, King Albert played a difficult hand well. While Albert earned the grudging respect of his allies, and ensured the obedience of his generals and ministers, it was the loyalty of his own people and the admiration of those of other nations that underpinned his status and success in a long-drawn-out and uncertain war. In a public relations exercise worthy of a modern monarch, Albert strove to establish himself as the symbol of Belgian independence and resistance at home and abroad. Quarters himself for the duration of the war in a modest villa in the seaside town of La Panne, just behind the Front in unoccupied Belgium and within range of the German guns, here was a determined and self-sacrificing

⁶⁵Thielemans, *Albert Ier*, pp158–9. A similar arrangement, command of a Franco-Belgian army group in the Flanders offensive, had been suggested in May 1917, but had been rejected as it would compromise the royal prerogative to command the Belgians and because Albert did not expect this offensive to succeed. See *ibid.*, Letter, Albert to Pétain, 23 May 1917, pp410–11.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, Albert to Curzon, 20 October 1918, *Carnets et correspondance*, pp497–8.

⁶⁷Thielemans, *Albert Ier*, Letter, Albert to Curzon, 30 October 1918, p498.

leader who would share his nation's and people's privations.⁶⁸ This carefully manufactured and nurtured image served its purpose. In the words of Foch's post-war tribute:

In this modest corner the heart of Belgium continued to beat. Here burned the generating fires of that energy which for four long years unflinchingly faced a formidable enemy, and which went forth to reconquer the native land in 1918. This little house remains for me a monument that will testify to future generations more adequately than any other, the greatness of a little country, which, led by her chivalrous King and defended by her valiant children, triumphed over a most brutal and iniquitous aggression.⁶⁹

'Brave little Belgium' was an early watchword of the British people's self-mobilisation for European war (as well as the factor that brought the nation united into the conflict), and that violated small state was led and personified by its noble monarch.

Albert's stance was fully exploited by the Allied media machine and he and his consort made a lasting impression on those who came in contact with them. For example, Winston Churchill, who made a quixotic effort to inspire Belgian resistance in the dark days of October 1914, remembered that:

The attitude of the King and Queen through these tense and tragic days [of the defence of Antwerp] was magnificent. The impression of the grave, calm soldier King presiding at Council, sustaining his troops and commanders, preserving an unconquerable majesty amid the ruin of his kingdom, will never pass from my mind.⁷⁰

In fact, the King could be an obstructive nuisance as well as an inspiration. But the former was magnanimously forgotten in victory; and the latter was widely remembered and commemorated. At the same time, he remained a respected and much loved sovereign. Following his sudden death, his own people and the world expressed their collective grief.

⁶⁸This strategy of modesty and austerity was also adopted by both George V and Victor Emmanuel III, see Chapters 6 and 8, this volume.

⁶⁹Foch, *Memoirs*, p228.

⁷⁰Winston Churchill (1931) *The World Crisis, 1911–1918, Abridged and Revised* (London: Thornton Butterworth) p210.

Reviewing the multiple encomiums, Galet, who knew the King better than any man, felt that it was wrong to place him alongside those other feted patriotic war leaders, Foch and Clemenceau.

I hold the conviction that he was even greater than represented, but in a different way. ... What characterised King Albert and guided his actions was the love of his people, he loved the Belgian people, without hating the German people. ... King Albert was inflexible in his duty to fulfil the international obligations his people had contracted, devoted to truth and justice, to doing what was right. It is owing to these guiding principles that he carefully husbanded the blood of his soldiers, that he only entered the war when forced to, that he wished to bring it to an end as soon as possible. How different from those leaders who were determined on destruction and who had many innocent victims.⁷¹

King Albert was a competent military leader, if essentially a 'figurehead' rather than an active commander. He sat on the side-lines and criticised Allied strategy and policy, while never being involved enough to appreciate its objectives and nuances, or to influence it. Ultimately he and Belgium benefited from the policy of attrition that brought the war to a favourable outcome, even though he was clearly sensible not to commit Belgium's own limited resources to active support of such a strategy. This reflects his personal approach to making war, as a humanitarian patriot rather than an aggressive nationalist: a noble warrior by default, but not belligerent for its own sake.

This was perhaps a particularly fine example of how a monarch could also be an inspiring and successful war leader. Albert emerged from the conflict with a glowing reputation. 'The king was magnificent' during the painful days of Belgium's martyrdom in autumn 1914, as his British liaison officer Colonel Tom Bridges recalled twenty years after the war:

I saw him almost daily...and was struck by his courage, his common sense and his foresight. He had none of the Gallic taste for high sounding phrases, and sometimes found the French generals rather tiring. His own appreciation of each situation as it arose was invariably sound. Had he not remained at the head of his army history would have been different.

⁷¹Thielemans, *Émile Galet*, Letter, Galet to Queen Elizabeth, 26 February 1934, pp78–9.

His brave consort stayed by his side and busied herself with the care of the wounded and refugees.⁷²

Such was the reputation that Albert won by force of character and action, one which endured, although as Bridges hints behind the scenes he could have difficulties working with others, both allies and fellow Belgians. Determination wins wars as well as consistency, and these Albert demonstrated, leading his army and nation through adversity to liberation and victory. If any nation might be said to have won the war, it was Belgium, restored to the map under its popular sovereign, returned to neutrality and indemnified for its loss.

Prince Leopold, Albert and Elizabeth's eldest son and heir, 'fought in the ranks of the Grenadiers while still at Eton. The only boy I expect who has gone to school with war medals.'⁷³ As King himself, Leopold would later go to war again in 1940 and have to make another fateful decision about his nation's future. Then the country would be overrun equally quickly, and Leopold would not acquit himself well, abandoning his Allies and his government by unilaterally surrendering his army to the Nazi invaders. Although Allied action would once again restore Belgium, these actions would cost 'the traitor King' his throne—but would not cost Belgium her monarchy, which still endures.

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⁷²Lt.-Gen. Sir Tom Bridges (1938) *Alarms and Excursions: Reminiscences of a Soldier* (London: Longman Green and Company) p123.

⁷³Ibid.

