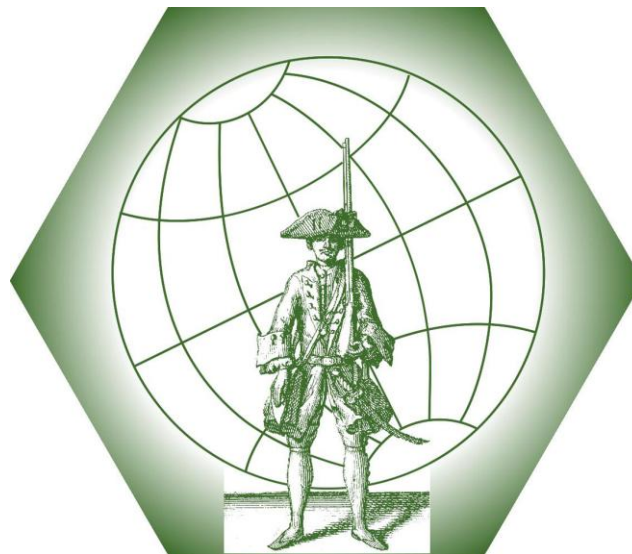


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**Development and Change in the Writing of Military History
from World War Two to the Present**

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Development and Change in the Writing of Military History from World War Two to the Present

A. Historians, Stories and Theories

There is an old saying: historians are better than their theories.

Similarly, and perhaps even more appropriately, the same could be said of the historiographical theories of military historians – universally believed to be empirical and practical, perhaps *too* practical. However, at an international level and especially over the last decades,¹ the renewal of military historical writing has reached such an extent that there has been a flood of historical reviews, many theories have been expounded, on both general and specific issues, while expectations have grown.

In 1938, the VIIIth Congress of the International Committee for Historical Sciences (ICHS) was held in Zurich and the International Commission of Military History (ICMH)² was established. In 1939 the first issue of the “International Review of Military History” (IRMH) was published and the ICMH 75th anniversary celebration prompted its organisers to invite to some general reflections on what military history has become internationally, by way of an introduction to an essay on the evolution of the Commission itself.

Clearly, 1938 and even more so 1939 marked a turning point in the military history of the world: Nazi-fascist aggression against smaller European powers, and against France in 1940, triggered World War Two.

1938 and 1939 were, however, years of no particular significance from the point of view of military historical writing and especially of military historical research. There was no work of great importance published, no international congress held which would have marked military history, no specific historiographical methodology (in the fields of history of politics and of *des institutions*, social and economic history, history of mentalities, and cultural and gender history) could claim particularly relevant works published during those years at an international level.

Of course these were years of great concern for international politics both in Europe and worldwide. An example and an exception to this is Edward H. Carr’s *Twenty years’ crisis 1919-1939: An introduction to the study of international relations*³ – an essay by a scholar who, though never a military historian, understood very well the devastating dangers posed by nationalism and

¹ Michael Howard, ‘The Use and Abuse of Military History’, in: *Royal United Services Institution Journal*, vol. 107 (1962), n. 625. On Howard cf. Hew Strachan, *Michael Howard and the Dimensions of Military History*, 2002, <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/lhcma/info/lec02.shtml>.

² Nicola Labanca, ‘Military History: A World Apart’, in: Ilaria Porciani - Lutz Raphael (eds.), *Atlas of European Historiography: The Making of a Profession 1800-2005* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010), p. 37.

³ Edward Hallett Carr, *Twenty Years’ Crisis 1919-1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations* (London: MacMillan, 1939).

modern warfare (a former diplomatic official, then a columnist for *The Times*, he went on to become an academic: his works on the Soviet Union are well-known, as is his famous series of *G. M. Trevelyan lectures* at Cambridge University, later expanded into his well-known book *What is History?*⁴). In its own (limited) way, the ICMH, at least initially, also tried to combat those dangers – as did the ICHS in its entirety.

Perhaps, from the point of view of military history, instead of 1938-39, it would be better to take the years 1928-29 as a starting point, when in France Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, founding the “*Annales*”, addressed a drastic criticism to the *histoire-bataille*.⁵ They criticised the military history of their times, not as a field of study, but because they saw it as the ultimate expression of that *histoire historisante* and *histoire événementielle* which, in their opinion, had prevented the renewal of historical research. Many military historians in turn tried to criticise their critics. They observed, with some justification, that the finest military history of their day – the work of Hans Delbrück⁶ for example – dealt not only with events, but also with structural issues. It was true, however, that the general criticism in the “*Annales*” could be applied to most contemporary publications on military history. Though Bloch and Febvre’s attack did cause some temporary difficulties, it also helped military history to reinvent itself.

Leaving aside the years 1928-29 for the time being and acknowledging that 1938-39 cannot be considered a precise turning point, the pre-war period can be taken as a scenario evocative of a situation which today has changed profoundly and to which there is no going back.

To elaborate on this: at the time, if a military historian (specialising either in ancient, medieval, early modern or contemporary history) had cultivated the dream of reading at least the most important international works belonging to their field of study, they would perhaps have been able to do so, despite the great difficulty and the effort required. There were only a few truly important works, articles in journals, though more numerous, were limited, and all these were promptly cited in national historical bibliographies, both specific and general. With perhaps a little more (albeit surmountable) difficulty they would have been able to keep abreast of the main works of military history dealing with a different historical period from their own. In the intervening years – from 1938 to the present – military historical research has literally exploded: the number of professional scholars has increased greatly; in every country there are many institutes dedicated to this field and innumerable reviews and book series are published. Today, 75 years on, the legitimate ambition to stay up to date with the published works dealing with a chosen chronological research area is destined to remain a dream in view of the explosion in military historical research which has meanwhile occurred.

An explosion, then: but in what direction? When? Produced by whom and in what contexts? Deploying which historiographical methodologies? A reflection on these 75 years can therefore be useful, even if – due to lack of space – we shall limit ourselves to making just a few points. It will furthermore be convenient to stay with the historians and their history books, rather than dealing with theorising.

⁴ Edward Hallett Carr, *What is history? The George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures delivered in the University of Cambridge, January-March 1961* (London: Macmillan, 1961).

⁵ Bertrand Müller (ed.), *Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre et les Annales d'histoire économique et sociale: Correspondance* (Paris: Fayard, 1994ff [vol. 1: *La naissance des Annales 1928-1933*, vol. 2: *De Strasbourg à Paris 1934-1937*, vol. 3: *Les Annales en crises 1938-1943*]). See also Carole Fink, *Marc Bloch: Biografia di un intellettuale* (Scandicci: La nuova Italia, 1999).

⁶ Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte* (Berlin: G. Stilke [vol. 1: *Das Altertum*, 2: *Die Germanen*, 3: *Das Mittelalter*, 4: *Neuzeit*, 5: *Neuzeit* (Fortsetzung, fortgesetzt von Emil Daniels), 6: *Neuzeit* (Fortsetzung, fortgesetzt von Emil Daniels), 7: *Neuzeit* (Schluss, fortgesetzt von Emil Daniels und Otto Hainz)]).

B. *The Transformation of Military History as a Specialist Domain of Knowledge*

If we look at the current state of military history, the most striking fact, as we have already said, is both the explosion of works and of the ways in which these works are produced. As with any other specialised field of historical study, military history, too, has changed since 1938. Over the last twenty-three years especially, the places devoted to and the practices of military history have changed greatly, influenced also (but not exclusively) by the new technologies. Moreover, this has transformed the mutual hierarchies which in the course of time have developed in this field of study.

Before World War Two, military history was ‘produced’ mainly by those in the military, both on active service and retired, belonging or not to military institutions, above all military academies, often entrusted with the task of writing the ‘official’ histories. Alongside them, however, there was already a small number of academic scholars, the best of whom were already at the time responsible for the making of the ‘new military history’, i.e. of the most innovative research. Clearly, in addition to these two main groups, there were also journalists and veterans who wrote historical accounts and memoirs addressed to a wider audience, the distinction between their respective roles being very clear. Today the situation is still pretty much the same though new subjects have intervened. Most importantly, the hierarchies of relevance between the protagonists are changing, while military history is being ‘made’ in several other places and according to many other principles.

Putting aside, for a moment, any value judgment, it is undeniable that many different subjects ‘produce’ military history today.

There are still academic historians, many more today than there were in the past and more specialised, whose historiographical methods shall be discussed at length below.

There are above all military historians, though their profile has changed dramatically. There are no longer just a few officers on active service employed by Historical Offices or military history teachers at academies. Today the military education system is much more complex and widespread than in the past and more and more officers employed at many levels in that system deal with military history (for example with ‘learned lessons’), though sometimes they are officers or technicians who have not received any kind of formal academic training in history. There are still historians employed by national historical offices (of a single national armed force or, more and more frequently, of multi-national forces), but there are now more and more historians *per se*, employed by international or multinational military organisations (by NATO’s Supreme Command, for instance, or in the military institutions of the European Union).

In addition, these days, the history of the overseas operations of national and multi-national units, before ever reaching Historical Offices, is collected, organised and even written by ‘unit historians’, who sometimes, though not always and not necessarily, have had an academic education (Ph.D.). They can sometimes be called in and asked to save images, reports, files (pdf, .doc and .jpg) before these are deleted from the personal computers of the units engaged in action, which obviously have other things than history on their minds. There are also the archivists who work for the military archives, which are sometimes deposited in local or national public archives and sometimes retained in the services. These archivists, too, write military history: they compile source inventories and they divulge information in specialised magazines and at the conferences in which they participate. Lastly, national armed forces and many military units have created their own museums some of which are dedicated to a specific war. Some are also privately owned and receive some financial support from the state and the armed forces. Not all these museums attract as many visitors as the Imperial War Museum in London, the *Invalides* in Paris, the *Центральный музей*

Великой Отечественной войны (Museum of the Great Patriotic War) in Moscow or the *Heeresgeschichtliches Museum* in Vienna, and few of them are as innovative as the recently founded *Militärhistorisches Museum der Bundeswehr* in Dresden. Whether managed by civilians or the military, none of them would be in a position to carry out their work or to set up new temporary or permanent exhibitions if they did not invest in continuous historical research on and expansion of their own collections. In conclusion, those who are permanently involved in the ‘making’ of military history today are greater in kind and in number than they were 75 years ago.

While there are still academic and military historians, a kind of ‘third sector’ has grown over the last decades. Technological change and the drastic fall in the number of publications (above all, though not exclusively, of those online) has promoted the sector’s visibility and organisation. They are primarily made up of civilians, although in this case, too, the profiles and expertise involved have expanded considerably. Here are a few examples. The number of those who write historical novels set during past and present wars has greatly increased. After all, during the five decades of the cold war and the last two decades of post-bipolarism (which were also seven decades of ever changing conflicts), war ‘sold well’ in bookstores and on news-stands. Nor should we forget defence correspondents writing for daily newspapers and magazines who more and more, though never enough, should allow public opinion to control military actions and the way in which military budgets which have been approved by parliaments are to be used, both in times of peace and war – a role of control by the public which only a few news agencies could and wanted to assume prior to World War Two. Television and radio documentary writers discuss the history of wars often carrying out their own more or less detailed research in traditional or iconographic military archives. Even the advisors of great historical drama films are, in their own way, ‘making’ military history and helping to produce works which have an enormously wider impact than erudite military history books by conventional scholars. A good Hollywood (or Bollywood) film on wars in Ancient Greece, Vietnam, Iraq or Afghanistan is often based on considerable reading and research and it can affect the imagination of such a vast audience that it cannot be compared with the number of readers of a scholarly book. In order to write military history today it is sufficient to sign up to the online discussion network ‘H-War’, where scholars, military officers both retired or on active service and amateurs participate as equal members. It would be short-sighted for academic and military historians to look with disdain at what these people do, simply judging it as mere popularisation, or to overlook the personal experiences and new conclusions they sometimes come to – as indeed it would have been for military historians to ignore Febvre and Bloch’s criticism back in the thirties.

The new technologies have contributed radically to this new way of ‘making’ military history. Editors of military history entries on Wikipedia and similar enterprises pride themselves on their extensive reading and on the professional way they re-edit the available information, adding research on specific issues when needed – the results of which, however, are not met with universal approval. Zero grade military historians, i.e. novices, would include the many bloggers specialising in military issues who relate their own or other people’s combat experiences, sometimes focusing exclusively on the single military unit they are somehow fanatical experts in. Many unknown authors, ‘weekend military historians’, spend a vast portion of their time organising websites and portals, striving to bring some sort of order into a vast bank of disparate knowledge and a good deal of chaos –often adding to both: copying, scanning, republishing images, battle orders, articles and books on military history covering a huge variety of issues. Furthermore, if the reliability of their work often raises doubts among the most rigorous academic historians, a list of those who make military history must most definitely include administrators of the official websites of the different national armed forces. The time for vast official reports on the two World Wars has passed, and maybe today is the time for the author who writes a short text that fits into a screen – each text being by no means less official, when promoted by the armed forces.

There can be little doubt that some of the functions of the new military historians of the digital era were already present, let us say during Gutenberg's era. However, it is clear that their increasing number and above all their impact have redoubled over the last two decades. It is not always possible to dismiss their work as vulgarisation since that is not necessarily the case.