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CHAPTER 10

Monarchy, the Armed Services and Royal Alliances: The Case of Britain and Japan, 1902–1975

Antony Best

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between a royal court and the armed forces of a state is clearly one of the most important in any form of monarchical government. After all, the oaths of loyalty that the services undertake are made to the crown, and not to a state's government. Moreover, monarchs and their relations have traditionally played a leadership role in the armed forces both in war and peace; even today a career in the forces is seen as a natural job for young Princes. Even those members of a royal family who are not actively employed in the services are expected to act as honorary officers, for example taking on the role of colonel-in-chief of army regiments. One might also note that, in the British case, one of the last areas in which the monarch attempted to exercise direct influence over government policy was in the management of military affairs; witness, for

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example, King Edward VII's efforts to shape the reform proposals for the army between 1903 and 1905.¹

The interaction between the monarchy and the armed services is also evident in the ceremonial aspects of the foreign policy of monarchical states. When, for example, a male foreign royal dignitary visited Britain in the early-twentieth century, it was established practice that as well as reviewing troops on parade etc., he would be shown some of the major military and naval establishments, such as Woolwich Arsenal and Portsmouth dockyard, and the staff colleges at Sandhurst and Greenwich. Moreover, senior military and naval officers would be attached to any such visitor's suite with their exact rank being decided on the basis of the seniority within his royal family of the dignitary in question. In addition, the broader diplomatic process was lubricated by the judicious bestowal of chivalric decorations and other symbols of esteem as a form of cultural diplomacy. It was also normal practice for monarchs to award decorations to the foreign officers associated with such royal visits. A further important tool at the disposal of monarchs receiving a royal visit was that they could appoint foreign Kings and Princes to ceremonial roles in their armed forces. Thus in 1901 and 1903 respectively Wilhelm II of Germany and Franz Josef of Austria-Hungary were made field marshals in the British army by Edward VII.²

The importance of the nexus between a royal court and the armed services of a state naturally means that when one monarchical state makes an alliance with another the way in which their respective royal Houses and services interact is a crucial element in the overall relationships between the two allies. In such a relationship, the armed forces on both sides are involved in a continual process of signalling respect for the monarchy of the other power, thus sealing the bonds between both courts and both sets of armed services, and creating a sense of a unity

¹John Gooch (1996) 'Adversarial Attitudes: Servicemen, Politicians and Strategic Policy in Edwardian England, 1899–1914' in Paul Smith, ed. *Government and the Armed Forces in Britain 1856–1990* (London: Hambledon) pp59–60; Simon Heffer (1998) *Power and Place: The Political Consequences of King Edward VII* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson) pp188–94.

²The National Archives, Kew (TNA), Balfour Papers, FO800/203 'Missions to Confer Military Decorations, etc., on Foreign Sovereigns' Field (FO) memorandum 4 April 1918. For the Kaiser's predilection for such honours, see Roderick McLean (2003) *Royalty and Diplomacy in Europe 1890–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp78–9.

of purpose. This signalling draws on the techniques outlined above but tends to heighten them by allowing for politically driven departures from precedence and introducing new manifestations of esteem. The way in which such a culturally-based relationship can work can be usefully studied by looking at the relations between Britain and Japan that developed in the period of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and beyond.

BEGINNING THE RELATIONSHIP

For many centuries, the court in Japan had been entirely divorced from political and military affairs. However, in the initial years following the collapse of the Tokugawa regime in 1868 the new Japanese government, in its attempts to emulate European institutions, very quickly developed ties between the court of the Meiji Emperor and the armed forces as part of that imitative process. It is, for example, notable that as early as 1873 the young Emperor was photographed in military dress and at the same time was required to learn how to ride a horse—a necessary skill for the reviewing of troops in the European-style.³ Meanwhile a number of members of the princely Houses who acted as adjuncts to the monarchy took up military careers. Thus, the Emperor's uncle, Prince Taruhito Arisugawa, became a general who formally led Meiji's forces both in the Boshin War of 1868–1869 against the Tokugawa and the campaign to suppress the Satsuma revolt in 1877. Then in 1894 he was made Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Army during the first part of the Sino-Japanese War. Meanwhile, his younger half-brother, Prince Takehito Arisugawa, became an officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy. As such, from 1880–1883 he became the first Japanese Prince to receive training in the Royal Navy, serving for a time on the battleship HMS *Iron Duke*. He later commanded ships during the war with China and was eventually promoted to the rank of admiral. In addition, the Princes Akihito Komatsu and Sadanaru Fushimi became senior figures within the Imperial Japanese Army, while Prince Yorihiro Higashi-Fushimi held a senior rank in the Imperial Japanese Navy.

The fact that Prince Takehito Arisugawa was sent for training to Britain in the 1880s was symptomatic of the fact that the newly-formed

³ See Takeshi Fujitani (1998) *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press) pp110, 175–7.

Imperial Japanese Navy looked to the Royal Navy as the model upon which to base itself. In order to develop along the right lines, in the 1870s it duly hired a British naval mission under the command of Archibald Douglas and established a naval academy at Etajima that self-consciously emulated Dartmouth.⁴ Meanwhile, a series of young Japanese naval officers were dispatched for training to Britain, including among their number Admiral Heihachirō Tōgō, the victor of the Battle of Tsushima against Russia in 1905. Despite the Imperial Japanese Navy's clear affinity for Britain, it would be wrong to say that this sentiment was reciprocated to any notable degree by the Royal Navy. Nor in the period before the alliance was there any great warmth in the court relations between Britain and Japan, although this was not for want of trying on the part of the latter. In 1880 the Japanese proposed a mutual exchange of decorations between the two monarchs, only for the idea of any equality in their standing to be brusquely brushed aside by Queen Victoria.⁵

Under her successor, Edward VII, there was a thawing of British coldness. With the signing of the formal alliance between the two countries in January 1902, the relationship between the respective royal Houses and so, between the armed services, began to change. The first overt signal of the extent of this transformation occurred in March 1902 when HMS *Endymion* became the first British ship on the China station to visit Japan since the signing of the treaty. Unexpectedly, given past precedents, its captain was called upon to attend an audience with the Emperor and its officers were invited to take part in a duck hunt in the grounds of the imperial palace.⁶ This, though, paled into insignificance besides the welcome given to the Commander-in-Chief China, Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, when he came to Tokyo in May 1902 for naval

⁴Ian Gow (1999) 'The Douglas Mission (1873–79) and Meiji Naval Education' in J. E. Hoare, ed. *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits* 10 vols (Richmond: Japan Library) III, pp144–57.

⁵See Antony Best (2008) 'The Role of Diplomatic Practice and Court Protocol in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1867–1900' in Markus Mosslang and Torsten Rott, eds *The Diplomats' World: The Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp248–9.

⁶TNA FO46/563 MacDonald (Tokyo) to Lansdowne 10 April 1902 no. 42. For the background to the alliance, see Ian Nish (1966) *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires, 1894–1907* (London: Athlone) pp143–244.

planning talks with the Imperial Japanese Navy. Bridge was given lavish treatment, including becoming the first foreign admiral ever to be asked to sit at the Emperor's table at a banquet.⁷

The care with which the Japanese government took action to emphasise its respect for its British ally by conferring this extensive royal attention on its armed forces meant that Britain had little choice but to reciprocate. Accordingly, in the summer of 1902, before Edward VII's coronation was postponed due to illness, the Admiralty had arranged for the Imperial Japanese Navy to be given a special privileged position at the naval review at Spithead. This included allowing the Imperial Japanese Navy to have two ships present at the review (rather than the one normally reserved for foreign powers). In addition, it was permitted to place one of these vessels in the British line. As the Principal Secretary at the Admiralty noted, 'Japan's position towards us is totally different from that of all other foreign govts and it is just as well to mark it.'⁸

Thus very quickly the alliance made a significant difference to the relations between the respective armed services of Britain and Japan. A crucial element in this process of change was the way in which this was tied to signalling exchanges between the two royal Houses. These ties received a further boost when the Russo-Japanese War broke out in 1904. During this conflict the British government, following the terms of the alliance, kept up a policy of strict diplomatic and strategic neutrality. However, Britain was able to use messages from the King to the Japanese armed forces as a way of circumventing this straitjacket and expressing respect and sympathy for its ally. The power of this form of communication was first revealed in November 1904. Major-General Ian Hamilton, the leading military observer for the Indian Army, was serving alongside the Japanese forces in Manchuria. He reported on the hugely positive reaction he witnessed on the staff of General Tamemoto Kuroki to a message that the British King had sent, thanking the Imperial Japanese Army for its recent birthday message. In a letter to Lord Knollys, the King's Private Secretary, Hamilton recorded that, 'there is no doubt but that the intense loyalty of the Japanese to their

⁷TNA FO46/552 no. 61, MacDonald to Lansdowne 22 May 1902; Bodleian Library, University of Oxford (BodL), Selborne Papers, Selborne Ms. 19, Bridge (C-in-C China) to Selborne 3 June 1902.