Finally, why exclude other people keen on military history who, at their best, produce some innovative research? The re-enactors for example, who are a specific product and an evolution (someone would say an involution) of the ever increasing free time, wealth, and to some extent of the widespread historical knowledge which characterises the wealthiest societies. Their research into buttons and boots, uniforms and weapons – when seriously undertaken – adds not only useful knowledge, which can be employed during parades at celebrations and local festivals or gunfire salutes in the woods over the weekends, but can also add to the most interesting social history of armies and wars. Similarly, those who write war-games rules make military history, too: if before World War Two this domain involved only a handful of people and a few of the highest ranking staff officers, then, during the years of the economic boom, it came to include a vast audience of board games players. More recently, with the transition from board to digital games, the audience has further increased, while the need for the accurate knowledge and quantification of the history of one battle or campaign or another has become even more pressing, obliging the rule writers for these games to become more and more professional.

It is clear then, that from 1938 to the present the professional field of military history has been steadily expanding. Alongside the two traditional groups, a third has grown and become more organised and has also specialised and professionalised to some extent. To gain a first impression, one need only browse the pages and discussions hosted on H-War (and on the more recent H-Minerva). This is perhaps the fate of all specialised knowledge today, and there is no reason why military history should be exempt from this. Without losing sight of the different components, the different levels of originality and scientific innovation, it is important that the community of military historians should acknowledge the existence of such a complex framework. Besides, mutual recognition would entail an equally mutual challenge to raise the quality of the research, from which the entire community would benefit.

It would be naïve simply to rejoice in the growth of this third sector. It has, in fact, created, and presumably could continue to create, serious problems: relational problems between experts in the same field of study, language problems in inside communications, problems of mutual recognition and of control over the different competences, and problems of accountability and reliability – two things which are essential to any democracy and above all to areas of knowledge as delicate as are those related to war and peace. Despite the increase in absolute terms in the number of academic positions, clearly today's boom in military history has led to a reduction, at least in relative terms, in the amount of space available to academic historians. Given that the number of those responsible for specific and financially supported research has increased, while the number (in relative though not absolute terms) of those who carry out more basic and impartial research has decreased, the resulting risks should be apparent to all - not only in the moulding of public opinion on such pivotal issues as war and peace (past and present), but also in the training of military officers. When examining the impact the revolution in military affairs has had on the most recent operations, for example, in terms of reliability in a military academy, what kind of different conclusions could be generated by the study of a text (a book, a film, a documentary or a website) produced by a computer technology corporation which holds contracts for software of the 'future soldier' kind, when compared to the conclusions generated by a text produced by a skilled university scholar who is impartial and uninvolved in the 'military-industrial complex'? What might be the resulting risks, in the field of military history, too, from the proliferation of knowledge that

has not been tried and tested by the quest for truth – with all its limits – but is motivated by partial interests?

This is why we believe that a re-examination of the developments that have occurred in international military history over the last 75 years must consider more than a mere enquiry into historiographical method⁷. Over this period there has been an explosion of military history and of military-historical research but also a silent questioning of the traditional mutual hierarchies. Once, in accordance with the claim of Erasmus, it was said *dulce bellum inexpertis*; more recently, in the period of the establishment of the higher military echelons during the XVIIIth and XIXth century, it was held that a certain degree of expertise was required in order to understand ‘the face of battle’; even more recently, and especially after the two catastrophic World Wars, many people thought that only those who had fought could describe them: the many atrocities and innovations soldiers had witnessed having reached such an extent that veterans alone were the ones who could legitimately understand them. Compared to all this, today there is something more: it is the risk that the specialised military-historical knowledge of many, sometimes enthusiastic, new experts in the field of military history could be exempt from doing impartial research and from the quality control which should (in theory) be carried out by academic historians– something which would produce a drastic transformation if not a veritable revolution within the previous mutual hierarchies.

The transformation and diffusion of knowledge in today’s knowledgeable society, always impact on and transform old relationships, and it is this that is occurring in the field of military history, too. How many pages, and with good reason, have been filled on the contrast between military officers and academic historians! Even if they do not eradicate these images and oppositions, today the new technologies and expertise in the field of military history inevitably transform them. For instance, military archives were once based on the work of professional and competent officers, and the distinction between civilians (archive users) and the military (archivists) was clear-cut. Today, however, the more farsighted states and aware armed forces employ the skills (both in-house as well as out-sourcing) of professional civilian archivists: the opposition between military and civilians has evolved into one between managers and users, or between professional and non professional. Another change has occurred inside the military institution itself. Internally, military history traditionally dealt with the reconstruction of the past, the building of identity, and

⁷ For an introduction cf. Matthew Hughes - William J. Philpott (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). Two very different and not entirely satisfactory works are: Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London: Routledge, 2004); and Stephen Morillo - Michael F. Pavkovic, *What is military history?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

Debates on the nature and utility of military history are frequent. For some reflections on these issues cf. Williamson Murray - Richard Hart Sinnreich (eds.), *The Past as Prologue: The Importance of History to the Military Profession*, edited by (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Useful are also: André Corvisier, *Dictionnaire d'art et d'histoire militaires* (Paris, Puf, 1988); then Id. (ed.), *A Dictionary of Military History* (English revised and expanded edition by John Childs (ed.), London: Blackwell, 1994); and *The Oxford Companion to Military History*, edited by Richard Holmes, with Hew Strachan, Chris Bellamy, Hugh Bicheno (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Charles Messenger (ed.), *Reader's Guide to Military History* (London - Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001).

For some evaluations, most of them on national contexts see: Allan R. Millett, ‘The Study of Military History in the United States since World War II’, in: P.H. Kamphuis (ed.), *Military History Around the World (= Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis*, vol. 14 (1991), pp. 109-129; E. M. Coffmann, ‘The Course of Military History in the United States since World War II’, in: *Journal of Military History*, vol. 61 (1997) no. 4; John A. Lynn, ‘The Embattled Future of Academic Military History’, in: *Journal of Military History*, vol. 61 (1997) no. 4; *Deutsche Militärhistoriker von Hans Delbrück bis Andreas Hillgruber*, im Auftrag der Deutschen Kommission für Militärgeschichte und des Militärgeschichtlichen Forschungsamtes herausgegeben von Hans Ehlert (Potsdam: Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 2010); Hubert Heyriès (ed.), *Histoire militaire, études de défense et politiques de sécurité. Des années 1960 à nos jours* (Paris-Bruxelles: Institut de stratégie et des conflits - Commission française d’histoire militaire - Economica, 2012); Nicola Labanca (ed.), *Storie di guerra ed eserciti: Gli studi italiani di storia militare negli ultimi venticinque anni* (Milano: Unicopli, 2011).

outwardly-oriented propaganda. In the past it was not infrequent for the same officers or the same office to be in charge of all these duties. What might be the consequences of the fact that today these duties are usually performed by several officers and offices, which receive varying degrees of visibility and different amounts of funding – with Historical Offices often enduring difficulties and being left behind when compared to those offices responsible for public relations, websites, exhibitions and presentations to encourage new recruits, etcetera?

Moreover, we should not forget one of the most profoundly serious problems of the last century: that which concerns gender relations. For centuries military history has been ‘a man’s world’. Since the revolution in the field of historiographical studies in the seventies and eighties, there have been more and more female researchers, increasingly experienced and innovative. Today, when the armed forces are increasingly differentiated along the lines of gender, it would be useful to remember that the (sometimes excellent) historical offices of some armed forces or inter-forces have been directed by women, either military or civilian, and that the archivist in charge of NATO’s Historical Archives today is a woman. The old gender division between male archive directors and female researchers is therefore evolving or is becoming more complex: not so much between men and women, but between experienced and inexperienced or, a distinction that has always existed and is independent of gender, between archivists who welcome free access and those who mistrust the right to free consultation.

The transformation on the international stage that has occurred over the last decades has obviously had different traits in different countries. Where the academic presence of military historians was strong, it has strengthened and grown. If this presence was recent, then it did not always survive. Finally, where a ‘civil’ military history was present in the tradition of academies of sciences, rather than in universities, for instance in East European countries, further problems arose. The armed forces everywhere have Historical Offices (or more and more often there are multi-forces offices), but their specific role in the production and distribution of military-historical research varies greatly from one country to another. In some countries they compete with military history departments of the military education system. Moreover, the national commissions of military history reflect this diversity, and it is difficult to find two of them which are alike.

While traditional military history, either civilian made by scholars or military made by officers, is extremely varied, over the last decades the increase in the number of those keen on *militaria* has been constant everywhere – in Western as well as Eastern Europe, from North to South, in the US as well as elsewhere –, at least judging from the circumstances we have delineated above: an expansion of the military history presence on the web, the growth of magazines and fanzines, of re-enactors groups and so on. Obviously, these phenomena reflect different national and local traditions, and differ in style and intensity. Nevertheless, the growth of this third sector has been swift and widespread.

The impression, at least in terms of quantity, is that it is surpassing, if not submerging, the other two sectors.

This should not necessarily be interpreted as a risk or as a threat: it is important to keep the overall framework in mind. The importance of the function of quality control and of the promotion of historiographical renewal, of which academic military history has always been guarantor, not just for itself but for the whole discipline, has not lessened but, under the new set of circumstances, has actually increased. The relevance of and opportunities for collaboration between academic and ‘fully-uniformed’ military historians have not diminished, but are becoming a more pressing objective. This is in the interests not only of the quality of the research, but perhaps even more of the armed forces themselves: in an increasingly informed society where there is a growing number of news agencies, the education of officers (historical in this case) is transmitted less and less by agencies within the armed forces alone; even though these have multiplied, military-historical

knowledge now reaches officers also from without. Would it not be in the interests of the armed forces if this knowledge were of increasingly higher quality? In many countries people no longer talk about a civilian culture as opposed to a military culture, but of a 'culture of Defence': would it not be convenient if the basic features of this culture of defence (in the field of history, too), were of a high quality and common to civilians and the military?

In conclusion, it is true that over the last three quarters of a century the number of those interested in military history has increased enormously. However, their profile has changed, and the prism has multiplied its facets. This must be looked at with interest, and free of any complex of superiority – military or civilian. New problems, as well as new opportunities have arisen. On the one hand, a huge accumulation of knowledge has been generated. On the other, it is creating new ways of addressing the old problem of how to check the quality and to validate this new, widespread knowledge scientifically. Given the delicacy of matters relating to war and peace and in view of the obvious political repercussions (both direct and indirect), the problem should not concern solely scholars or those who take a direct interest. In short, it is not simply a historiographical matter. The growth in the available knowledge is not just the result of evolution in historiographical methodology. As will be seen, there have been great changes in *how* military history is made, they also concern the questions of *who*, *where* and *why* military history is made. The history of military historiography, as well as the history of historiography in general, should not be simply a history of ideas (which, nonetheless, we shall be looking at from now on), but, first and foremost, a history of practices, spaces and hierarchies – in a word, of structural changes and of the modes of production of knowledge.

In the next few pages, we shall move from the practices and spaces of military history to its methods and contents. However, 75 years after its birth, it would be desirable if the ICMH, too, was to reflect upon the structural changes in the military historian's profession which we have been discussing so far.

C. Methods, Themes and Chronology of Military History Research

Some people trace the origins of military history back to the origin of the historical narrative itself, i.e. with Thucydides and Xenophon. Regardless of how far back one would like to go when tracing these origins, we can safely say that in the second half of the XIXth century three interweaving phenomena produced a thoroughly modern situation. 1. the establishment of huge mass armies based on conscription, with extensive and qualified bodies of officers and troops supplied with the most up-to-date equipment, the fruits of industrial progress; 2. the formalisation, within these new armies, of the chief of staff systems; 3. the professionalization of the academic education system through the foundation of new universities and the establishment of an organic academic system (which, in fact, also involved the military education system, through the foundation of war schools, military academies and so on). Men who were to be trained as officers, an ever more professional army and a modern academic system were to form the base of the new military history. As distant as the origins of the military history narrative were, henceforward the scenario was to change (long before the foundation of the ICMH).

The ‘new’ military history, or modern military history, was the result of the intertwining of these three factors and it occurred inside the military academies, the higher education military institutes, and in the historical offices of the armed forces. Between 1870 and 1914 this system had spread throughout all military institutions of Western and European countries. Then World War One broke out. Alongside the many devastating effects this war had, a positive outcome should be remembered: the strengthening of Historical Offices at the level of high ranking officials and, more generally, the institutions of military education. The former were entrusted with the task of collecting the vastest possible documentation on the conflict and explaining why it was that for five years the commanders and armed forces of an entire continent had failed to win a war for which they had been preparing for decades, but had instead sacrificed the lives of millions of men and women. The institutions were charged with the dissemination of this knowledge among the ranks of the officers.

Though developed within military institutions, it would be wrong to think that the ‘new’ military history was or perceived itself as independent. An example will suffice: in Germany, the official history (made by the military) and the academic history (made by scholars) coexisted. One of its first representatives was Hans Delbrück, who from 1900 to 1920 was to lay the foundation of the new military historiography, centred on universities that were, however, engaged in a non confrontational and dialectic exchange with the German military establishment.⁸ Initially, the weakest trait of academic military history was that it was very limited: if it is true that, generally speaking, at the end of the XVIIIth and beginning of the XIXth century positivist history consisted, for the most part, in diplomatic, political and military history, it is also true that the latter was written by what was still a very limited number of academics.

From then on (and, as we have seen above, until the more recent rise of the third area), the writing of military history rested on these two pillars: one within the military, the other within the academic world. It was under such circumstances that the ICMH was founded. It started to operate just after Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre had advanced their criticism⁹. In fact, the harsh criticism of the “Annales” targeted and hit many of the flaws that the official works and those written by veterans had. It is less clear whether their criticism had a braking effect on the production of academic history, which was anyway limited in quantity before Bloch and Febvre’s attack against

⁸ Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*.