⁸TNA ADM116/132 Thomas (Adm), Minute 28 May 1902.

own Emperor renders them specially susceptible to such a kind message as that which I had the honour of conveying from the King.⁹

Recognising the significance of such gestures in January 1905 the British Minister in Tokyo, Sir Claude MacDonald, was told to pass on to Japan's naval hero, Admiral Tōgō, the King and the government's 'utmost admiration' of his achievements.¹⁰ This, too, was reported to have had a marked positive impact.¹¹ A more esoteric signal then followed, in the form of the King radically departing from the normal protocol for decorations bestowed on British subjects. To honour Hamilton for his service as one of Britain's military observers in Manchuria, the Japanese Emperor had decided to award him with the Order of the Sacred Treasure. In such circumstances, servants of the British Crown, whether military or civil, were normally told to refuse the award on the grounds that they could only serve one master or to accept but not wear the foreign decoration. Occasionally an exception was made for what was called 'limited permission'. This meant that the individual concerned was allowed to wear the decoration but only in the presence of the foreign monarch concerned or one of his representatives. However, in Hamilton's case, the King personally overruled the War Office, which wanted to allow 'limited permission'. Instead, he granted Hamilton 'full permission' to wear the decoration, meaning that he could wear it on any ceremonial occasion.¹² While to modern *mores* this detail might seem arcane, for those at the time, who had a greater sensitivity to the nuances of meaning in the world of protocol, it was an important gesture and one that clearly demonstrated the King's respect for his ally.

Building on this episode, when freed from the constraints of neutrality at the end of the war in September 1905, the King participated in further symbolic gestures that were intended to demonstrate Britain's respect for Japan's military and naval prowess. On the King's personal initiative, it was decided that the newly-created Order of Merit should

⁹Royal Archives, Windsor (RA): VIC/MAIN/W/67/18 Hamilton to Knollys 20 November 1904. I acknowledge the gracious permission of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to use quotations from the Royal Archives.

¹⁰TNA Lansdowne Papers, FO800/134 Lansdowne to MacDonald 5 January 1905 (tel.).

¹¹Ibid., MacDonald to Lansdowne 2 February 1905.

¹²TNA FO83/2133 Edward VII Minute n.d. [April 1905] on War Office to Foreign Office 28 April 1905.

be awarded to the father of the modern Japanese army, Field Marshal Aritomo Yamagata, and also to the Imperial Japanese Army's and Imperial Japanese Navy's respective field commanders, Field Marshal Iwao Ōyama and Admiral Tōgō.¹³ In addition, an array of other decorations were given to Japan's generals and admirals, including various ranks of the Royal Victorian Order, which was an Order which the King could bestow in his personal capacity. These decorations were taken out to Japan for investiture in the spring of 1906 by the Mission that also brought out the Order of the Garter for the Emperor.¹⁴ Moreover, this Mission itself, in line with precedent, contained a strong military element, with the King choosing one of his favourites, General Sir Thomas Kenny-Kelly, to represent the army and Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Edward Seymour, a former Commander-in-Chief of the China station, for the Navy.

One problem, though, in using refined protocol at this elevated level was that the Japanese establishment was only just learning the rules according to European standards, but at the same time had already gained a reputation for sensitivity about anything that could be interpreted as a slight. During the Garter Mission, led by Prince Arthur of Connaught, son of the Duke of Connaught, the Japanese decided to assign its most senior military figures to his suite as a sign of respect for their ally. However, as Prince Arthur was only the King's nephew and not the heir to the throne this was actually, from the European perspective, clearly inappropriate for someone of his standing.¹⁵ This had unfortunate consequences. When Prince Fushimi came to London in 1907 to express the Emperor's gratitude on receiving the Garter, it was felt necessary by the government to reciprocate the Japanese gesture by attaching Field Marshal Lord Roberts and Admiral of the Fleet Sir Edward Seymour to his suite. The King was not amused at this break from European precedence. He let it be known that the Prince's visit had become 'distasteful' to him, in that he had been 'forced into Japanese methods'. He went on to declare sarcastically that if things continued as they were, Britain might as well adopt

¹³TNA FO46/598, Telegram, Lansdowne to MacDonald 9 October 1905.

¹⁴TNA FO372/20 7064/198/323, Telegram 20, MacDonald to Grey 26 February 1906; Telegram 10, Grey to MacDonald 27 February 1906.

¹⁵RA: VIC/MAIN/W/51/73 Hardinge (FO PUS) to Edward VII 24 April 1907; X/25/66 Davidson to Ponsonby 24 April 1907.

Tibetan customs.¹⁶ Typically, however, Edward VII calmed down after this initial outburst. It should be noted, however, that Britain was not above inventing precedents of its own in order to fête the Japanese. For example, on Fushimi's return home, despite protests from the Admiralty, it was arranged for the Prince to travel from British Columbia to Japan on board a Royal Navy cruiser, HMS *Monmouth*.¹⁷

Another difficulty was that Japanese punctiliousness in regard to protocol could have a deleterious effect, as the constant Japanese stress on the need to engage in such activities was both time-consuming and wearisome to others. From 1906 it became noticeable that those in charge of the Royal Navy's China station began to take against official visits to Japan. The basis for this distaste was, as Admiral Sir Alfred Winsloe confided to the Admiralty in December 1912, that 'the occasion is taken to make life horrible by one long succession of lunches and dinners'.¹⁸ The novelty of the welcome proffered in the first dawn of the alliance had thus decidedly worn off within a very few years. Nor could it be said that it had led to any real sense of warmth between the respective armed forces or bridged the ethnic divide in any substantial way.¹⁹

Despite this, the court-service nexus continued to be a fundamentally important aspect of the Anglo-Japanese alliance in terms of bringing the royal Houses closer together and creating a public image of equality and respect between the two countries. For example, in 1909 none other than General Horatio Herbert Kitchener was invited to visit Japan as the Emperor's guest at the Imperial Japanese Army's annual manoeuvres and the invitation led to a further ostentatious distribution of decorations.²⁰ Then, in 1911, Japan decided to send its leading war heroes, General

¹⁶ RA: VIC/MAIN/X/25/59 Ponsonby to Davidson 21 April 1907; X/26/5 Ponsonby to Davidson 28 April 1907.

¹⁷ Royal Navy Museum, Portsmouth, Tweedmouth Papers, MSS254/399 Grey to Tweedmouth 30 May 1907.

¹⁸ Churchill Archive Centre, Cambridge (CAC), Churchill Papers, CHAR13/11, f71, Winsloe (C-in-C China) to Churchill 30 December 1912. See also National Maritime Museum, Greenwich (NMM), Noel Papers, NOE/4A Moore (C-in-C China) to Noel 18 June 1906.

¹⁹ See, for example, BodL, Rumbold dep. 4, f61, Diary, 23 September 1910.

²⁰ TNA FO372/169 46878/40698/323, no. 35, Treaty, MacDonald to Grey 4 December 1909.

Maresuke Nogi and Admiral Tōgō, as the army and navy's representatives to the coronation of King George V, which as one British diplomat in Tokyo noted was 'an astute move ... to bolster up the alliance'.²¹

TESTING THE ALLIANCE

The start of the Great War in 1914 put the alliance to the test, as the two countries were now committed to the common cause of defeating Germany. As with many such conflicts, this conflagration saw a number of tensions arising between the two allies. These were generally political in nature, because Japan appeared to see the conflict as a ripe opportunity for it to increase its influence in China at the expense of the interests there of the European powers. Its continuing focus on East Asian affairs also meant that Japan's contribution to the war effort was limited in size, which attracted further adverse comment from its allied European powers. Moreover, even when the Japanese armed forces did collaborate actively in action, the results were mixed. Most notably, the Imperial Japanese Army engaged in the autumn of 1914 in a short and successful campaign to seize the German naval port of Qingdao. However, problems emerged in terms of its relations with the small British contingent to this operation. In addition, the Imperial Japanese Navy helped with naval patrols in the south Pacific and Indian Oceans and in the Mediterranean Sea, but its record in its dealings with the British command was again mixed. The propaganda that had been carefully cultivated by both sides about the degree to which the armed forces of the two allies had become intertwined in the service of their respective monarchs was thus revealed to have limited substance in reality.

Despite these problems, however, the court-service nexus remained the most appropriate channel for symbolic signalling between these two powers. Indeed, in a time of war it became more important than ever. Thus, when the British government decided in 1918 that it was necessary to put new life into an alliance that had started to drift, it settled on the idea of demonstrating its continuing faith in Japan by making the Taisho Emperor a Field Marshal in the British army, the first

²¹BodL, Rumbold dep. 4, Diary, 15 January 1911. See also TNA Grey Papers, FO800/68, Telegram, MacDonald to Grey 14 January 1911.

non-European to be so honoured.²² In order to bestow a Field Marshal's baton on the Emperor, a military mission was sent out to Japan led once again by Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught. Very deliberately, all the officers chosen for the mission, including the Prince himself, had served on the Western Front and during the visit, in order to emphasise this point, they wore khaki uniforms rather than ceremonial dress. The effect was profound. Immediately after the visit, the British Ambassador in Tokyo reported to the Foreign Office that:

it seems to me that the Prince's visit has been the very best kind of propaganda, because it made people think well of Britain, and yet made them do so unconsciously ... it has ... given British and Japanese alike an opportunity of drawing closer together, and of thus re-forging links which the wear and tear of warfare had perhaps tended to impair.²³

Japan, in turn, sent its own baton mission to Britain, which was led by Prince Higashi-Fushimi. Being the only royal visit made to London during the war, it was duly marked by the sole state dinner held during these years.²⁴

POST-1918 REALITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The reciprocal visits by Princes Arthur and Higashi-Fushimi rejuvenated Anglo-Japanese relations at a difficult time. However, and simultaneously, broader forces were at work which were undermining the diplomatic practices of the pre-war era and making the future of military alliances as institutions in international politics uncertain. At the Washington conference of 1921–1922 the Anglo-Japanese alliance duly became prey to this tendency. It was instead replaced by a consultative

²²See TNA Balfour Papers, FO800/203, Memorandum, 4 April 1918, 'Missions to Confer Military Decorations, etc., on Foreign Sovereigns' Field (FO). See also Ian Nish (1972) *Alliance in Decline: A Study in Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1908–23* (London: Athlone) pp241–8.

²³TNA Balfour Papers, FO800/203 Greene to Balfour 3 July 1918.

²⁴For references to this state dinner, see the following file, RA: RA MRH/MRH/SOV/MIXED/14.

pact, which included the two former allies plus the United States and France, to uphold stability in the Pacific Ocean.²⁵

With relations with Japan having been strained by tensions during the war and, in addition, the creation of new problems around the issue of Japanese immigration to the Dominions in the British Empire, Britain was aware that the end of the alliance could appear to the Japanese as a deliberate slight. It therefore recognised that there was a need to salvage Japan's *amour propre* by stressing that the two countries' mutual relations would continue to be guided by the 'spirit of the alliance'. This meant that it was necessary for the ceremonial element in the relationship to be maintained, which, of course, had ramifications for the armed forces of both countries.

The continued emphasis on the court-service nexus was, for example, evident in 1922 when Edward, Prince of Wales, visited Japan. He arrived in the country on board one of the Royal Navy's latest ships, the battle-cruiser HMS *Renown*, and was accompanied by his young cousin, Lord Louis Mountbatten, who was then a naval lieutenant. Further contact continued in the form of Prince George, the later Duke of Kent. When Prince George was a young naval officer on the China station in the mid-1920s, he was ordered by his father, George V, to pay respectful visits to the Japanese royal family. On the first occasion in 1925, this necessitated the Commander-in-Chief China removing himself from Chinese waters at the height of a wave of nationalist agitation there. This was because the King had insisted that the Prince should arrive in Japan on the Admiral's flagship, HMS *Hawkins*.²⁶ Meanwhile, in Britain itself, the King had already played his part the previous year, 1924, by agreeing to receive a visiting Japanese military mission.²⁷

In addition, links continued in the area of military education. In 1926 the Japanese government asked if one of the Taisho Emperor's young sons, Prince Takamatsu, who was an officer in the Imperial Japanese Navy, could come to Britain to continue his naval training. The naval *attaché* in Tokyo strongly supported this request, observing that, while the Prince's attachment might raise some difficulties as the two countries no longer shared technological information, 'the political advantage

²⁵Nish, *Alliance in Decline*, pp368–82.

²⁶TNA ADM1/8692/257, Telegram 606, Admiralty to C-in-C China 22 August 1925.