⁹ Müller (ed.), *Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre et les Annales d'histoire économique et sociale: Correspondance*.

the *histoire bataille*, and was to remain so in the following years. This, in brief, was the situation three-quarters of a century ago.

But what about today? A point of arrival is less easy to identify, in view of the boom and diversification of military history which we have mentioned above. Opinions, too, can vary and be influenced by the different historical contexts and needs which have meanwhile arisen. A few years ago Jeremy Black supplied a general yet concise comment:

- a. Eurocentrism, more specifically a focus on Europe, especially Western Europe and North America, or rather the USA.
- b. A technological bias in explaining military capability, and a fascination with technology in accounting for military developments, more specifically the 'machinization' of war.
- c. A focus on leading powers and dominant military systems, leading to a paradigm/diffusion model of military capability and change.
- d. A separation of land from sea conflict in most analysis.
- e. A focus on state-to-state conflict, rather than on the use of force within states. This is qualified in the case of civil wars only when these apparently correspond to state-to-state wars, as, most prominently, with the English and the American Civil Wars.
- f. A lack of focus on political 'tasking' in the setting of force structures, doctrines and goals, and in the judging of military success.¹⁰

Here we do not wish simply to switch from Bloch (and Febvre) to Black. Their criticism cannot be fully embraced. Nor – and most importantly – did Black exhaust all possible complaints vis-à-vis most recent military history (for instance, there is no mention of the gender bias which still seriously affects military-historical research). Taking all this into consideration, it is nevertheless true that since 1929 (or 1939) the interests and methodologies of military history have changed considerably.

If we browse through the last 75 years which separate the foundation of the ICMH and the present day, we can easily observe when and how much they have evolved and changed. For reasons of space, we shall limit ourselves over the next few pages to some general indicators and mention just a few of the most relevant authors and their works.

C.1. Before and After the Foundation of the ICMH: a Transition

As we have seen, the two year period 1938-39 did not mark a turning point. The great change in military history had already happened in the shape of World War One. This event had shown very clearly the importance war had in world history. After 1918, for example, the communities of historians from all countries – from the US (Quincy Wright¹¹) to Russia (Pitirim Sorokin¹²) – became increasingly desirous of measuring the weight and dimensions of war with greater precision than in the past.

While scholars of the new social and political sciences counted the wars in human history, applying new methods of enquiry, many historians remained happy with their own old methods. Until World War One there was still the old positivist military history, which was good from the point of view of the collection of documentation, but poor on the theoretical front – for example

¹⁰ Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History*, p. ix.

¹¹ Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942).

¹² Pitirim Sorokin, 'A Neglected Factor of War', in: *American Sociological Review*, III (Aug. 1938), pp. 475-486; Id., 'The Cause and Factors of War and Peace', in: *American Historical Association, Report*, III (1942), pp. 83-95; Id., 'The Conditions and Prospects for a World Without War', in: *American Journal of Sociology*, XLIX (March 1944), pp. 441-449; and Id., *Man and Society in Calamity: The Effects of War, Revolution, Famine, Pestilence upon Human Mind, Behavior, Social Organization and Cultural Life* (New York: Dutton, 1946).

John William Fortescue's macroscopic work on the history of the British army¹³. These works often looked at war and the military institution from a localised perspective, were keen on dynastic legitimisation (Fortescue was the royal librarian), and focused mainly on field operations and conduct in combat. The World War had demonstrated that war could not be won on the battle field alone, thus condemning to the realm of the irrelevant such prospects of analysis. It is true that the best military-historical research had already understood this, even before World War One: at the end of the XIX century Hans Delbrück had explained that war and the military institution were to be included *im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*.¹⁴ Therefore, from the point of view of academic historiography, WW1 definitely confirmed that military history had to be embedded into the political (and economic, institutional etc.) history of each nation. Naturally, this lesson on methodology influenced not only the military-historical research on contemporary events, but also that dealing with the ancient, medieval and early modern times.

At the time, in fact, although there were differences between countries and in the objects of study and methods, internationally there was still a certain basic unanimity in the best military-historical research. It was as if everybody converged towards Delbrück. The legacy of the best positivist and XIXth century historiography, which had offered valid documentary works and great narratives¹⁵ in the field of military history, had already been heading in the same direction. Above all, historians (whether they were ancient history specialists, medievalists or modernists) had interests in common: authors of the best works – from Holmes to Ritterling, from Kromayer to Erben and Lot, from Oman to the younger Ritter and Pieri,¹⁶ were no longer interested in the great battle, but in institutions and politics instead.

World War One had also greatly stimulated the military history produced from within the armed forces, a more official and operationally-oriented history. As we have already seen, the conflict prompted the armed forces in every country to collect the widest possible amount of documentation and to try and explain such a prolonged war. Every War and Naval ministry started publishing great official reports, consisting of many volumes appearing over several years and focusing on battles and campaigns. While the academic historiography looked at society, the historical offices looked at the armed forces and battles. In short, it was towards this second tendency that Febvre and Bloch, both officers during the Great War, directed their attack. The *histoire bataille* explained neither that conflict, nor the others. From this perspective, their criticism was legitimate, and it still is today. If anything, an excessive tone of criticism could be traced in the fact that, thanks to academic research, neither was all military history *histoire bataille* (again, thinking of Delbrück), nor was all official military history which was produced by Historical Offices, a history of battles. It is a well-known fact that officers who were historians focused their greatest efforts on reconstructing battles and campaigns. However, since the war had produced the militarisation and mobilisation of wide portions of society, this was not enough: military historians were therefore forced to deal with, for example, economic management, food supplies, the organisation of propaganda, soldiers' religious beliefs and superstitions, and so on. The military

¹³ John William Fortescue, *A History of the British Army* (London: Macmillan, 1899-1930 - 13 vols.); Id., *Military History: Lectures Delivered at Trinity College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1914).

¹⁴ Hans Delbrück, *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*.

¹⁵ Ettore Ciccotti, *La guerra e la pace nel mondo antico* (Torino: Bocca, 1901).

¹⁶ Johannes Kromayer - Georg Veith, unter Mitarbeit von August Köster, Ernst von Nischer von Falkenhof und Erwin Schramm, *Heerwesen und Kriegführung der Griechen und Römer* (München: C.H.Beck, 1928); T. Rice Holmes, *The Roman Republic and the Founder of the Empire* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923, 3 vols.); Emil Ritterling, 'Legio' in: *Paulys Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, neue Bearbeitung begonnen von Georg Wissowa, Bd. XII, 1, 1924 (Stuttgart: 1963), coll. 1186-1328, u. Bd. XII, 2, 1925 (Stuttgart: 1963), coll. 1329-1829; Wilhelm Erben, *Kriegsgeschichte des Mittelalters* (München und Berlin: Oldenbourg, 1929); F. Lot, *L'art militaire et les armées au moyen age*, Paris: 1946; Gerhard Ritter, *Friedrich der Grosse: Ein historisches Profil*, Leipzig: Quelle und Mayer, 1936.

historical offices were not the Carnegie Foundation¹⁷ (which started operating precisely because the official and traditional military history was no longer sufficient), but neither were they entirely indifferent to these new needs. That the military history of World War One could not be merely *histoire événementielle* is proven by the fact that in order to reconstruct battles, the Historical Offices had to gather documents on and to reconstruct the structure, the organisation, let us say the constitutional features of the military establishment during the years of the war. An example will suffice: the Italian Historical Office of the General Staff began the publication of the official account/report entitled *L'esercito italiano nella grande guerra, 1915-1918*¹⁸ [*The Italian Army in the Great War, 1915-1918*], which once concluded would consist of almost thirty volumes, but alongside (and even before) this it had to study and publish the *Riassunti storici dei corpi e comandi nella guerra 1915-1918*¹⁹ [*Historical Summaries on the Forces and Commands in the 1915-1918 War*], which included information on the brigades, divisions and regiments, and *Le grandi unità nella guerra italo-austriaca, 1915-18*²⁰ [*The Great Units in the Italo-Austrian War, 1915-18*], which contained information on the forces, army corps etc. With these works, whose publication started before the first great official report, the military historians wrote a structural history rather than an *histoire événementielle*.

Alongside works by scholarly and military historians, the debate over World War One flooded the field of mainstream publications. Generals and officers (both retired and still on active service) with their critical opinions; veterans with their accounts; men and women who had played a role in the propaganda war on the home front; and the more genuine political debate which had opened up on the outcomes of the war: there was a vast number of people who wrote the military history of the Great War – and this is understandable, since it had been a global conflict which had mobilised not just the armed forces but entire societies as well.

All this had a tremendous impact on the way the history of the war and of the armed forces was perceived. From then on, military history would be (and had to be) written *à la* Delbrück.

Twenty years later, in 1938-39, all this was almost out-of-date.

Public interest in the origins and military actions of World War One, which once stimulated journalists and witnesses, had declined. Many military historians had concluded (or were about to conclude) the official Reports on the Great War: consequently, personnel at the Historical Offices were being increasingly reduced. Nor was there any significant increase in the number of scholarly historians. Only their methodology was more conscious and robust, having once interiorised Delbrück's lesson and mediated Febvre and Bloch's critique. Thus armed, they had returned to the study of war and armies of all eras. In brief, historiography had made progress. John Huizinga, in a chapter of *Homo ludens*, had highlighted the essential role played by culture in making of history

¹⁷ In the Italian case, for instance, the Carnegie Foundation played a vital role in the publication of essential studies in the fields of history, economics and sociology, which also had a repercussion on military history. See for instance Giuseppe Prato, *Il Piemonte e gli effetti della guerra sulla sua vita economica e sociale* (Bari: Laterza, 1925); Giorgio Mortara, *La salute pubblica in Italia durante e dopo la Guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1925); Riccardo Bachi, *L'alimentazione e la politica annonaria in Italia*, with an appendix on *Il rifornimento dei viveri dell'esercito italiano* by Gaetano Zingali, (Bari: Laterza, 1926); Alberto De' Stefani, *La legislazione economica della guerra* (Bari: Laterza, 1926); Luigi Einaudi, *La guerra e il sistema tributario italiano* (Bari: Laterza, 1927); Arrigo Serpieri, *La guerra e le classi rurali italiane* (Bari: Laterza, 1930); Luigi Einaudi, *La condotta economica e gli effetti sociali della guerra italiana* (Bari: Laterza, 1933).

¹⁸ *L'esercito italiano nella grande guerra, 1915-1918* (Roma: Ministero della guerra, Comando del Corpo di Stato Maggiore, Ufficio storico, 1927-1988).

¹⁹ *Riassunti storici dei corpi e comandi nella guerra 1915-1918* (Ministero della guerra, Comando del Corpo di Stato Maggiore, Ufficio storico, 1924-1931).

²⁰ *Le grandi unità nella guerra italo-austriaca, 1915-18* (Ministero della guerra, Comando del Corpo di Stato Maggiore, Ufficio storico, 1926).

and especially when dealing with war, and not merely the wars of the ‘Autumn of the middle ages’.²¹ Charles H. Oman himself, writing a history of the art of war in the middle ages (war as art, just like Delbrück’s *Kriegskunst*), did not limit his work to the technical aspects but approached the issue from a much wider perspective.²²

Understandably, it was the period 1939-1945 rather than 1938-1939 which had a stronger impact on the writing of military history. If World War One had already diminished the scientific value of the *histoire bataille*, World War Two nullified it completely. The reconstruction of battles and campaigns did not disappear: the history of military operations was still useful, but it became increasingly complex and difficult to write, given the dimensions of the armies, the geographical extent of the campaigns and the multi-national composition of the armies. However, this reconstruction could hardly reflect the general image of a war which had been as global as it had been total. Above all, this task came to be seen as one which concerned academic historians ever less, with the result that it was left to military historians.

Even during the war, profiting from the experience they had accumulated when studying World War One, the military historians started afresh to collect documentation on the on-going conflict. Military history, once again, had to cover all those areas pertinent to the armed forces: from strategy to battles, from the great units to the different specialisations, from mobilisation of the economy and society to the occupation forces and propaganda. The general staffs, above all those belonging to the US and the Soviet Union, were *de facto* about to write a global history. It was not, of course, an impartial history: each country had to write about and justify its political and military conduct during the war. Moreover, documentation and history could serve as a weapon in the war or in its aftermath; propaganda, war communication, documentation and history were tightly intermingled, to the extent that they faded one into the other. For instance, the armed forces kept in mind something that World War One had shown very clearly: public opinion is moved by stories of atrocities. For this reason, they all tried to document the atrocities committed by the enemy (and to hide their own). The case of the documentation gathered by the United Nations on the German extermination camps, or on Japanese war crimes in China, is a sadly well-known case in point, as is, on a different front, the case of the criminal war fought on the Eastern front on behalf of the Nazi regime by the Wehrmacht against the military, political and racial enemy that was the Red Army, the Soviet Union’s Communist Party and, more generally, the Slavs. But also in the case of those operations that were less dramatic, such as the campaign for Italy in 1943-45, all the armies involved started to document the massacres committed by the enemy: the German units which occupied Northern Italy documented those committed by the anti-fascist Italian Resistance movement, while the Anglo-American forces documented the massacres and slaughters committed by the Wehrmacht against the Italian population, who it suspected of helping the Resistance. The documents about and the history of the war were to be of use in the aftermath of the war. (To complete the example illustrated above: the Italians belonging to the “Southern Kingdom” – who fought with the Anglo-Americans – who in 1943-45 documented the tortures committed by Germans, were the same Italians who, in 1940-43, had documented the atrocities committed by the Yugoslav Resistance movement against the Italian occupation, while trying to hide those committed by themselves).