²⁷TNA WO32/4998 Stamfordham (BP) to Creedy (WO) 20 May 1924.

of acceding to this request could outweigh the possible disadvantages'.²⁸ The British therefore approved of the plan. These plans did not, however, materialise thanks to Taisho's death in December 1926, because this led to a long period of Japanese court mourning. Consequently, that moment was lost.²⁹ Lastly friendship continued to be cultivated through the exchange of ceremonial positions in the two countries' armed forces. In 1930 the British decided to elevate the new Emperor, Hirohito, to the rank of a Field Marshal. He had already been made a General in the British army in 1921 while on a visit to Britain. A Field Marshal's baton was duly handed over to Prince Takamatsu who came to London that year to thank the King for the Order of the Garter that been bestowed on the Emperor the previous year.³⁰

For the Foreign Office during the 1920s, the maintenance of these connections was considered very useful. There was an awareness that, in policy terms, there were serious differences of opinion between Britain and Japan, such as over how to deal with the rise of the Guomindang in China. The ability to continue to engage in royal diplomacy and so to continue to develop ties between the armed forces was considered important; because it allowed Britain to make gestures of respect and friendship in fields that did not involve any substantive political commitment. Relations could thus be carefully nurtured and, despite the occasional difficulty over policy, Japan could continue to be made to feel welcome.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE MANCHURIAN CRISIS AND ITS AFTERMATH

The difficulty, of course, came when the political problems between the states changed from being simply events that caused temporary friction into serious differences of opinion. From 1931 and the outbreak of the Manchurian crisis, it became all too evident that Britain and Japan were on diverging paths. In this environment, to engage in the signalling that it had taken place in normal times was fraught with

²⁸TNA ADM1/8706/209 Fisher (DNI), note 27 August 1926.

²⁹TNA ADM1/8706/209, Telegram 45, Larken Minute 14 September 1926, and NA Tokyo to Admiralty 4 March 1927.

³⁰TNA WO32/3753 Stamfordham to Creedy 3 June 1930.

difficulty, for it could all too easily be interpreted as indicating approval for Japan's actions. Accordingly, for much of the 1930s the interactions between the respective courts and their armed services became more infrequent and less high profile. This relative decline had, though, the effect of making any new initiatives stand out. Thus, for example, some pro-Japanese figures in London were interested to note that in January 1936 the Imperial Japanese Army offered to provide a large guard of honour for the memorial service held in Tokyo following the death of George V, as this appeared to indicate a new interest in closer ties with Britain.³¹ At the other end of the scale, though, inter-service tensions sometimes threatened to derail attempts at reconciliation. Most notably in October 1936 three British naval ratings were beaten while in Japanese custody at Keelung in Taiwan with the result that the subsequent delay in Japan's proffering an apology almost led Britain to refuse to accept an Imperial Japanese Navy presence at the 1937 coronation naval review for King George VI.³²

With the start of the second Sino-Japanese War in July 1937, the interaction shut down almost entirely and relations between the two countries' armed forces soon turned sour. This was especially evident in Shanghai where British forces patrolling the perimeter of the International Settlement were brought face-to-face with the Imperial Japanese Army's brutality towards the Chinese.³³ Thus, despite the years of signalling intended to generate mutual respect, a huge gulf was emerging in practice. A few, though, on the British side were disposed to place undue weight on the continued significance of the court-service nexus. The chief culprit in this field was a military officer called Roy Piggott who, having been trained as a language officer in Japanese in the mid-1900s, subsequently acted as military *attaché* in Tokyo from 1922 to 1926, and then again from 1936–1939.³⁴ It was Piggott who had,

³¹ Sheffield University Library, Kennedy Papers, 4/30, Diary, 3 March 1936.

³²For this incident, see Greg Kennedy (2002) 'Anglo-Japanese Relations and the Keelung Incident, 1936–38' in Greg Kennedy and Keith Neilson, eds *Incidents and International Relations: People, Power and Personalities* (Westport, CT: Praeger) pp135–58.

³³TNA WO32/4347 'The Shanghai Emergency 1 February–31 December 1938' Telfer-Smollet (GOC Shanghai) report 1 February 1939.

³⁴For an overview of Piggott's interactions with Japan, see Antony Best (2013) 'Major-General F. S. G. Piggott (1883–1966)' in Hugh Cortazzi, ed. *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits* (Leiden: Global Oriental) VIII, pp102–16.

back in 1917, first had the idea of making the Emperor a Field Marshal in the British army. In his years in Tokyo as *attaché* he showed an unfortunate tendency to see the Imperial Japanese Army's involvement in protocol concerning Britain as a testament to that institution possessing Anglophile sympathies.³⁵

THE POST-1945 LANDSCAPE IN THE COURT-SERVICE NEXUS

The full extent of the problems created by the centrality of the court-service nexus emerged in the postwar period, from 1945 on. There were elements in both countries during the early Cold War years who believed that a *rapprochement* would be of benefit. For the Foreign Office in Britain, the interest was in ensuring that Japan felt as if it belonged to the 'free world' and would resist the temptations of neutralism or worse.³⁶ Meanwhile, within the Japanese government there was a hope that the restoration of relations with Britain would allow it to pull free from America's clutches and thus able to pursue a more independent foreign policy.³⁷

In normal circumstances, it would have been obvious to use the long-established links between the royal Houses and armed forces to assist this process. Through its very nature, though, the Pacific War had made this well-nigh impossible. The brutality of the Imperial Japanese Army's treatment of British prisoners-of-war meant that the public in Britain was now inclined towards profound distaste for Japan and things Japanese. Moreover, this unwillingness to 'forgive and forget' was fed by a constant diet of cultural representations of prisoner-of-war suffering in the form of novels, plays and films, most notably David Lean's *The*

³⁵TNA FO262/2016 153/70/38 Piggott (MA Tokyo) Minute 23 March 1938. See also, for example, Piggott's postwar recollection of the presentation in 1925 of a portrait of the British King to the Japanese staff college in Tokyo in F. S. G. Piggott (1950) *Broken Thread: An Autobiography* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden) pp200–1.

³⁶See Antony Best (2013) 'A Cardinal Point of our World Strategy': The Foreign Office and the Normalization of Relations with Japan, 1952–63' in John Young, Effie Pedaliu, and Michael Kandiah, eds *British Foreign Policy from Churchill to Blair* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) pp100–18.

³⁷Tanaka Takahiko (2001) 'Anglo-Japanese Relations in the 1950s: Cooperation, Friction and the Search for State Identity' in Ian Nish and Kibata Yoichi, eds *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600–2000*, 2 vols, 2: *The Political-Diplomatic Dimension* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) pp201–34.

Bridge on the River Kwai.³⁸ It is thus hardly a surprise to learn that in 1954, the newly appointed Japanese naval *attaché* to London was advised by the Foreign Office to wear civilian clothes in public rather than military uniform.³⁹ The only compensating factor that ameliorated this effect was that the postwar constitution of Japan, in making the Emperor merely a symbol of the state, had cut what had become a dangerously close relationship between the court and the armed services.

This anti-Japanese sentiment in Britain was particularly heightened in elements close to the throne and, it has to be acknowledged, within the court itself. Most notably, Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten, who was Queen Elizabeth II's second cousin and the uncle of her consort, Prince Philip, had served during the war as the head of South-East Asian Command which had fought against Japan in the Burma campaign. As such, he was naturally asked to be the patron or president of various veteran and prisoner-of-war associations, including the Burma Star Association, the British Empire Services League and the National Federation of Far Eastern Prisoners-of-War Clubs and Associations (NFFPCA). In these circumstances, even if the royal court had been inclined to be sympathetic to the Foreign Office's views, it could not be seen to take a lead in restoring relations with Japan lest it compromise its own relations with the community that above all others personified patriotic values and sacrifice.