²¹ Jan Huizinga, *Homo ludens: Versuch einer Bestimmung des Spielmentes der Kultur* (Amsterdam: Pantheon Akademische Verlagsanstalt, 1939).

²² Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1924 [vol. 1: A.D.378-1278, 2: 1278-1485]). Cf. also the first edition of *A History of the Art of War: The Middle Ages from the Fourth to the Fourteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1905); and Id., *A History of the Art of War in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Methuen, 1937).

In the meantime, academic military history, too, had been thrown into the conflict. It was a widespread phenomenon: every country tried to exploit all available specialist expertise to achieve military ends. There are well-known cases of professors at Oxford, Cambridge, the Sorbonne, as well as at the prestigious German universities who were enrolled as informants, experts, translators, secret agents and were even parachuted behind enemy lines. There are the renowned cases of true research teams (from psychologists to sociologists) in the US, which received substantial funding and were directly engaged in preparations for war: the former, for instance, dealt with the interrogation of German prisoners of war, in order to understand the strong resistance of the units they belonged to; the latter tried to understand what kept units united, their own as well as the enemy's – this research would later be included in the series *The American Soldier*.²³ Nor were historians completely forgotten during the war. Thus in the US, esteemed historians, both American and German fleeing the Nazi regime, were called upon to enquire into the reasons behind modern and contemporary European wars. The fruits of this collaborative research appeared in 1943 in a volume of more than half a million pages under the explicit title: *Makers of Modern Strategy. Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* by the prestigious Princeton University Press. The volume was edited by Edward Mead Earle and benefited from the collaboration of, among others, Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, R.R. Palmer and Hans Rothfels, Hans Speier and Theodor Ropp.²⁴ This volume quickly acquired classic status. This clearly exemplifies the fact that military history, too, was mobilised: not just contemporary historians, but modernists and medievalists as well. (The aforementioned works by Q. Wright, P. Sorokin etc., published in the same period, showed a similar tendency).

World War Two, then, was to promote progress in methodology, intense activity by military historians and their mobilisation. The end of the war and the beginning of the Cold War intensified these tendencies. Official military history was completely engaged in the reconstruction of a conflict of such enormous proportions. Academic historians went back to the research they had been obliged to interrupt, but a considerable amount of time was to pass before really new, innovative works of military history in the fields of Ancient, Mediaeval and Early Modern history as well as of the history of the first half of the 20th century, would appear. The dynamics that had existed at the end of World War One returned, heightened this time by the sharp ideological clash that divided the international community from East to West as well as within each separate country. Europe was divided, and what had once been a (small) community of military historians had to deal with the rise of new (ideological) boundaries.

Not all the military history that was thought and published in those difficult post-war years could be considered methodologically up-to-date. The great military history abstracts were still the prerogative of freelance historians, who were frequently well-informed and often expert, but were nonetheless imbued with ideology and lacked any historiographical and methodological awareness. Among the many examples, there is John Frederick Charles Fuller's work on *Armament and History. A Study of the Influence of Armament on History from the Dawn of Classical Warfare to the Second World War*, published in 1946. Fuller, an armour officer, during the twenties and Thirt

²³ *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press [vol. 1: *The American Soldier : Adjustment During Army Life*, by Samuel A. Stouffer et al.; 2: *The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath*, by Samuel A. Stouffer et al.; 3: *Experiments on Mass Communication*, by Carl I. Hovland, Arthur A. Lumsdaine, and Fred D. Sheffield; 4: *Measurement and Prediction* by Samuel A. Stouffer et al.]). Cf. also Robert K. Merton and Paul F. Lazarsfeld (eds.), *Studies in the Scope and Method of "The American soldier"* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1950).

²⁴ Edward Mead Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, with the collaboration of Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944). See also Nicola Labanca, 'I due "Makers of modern strategy": guerra e società, storia e scienze sociali', preface to the Italian edition by Peter Paret (ed.), *Guerra e strategia nell'età contemporanea* (Genova: Marietti, 1992), pp. 7-32.

had been one of the most prolific writers to deal with military issues, and to place history at the services of his own ideological battles. He did so in 1932 with the volume *War and Western Civilization, 1832-1932. A Study of War as a Political Instrument and the Expression of Mass Democracy*, and he did it again in 1940 with *Decisive Battles. Their Influence upon History and Civilization*, a one thousand page work in two volumes. The 1946 work and the two volumes published in 1940 were the training ground for his *A Military History of the Western World*, in three volumes (1954-56). An interesting and ambitious work, rich in stimulating ideas for analysis, it was nonetheless little more than a history of operations, campaigns, battles, commanders and heroes.²⁵

It was a long way from Delbrück.

C.2. The Fifties and the Sixties: the Origins of the Renewal of Historiography

To move on, we shall now consider the ensuing twenty years: the fifties and the sixties.

Given that our reflections are to be on the international level, we cannot follow in detail what was different in each country and area of study. The dynamics pertaining to Ancient History are different from those of the history of the Middle Ages, as are those belonging to Early Modern and Contemporary history. The larger countries embarked on different areas of studies to those of smaller countries, and especially during the Cold War, eastern European countries were to follow different paths from those of Western Europe (this was to concern the history of the ICMH, too: in the aftermath of World War Two, an issue of the *Rimh* was edited by a Polish commission working on behalf of the exiled government in London rather than the legitimate government in Warsaw). Moreover, these two decades witnessed, for the last time, the division of the planet into colonising countries and colonised territories, half a million years after colonialism had begun (again, this was not devoid of interest for the history of the ICMH: France, which at the time was pivotal to the Commission, tried to have some of the RIHM's post-war publications edited by African countries who were about to gain independence, such as Algeria, or those which had recently become independent, such as Morocco). There were notable differences, but the best works of military history clearly demonstrated some common characteristics: considerable continuity with the previous period, though with some significant signs of discontinuity. This is why, relative to those two decades, one can talk about concomitance and the origins of the renewal of historiography.

It is these common themes concomitance that is most evident when leafing through the best military history of that period, beginning with the generations who were involved in its productions. If we put the best ancient, medieval and modernist military historians of the time together, we shall find that two generations worked side by side over these two decades. The elder, born in the XIXth century, had witnessed two World Wars and had a tried and tested methodology: it was the generation of Toynbee, Nef and Pieri.²⁶ Then there was the younger generation, which had been educated under the aegis of Delbrück, mediated by the older generation. They started to question the older generation's methodology and in their own research began to move away from the legacy they had inherited towards a military history which would be less political and institutional, despite the fact that they were still tightly bound to these issues. Brelich and Vernant, Harmand and

²⁵ F. C. Fuller, *Decisive Battles: Their Influence upon History and Civilization* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1940); Id., *Armament and History: A Study of the Influence of Armament on History from the Dawn of Classical Warfare to the Second World War* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1946); Id., *A Military History of the Western World* (New York: Da Capo, 1954-1955 [vol. 1: *From the earliest times to the battle of Lepanto*; 2: *From the defeat of the Spanish armada to the Battle of Waterloo*]).