In this regard, it is notable that in 1955 Mountbatten turned down a suggestion from the Foreign Office that he could usefully combine a visit to Hong Kong with one to Japan. The Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, observed in his begging letter that, 'it is only too rarely that important Englishmen are able to get as far as Japan, and from the political point of view such visits are therefore all the more valuable.'⁴⁰ This, however, cut no ice with the Earl who curtly observed that he did not have the time to spare.⁴¹ In the end, the problem of how

³⁸For the Far Eastern POWs in British literary culture, see Roger Bourke (2006) *Prisoner of the Japanese: Literary Imagination and the Prisoner-of War Experience* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press).

³⁹National Archives of Australia, Canberra, A1838 480/8/6 Finland (UKHC Canberra) to PM's Dept 5 July 1954.

⁴⁰TNA FO371/110259 FJ1218/1 Kirkpatrick (PUS FO) to Mountbatten 1 December 1956.

⁴¹TNA FO371/110259 FJ1218/1 Mountbatten to Denning (Tokyo) 9 December 1955.

to renew the pattern of reciprocal royal visits was solved by an ingenious if obvious solution—the best way of circumventing the frayed court-service nexus was to entrust these exchanges to the female members of the royal Houses whose links with the armed forces were not as well developed. Thus, in 1961 the first postwar visit to Japan by a member of the British royal family was carried out by the young Princess Alexandra, while the second visitor was Princess Margaret in 1969.⁴² Japan followed suit; in 1962, to the approval of the Foreign Office, it dispatched the Anglophile Princess Chichibu to London, and she made a further visit in 1967.

This relatively low-key approach was suitable for making the first cautious contacts, but it could not be followed indefinitely if the idea was to achieve a complete *rapprochement*. The latter could only be sealed by reciprocal state visits which necessarily involved a military element. The difficulties that this posed became readily apparent in 1971 when Emperor Hirohito visited Britain. As the Emperor had been Japan's wartime leader it was recognised within the 'establishment' that it was almost inevitable that his appearance on British soil would lead to a number of protests from the POW community and their supporters. In order to try to keep these demonstrations within bounds, an attempt was made through the good offices of Lord Mountbatten to persuade the leadership of the Burma Star Association and the NFFPCA that, out of respect for the Queen, they should mute their criticism of her guest.⁴³ To a substantial degree this goal was achieved and protests were comparatively few and far between.⁴⁴ However, there was an implicit *quid pro quo* involved in Mountbatten's deal. This was that, having dissuaded the veterans associations from protesting, he felt he should not take part in the state ceremonial surrounding the visit. He therefore decided to absent himself from the state banquet held on 5 October. He received many personal letters of congratulations from the general public for this

⁴²TNA CAB130/165 GEN693 Royal Visits Overseas and Visits by Foreign Heads of States Committee 3rd meeting 4 November 1960; CAB134/3189 RV(68) Royal Visits Committee 2nd meeting 23 October 1968.

⁴³Special Collections, Hartley Library, University of Southampton (HL), Mountbatten Papers, MB1/K156 Pilcher (Tokyo) to Mountbatten 7 January 1972.

⁴⁴TNA FCO21/925 FEJ26/4/pt.C Secretary of State's Briefing for Cabinet 11 October 1971.

gesture.⁴⁵ Equally, though, it should be noted that Mountbatten did meet privately with the Emperor, in order to renew acquaintance with a man he had first met in 1921–1922. He also used the occasion, though, to lobby for Japan to involve itself in the United World Colleges, an international education movement that Mountbatten was promoting.⁴⁶ This move did not go down so well and attracted some media and public criticism, with one veteran's daughter stating baldly in a letter to the Earl, 'You have let the men down badly.'⁴⁷

The Emperor's visit revealed the extent to which the court-services nexus that had done so much to provide the ballast for Anglo-Japanese relations during the years of the alliance had now become its weakest point. Nor, it should be added, did the problems fade after 1971, for when Hirohito's successor, Emperor Akihito, visited Britain in 1988 on his first state visit there were again problems with the former prisoners-of-war and civilian internees, who by this stage were demanding compensation from the Japanese government.⁴⁸ Moreover, there were rumours of difficulties behind the scenes in the upper reaches of the state. On 13 May 1998 *The Times* reported that the Duke of Edinburgh, due to his close ties with the Burma Star Association, had opposed the idea that the Order of the Garter should be conferred on the new Emperor.⁴⁹

Nor were the difficulties solely limited to Japanese royal visits to Britain, because tours in the other direction also raised distinctly awkward issues. In the latter case, the most challenging problem was how should a British monarch engage in what it had now become an accepted aspect of any state visit to a friendly power, namely honouring that country's war dead. In the Japanese case this conundrum was particularly difficult, because as well as being a former foe which had engaged in ill-treatment of British prisoners-of-war, there were two problematic

⁴⁵HL, Mountbatten Papers, MB1/K156 Pilcher (Tokyo) to Mountbatten 7 January 1972. This file also contains a large number of letters congratulating Mountbatten on his stance.

⁴⁶Interview, Mountbatten, *Daily Express*, 20 October 1971.

⁴⁷HL, Mountbatten Papers, MB1/K156 Duncan to Mountbatten 10 October 1971.

⁴⁸'Protest Veterans Turn Back the Clock', *The Times*, 27 May 1998.

⁴⁹'Duke Resisted Garter Award to Emperor of Japan', *The Times*, 13 May 1998. Buckingham Palace subsequently issued a statement denying the truth of this report, see 'Duke Denies Opposing Akihito Award', *The Times*, 14 May 1998.

sites of commemoration in Tokyo. These were the war cemetery at Chidorigafuchi, which was not militaristic in nature, but also the far more controversial Yasukuni Shrine. This issue was initially raised in connection with the Queen's first visit to Japan in 1975. Early on in the planning for this occasion, the British government let it be known that the Queen would go to the Commonwealth war cemetery at Yokohama. The problem with what to do in regard to making a gesture towards Japan's war dead led to long and difficult deliberation.⁵⁰ Due to the withholding of many of the relevant files from the Foreign Office records it is not easy, at this time, to follow this debate. However, it appears that it was felt that even a visit to Chidorigafuchi would create political difficulties. Instead, the decision was taken that the Queen would visit the Ise Shrine, which had no associations with the war.⁵¹ It is also notable that a ceremony at the Yokohama cemetery came to be a required element for future royal visits to Japan. Even when Prince Philip represented the Queen at the funeral of Emperor Hirohito in 1989, this was included in his schedule.⁵²

CONCLUSION

The example of British relations with Japan thus provides a useful case study for looking at the way in which the court-military nexus is an essential element in ties between monarchical states and that this is especially important if they become allies. Alliances are, of course, inherently military relationships by their very nature, but the fact that the crown and the armed services are so closely interwoven in any royal system of government, be it absolute or constitutional, means that the mutual signalling that takes place in this arena is vitally important for building up trust and respect between the two parties. This is an aspect of diplomacy that is often overlooked by historians, but it is clear from the attention that was paid to this field of activity not just by civil servants but also by politicians and even monarchs themselves that contemporaries recognised its utility and significance. Such was its centrality to the relationship

⁵⁰TNA FCO21/1446 FEJ26/1/pt.A Barrington (Tokyo) to March (FCO) 20 January 1975.

⁵¹TNA FCO21/1448 FEJ26/1/pt.C Haskell (FCO) to Wilcox (British Council of Churches) 30 April 1975.

⁵²'Duke to Lay Wreath', *The Times*, 20 February 1989.

that was constructed over the twenty years that the alliance existed that even after the latter lapsed in 1922 the British government still felt it necessary to cultivate ties between its own military and the Japanese court.

The irony was, however, that, for the same reasons, after 1945 the court-military nexus had, if anything, a negative effect on Anglo-Japanese relations. With Japan's image now tarnished by its wartime military excesses, the British government found that it could not easily draw on the monarchy as a channel for the restoration of relations precisely because of the fact that it was so close to the armed services. This expressed itself not only in abstract concerns about compromising the prestige of the monarchy in the eyes of the military, but in the actions and opinions of those senior figures in the royal family, most notably Mountbatten and the Duke of Edinburgh, who had served in the war. There was clearly a personal reticence in the British court about normalising relations with Japan.

The centrality of relations between the court and the military therefore means that while this can be an important weapon within a state's diplomatic armoury, it can be neutralised when, for reputational reasons, there is a profound reluctance to engage with the other party. Signalling has its limits and those responsible for making policy are clearly aware that this is a field of activity that needs to be handled with care lest it communicate the wrong message. That is, in itself, a testament to the continuing importance of royalty in contemporary political affairs.

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CHAPTER 11

Epilogue

Judith Rowbotham and Matthew Glencross

It is easy to see the Great War itself as an inevitable event, given the tensions within Europe since the start of the twentieth century. It is also easy to look at the ending of monarchies (notably those of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia) as being predictable and directly attributable to the conflict. The benefit of hindsight can equally lead to a simplistic conclusion, bolstered by the dramatic nature of especially the downfall of the Romanovs and the realities of the modern republics which have superseded them, that monarchy as an institution was outdated—unsuited to the modern world. Where the institution has remained, it has increasingly been understood by a substantial element in Western political and historical scholarship as anachronistic, ‘merely’ ornamental and so essentially superfluous to the modern age, and to the government and politics of those states which have retained their monarchies. Equally, in the usual narratives of political development, the Great

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War is seen as being the key turning point. It is characterised as the first of the two world wars which brought the age of European global dominance to an end, to be followed by the Cold War, framing the emergence of two republican super powers, the USSR and the USA, as well as confirming the irrelevance of the monarchical institution in the modern world.

But the Great War was far from the only European conflict which, historically, had afflicted and reshaped the political landscape of the continent, resulting in the reshaping of kingdoms and bringing dynasties crashing down. This is also a global, and not just a European reality. The majority of case studies included here focus on European examples, but do not do so exclusively. After all, monarchy has never been a solely Western phenomenon. In terms of individual states, the institution has both disappeared and survived across the globe, and throughout recorded historical time. Occupants of the thrones of both the Habsburg Empire and the Russian Empire dated the origins of their thrones back to the tenth and ninth centuries respectively.¹ The popular trope is that despite the weight of history, like the French throne at the time of the French Revolution, they fell, because they were unfitted to emerging modern states. However, in terms of the weight of history, the current Japanese Emperor, Akihito, is recorded as the 125th occupant of the Chrysanthemum Throne, in a line dating back to 660BC. The Danish monarchy also claims a long pedigree, stretching back over 1000 years, though the size and significance of the territorial dimensions of the Danish kingdom have certainly varied.² The English and Scottish crowns have a similarly claims to a long pedigree, but are now merged within the United Kingdom and the current ruling dynasty. Such thrones have survived conflict and dynastic interruptions often associated with conflict as well as, in the case of the UK at least, a brief interregnum.

Where, in the last century, the institution has disappeared from various modern nations in the context of an inter- or intra-state conflict,

¹ Otto I was crowned Emperor and successor to Charlemagne in 962AD; the Habsburg Empire grew out of that after the final dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. The Romanovs were the second dynasty to rule Russia, succeeding in the seventeenth century to the Rurik dynasty, which had established itself around 862AD.

² Generally, it is accepted that it was at its zenith in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See Paul Lockhard (2007) *Denmark 1513–1660. The Rise and Decline of a Renaissance Monarchy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

what the chapters included in this volume suggest is the importance of looking to existing strains and stresses within states, as well as to the personality of individual monarchs. Amongst the 'fallen' monarchies, what can be said with absolute certainty is that the Great War highlighted pre-existing internal problems which were seen as being rooted in, or representing the monarchic form of government by a number of powerful dissident groups within these states. But there was no international pressure to end the monarchic form of government. The significance of a concentration on internal factors, and how they were perceived as affecting individual monarchies, is further underlined when it is noted that by the time Russia withdrew from the Great War, its territorial losses in Russian Poland, Lithuania and Latvia in 1915 can be said to have been balanced by the gains resulting from the successful Brusilov Offensive against Austria-Hungary in 1916, while in Transcaucasia, Russia was holding its own against the Ottoman armies. Equally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had come relatively unscathed out of the war in terms of the balance between losses and defeats.

The real impact of Russia's participation in the Great War was domestic, especially given that the new Russian republic continued with the conflict rather than seeking an immediate peace, because of the gains they still hoped to make and in the face of the huge human cost of the conflict. Equally, Karl failed to make the move to conclude a peace despite his personal and political inclination for it, and the clear desire for it within the Empire. Both Empires had in common that they possessed monarchical incumbents who, at the start of the twentieth century, had already shown themselves reluctant to reform and change the institution of monarchy as it operated under their aegis. Here, they also shared an outlook that had much in common with the German Kaiser.

This forms an interesting contrast not only to the British monarchy, but also to the Belgian and even the Italian one, for instance. The big challenge that the British monarchy had had at the start of the twentieth century had been the legacy of the relative personal invisibility and inactivity of Queen Victoria, but under Edward VII and George V, aided by Queen Mary, that problem had been substantially overcome. There was felt to be a personal link between monarch and people even before 1914 that the King could build on in the war. Equally, the personal dimension to the monarchical visibility in Belgium and Italy has been shown here to be significant in sustaining both the war efforts of these two nations and the levels of popular support for the institution.

The republican movement in the UK until the late twentieth century, when there was a brief resurgence, consequently languished with little popular support.³ There is an irony that the Ottoman Sultanate and Caliphate had adapted during the Young Turk movement and responded to demands for constitutional monarchy, and so survived—but that Kemal Atatürk, chose not to preserve it. That, however, says more about Atatürk and his personal experiences with both the Young Turks and the last two Sultans than it does about the robustness of the concept of monarchy there. Nor should it be forgotten that elsewhere in the former Ottoman Empire, not only was the Khedive of Egypt converted formally into a monarch, but also new monarchies were established, for example in the Gulf Arab states and in Jordan and Iraq. This suggests that both within Europe and more widely, the institution of monarchy was not being dismissed as an outdated and irrelevant political element in national governments.

The need, then, is to consider how various factors worked towards advancing the ending of monarchy as a chosen form of government within those states where republican forms of government were preferred—but this must not lead to an assumption that the events producing the ending of monarchical government in one particular state carries model lessons for other monarchies. The survival of the British, Belgian and other European monarchies not included here, such as the Dutch and Scandanavian monarchies, is best understood as being tested, but not undermined, by conflict experience. The survival into the twenty-first century of the Scandanavian and Dutch monarchies cannot be sensibly linked in any way to their neutrality during the Great War, given their experiences during World War II. The same holds true for the very substantial number of non-Western monarchies also not considered here, even though (at least nominally) several other surviving kingdoms were involved in the conflict, including Siam (Thailand), which declared war on Germany in 1917 and sent a small expeditionary force to the Western Front in 1918.

After all, in the successor states to the former Habsburg Empire, monarchy was not automatically dispensed with. In those areas where the Habsburgs had been most strongly associated with the throne—notably Austria itself and Czechoslovakia—the republican option was preferred. Elsewhere, as in the territory which became Yugoslavia, the monarchic

³ Matthew Glencross, Judith Rowbotham, and Michael Kandiah, eds (2016) *The Windsor Dynasty 1910 to the Present: Long to Reign Over Us?* (Basingstoke: Palgrave).

option was chosen over the republican one. Nor can there be an easy association between defeat and the downfall of monarchies and victory and its survival. The Bulgarian throne survived, despite being part of the Central Powers, while the Italian throne was materially weakened by the outcome of the war. The Italian share in the Allied victory had set up expectations about what Italy should have and deserved which remained substantially unfulfilled, and the apparent inability of ‘the victorious King’, Victor Emmanuel III, to argue his country’s case for a greater share of the spoils so weakened him that he felt unable to squash Mussolini’s rise to power. Even so, Mussolini did not feel that he could dispense entirely with the monarchy until the monarchy sought to dispense with him, during the Second World War.

The message of this volume is that the symbolic and cultural power of monarchy should not be underestimated. War has the capacity to enhance the importance of that symbolism, providing channels through which the everyday citizens of a state can understand their emotions and sacrifices being appreciated through the cultural gestures made by monarchy. Victor Emmanuel’s gesture of living as much like his soldiers as possible was echoed by George V and the austerities he insisted on in royal households in Britain. Albert I and Karl also took pains to appear to share the hardships of their subjects, avoiding regal ostentation as far as possible. It is worth noting that, in the case of the latter three, this austerity extended to their presence on the front line, as with Victor Emmanuel. Rupprecht of Bavaria was also a very hands-on and involved commander, and that undoubtedly contributed his enduring popularity within Bavaria and his consequent faith in the robustness of the monarchic institution in general and specifically, his hopes for its restoration in Germany.

At the start of the twenty-first century, of the 193 states recognised by the UN, 26 are counted as monarchies in the usual lists. This, however, counts Queen Elizabeth II as being a single monarch over the 15 independent states where she remains head of state, in the post-imperial era.⁴ Strictly speaking, therefore, this inflates the number of monarchic states

⁴Under the Statute of Westminster 1931, the monarch is head of these states quite independently of her role as Queen of the UK and head of the Commonwealth. The divisibility of the British Crown was confirmed by the Royal Titles Act 1953. See Vernon Bogdanor (1997) *The Monarchy and the Constitution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) pp255–6; 267–70.

to 41. That number may well diminish in coming years. However, while the removal of the monarchy in the former British Empire (in states like Canada, Australia and New Zealand) has been confidently predicted in the last three decades, it has yet to materialise. Popular referenda in all these former Dominions have, to date, resulted in a clear vote to retain the monarchic, over the republican, system despite anti-monarchic hopes to the contrary being expressed even by leading politicians. As the recent history of Spain suggests, it would also be a brave individual who would insist that no other monarchies could be restored—that none of the hundred or more known pretenders to thrones that have disappeared in the last century might choose to restore monarchy as an alternative to their current republican status in the aftermath of crisis, up to and including conflict.

Many (though not all) current monarchs and individual members of both ruling and pretender royal families have certainly considered it an important part of their royal commitments to take an active interest in conflicts involving their countries, whether or not they have been permitted to take a front line role.⁵ The presence at prestigious American and British military training academies of Arab, African and Asian princes has been a regular and continuing phenomenon for over a century. The symbolism of monarchy as a unifying force, overcoming the powers of internal divisions at times of war, has remained powerful despite the clear failures of men like Nicholas II of Russia to so act during the Great War. When King Abdullah of Jordan, a trained fighter pilot, was reported to be taking an active role on missions against DAESH IS militants threatening his kingdom, it was a narrative that was considered by both the Jordanian and the international media to be both credible, and admirable. It turned out that in fact, he was not flying into action but rather, taking an active role in the command centre, but it has not harmed his reputation within his own kingdom and the region more widely that he took such a tough stance.⁶ The indignation of both the British armed

⁵The Japanese dynasty is perhaps the prime example of a ruling House that has, because of historical negative associations, chosen to avoid the appearance of cultivating links with the Japanese military even years after the ending of the Second World War. See Kenneth Ruoff (2001) *The People's Emperor: Democracy and the Japanese Monarchy 1945–1995* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) p131.

⁶See, for instance, 'King Abdullah of Jordan: A warrior and a biker but is he a statesman?' *Daily Telegraph*, 5 February 2015.

forces and UK public opinion when a Labour MP, Emma Dent Coad, suggested that Prince Harry's military service was in some way 'fake' is telling of the continuing expectations of links between royal families and military abilities.⁷

At a testing time for Spain, with the dispute over the status of Catalonia, it will be interesting to see how the Spanish monarchy performs—but the outcome will have more to do with the individual choices of the King and the Spanish government, than with an inherent weakness in the institution itself. Concern over the future of the Japanese throne, with a dearth of male successors and a ban on female accession to the throne may prove equally testing of the Chrysanthemum Throne, just as what are, just as what are being reported, at the end of 2017, as attempts at reform by the new Thai monarch. But again—should either fail, does that mean that other monarchies are bound to do so also? The chapters in this volume suggests not. As this suggests, despite what we believe to be the important contribution of this volume to the study of modern monarchy, there remains considerable work to be done on both Western and non-Western monarchies during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

⁷'Prince Harry's ex-army chief blasts "slander" from Labour MP', *Daily Express*, 28 September 2017; 'Angela Rayner defends Prince Harry', *Guardian*, 25 September 2017; 'Labour MP Emma Dent Coad faces backlash', *Standard*, 27 September 2017.

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