²⁶ Arnold J. Toynbee, *Hannibal's Legacy: the Hannibalic War's Effects on Roman Life* (London - New York: Oxford University Press, 1965 - 2 vols.); John Ulric Nef, *War and Human Progress: an Essay on the Rise of Industrial Civilization* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950).

Verbruggen, Smail and Gaier were of this generation.²⁷ There were the first signs of change, but there was too a great deal of continuity between these two generations and the one that had come before.

In the meantime, the official military history continued along the path of collecting documents and writing about those involved in World War Two which it had started in 1945 (if not already in 1939). Each country and often each armed force had its own style (national, institutional), not to mention the personal style of each single author, in the writing of the official military history, but there were also several common traits. One was due to the complexity of the war vis-à-vis past wars. World War Two had consisted of: combined operations by corps of different armed forces of one country; coordinated operations by units of different nations; operations conducted on territories far away from the motherland; operations launched by allied joint commands and operations influenced more heavily than before by politicians' decisions. These circumstances, in fact, complicated matters for military historians, who were used to working exclusively with the support of 'their own' archives, while official reports, which did not resort to other sources and expertise, were less convincing than in the past. These trends were common to all, but some individual features did emerge: for example, the huge operations conducted by the victors (above all the US and the USSR) on the archives of the defeated countries, in order to confiscate and duplicate their military (and diplomatic) documents. Official military history proceeded on its course, all the time facing up to new difficulties.

Other challenges threatened contemporary military history. The first came from the new international political milieu created by the Cold War, which had contradictory consequences, both downgrading and upgrading military history.

On the one hand, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the US utterly shifted the interests of the armed forces of the main countries vis-à-vis history: what possible use could the study of the conventional past for an atomic future be? What military lessons (which had previously been the aim of the official military history) could now be taught by pre-nuclear wars? The devaluation of history stemmed from that tendency.

On the other, the atmosphere of ideological conflict that typified the Cold War era gave an almost exaggerated value to the reconstruction of the past. No general staff was over-inclined to explicitly criticise its own past actions, nor the actions of its predecessors: but in the interwar period there had been a debate, within the military too, on the direct and indirect strategies used during the Great War, on the role of mechanisation both in that and in future conflicts, etc.. To give a further example, during the era of imperialism (1870-1914) there had been a public debate, led by the military, over previous wars, including the Napoleonic wars and the Franco-Prussian war. This debate, in which both military and civilians participated, became difficult during the Cold War, being suddenly perceived by the military institutions as risky. Consequently, the political value of the most contemporary military history was emphasised to the detriment of the freedom of expression and debate. The fear of 'fifth columns' poisoned official historical debate.

²⁷ Angelo Brelich, *Guerre, agoni e culti nella Grecia arcaica* (Bonn: Rudolf Harbelt, 1961); J.-P. Vernant (ed.), *Problèmes de la guerre en Grèce ancienne* (Paris - La Haye: Mouton & Co., 1968), Giovanni Forni, 'Limes', in: Ettore De Ruggiero (ed.), *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità romane* (Roma: 1959), IV, 1, pp.1074-1184 & IV, 2, 1185-1380; Jacques Harmand, *L'armée et le soldat à Rome de 107 à 50 avant notre ère* (Paris: Picard, 1967); J.F. Verbruggen, *De Krijgskunst in West-Europa in de Middeleeuwen, IX tot begin XIV eeuw* (Bruxelles: Paleis der Academiën, 1954 [translated into English in 1977: *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe During the Middle Ages* (Amsterdam-N.Y.: Oxford: NorthHolland, 1977)]); R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare, 1097-1193* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956); Claude Gaier, *Art et organisation militaire dans la principauté de Liège et dans la comté de Looz au moyen âge* (Bruxelles: Palais des Académies, 1968).

Contradictorily, in an era of ideological and atomic war, military history became both less important and more delicate.

The second challenge was, perhaps, more traditional. At the end of World War Two a huge public debate started on the causes of the conflict, on the strategic decisions (for instance the unconditional surrender), on the conduct of this or that commander, similar to, but even wider than, the debate which followed World War One. Much as the debate twenty years before and earlier, it was encouraged by high ranking officers, former supreme commanders and also an immense number of memoirs written by officers of higher or lower rank and even by soldiers, a consequence of ever greater literacy and further growth of the publishing market. In many ways, all this published material diminished the impact of the contribution of official military historians. Notwithstanding the fact that they controlled the archives and based their studies on unpublished documents, the exceptional quantity of publications (which military historians had neither the means nor the desire to control) threatened to submerge the official military history. These two fields were in fact complementary, though they were often thought to be alternatives.

The third challenge, even in the fifties and sixties, derived from the military juncture. Military historical offices had to write not only the history of World War Two (and sometimes to finish writing about World War One). The political conflict of the Cold War years created new possibilities for military conflict: at that time, for example, the Korean War and the Vietnam War (at the time still underestimated). Moreover, those European countries which had colonies had to fight wars against anti-colonial freedom movements: of the other theatres of conflict, Hanoi and Algiers were cause for concern and military operations for Paris; Kuala Lumpur, Aden, Nairobi and Suez for London. The historical knowledge of the military colonial past could have been of use to such operations: but the attention of the official military history of the European colonial powers was directed elsewhere (for example, as we have seen, on the history of World War Two). This often resulted in the military mistakes made in one colony being replicated in another.

Despite these many challenges, the official military history (mainly and understandably concerned with the recently concluded World War), continued to follow its path. For its part, the military history written in universities also carried on. The study of wars in ancient times, in the middle ages and early modern age continued to be a clear priority for scholarly military historians. All these areas of study made significant progress and in some cases there was a systematisation of their knowledge. Sacred national memories were to prove a major influence. In 1967 in the UK, for instance, David Geoffrey Chandler published his vast *The Campaigns of Napoleon*;²⁸ in Italy Piero Pieri re-edited one of his previous publications on the Renaissance and wrote a massive history of the Italian Risorgimento.²⁹ In some cases, these years laid the foundation for future debates which would be of great importance: in 1955 the British historian Michael Roberts, studying the Swedish army, introduced the concept of the Early Modern 'military revolution'.³⁰

The most important work in the field of European military history was perhaps Gerhard Ritter's great reconstruction on *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk: Das Problem des «Militarismus» in Deutschland (1954-1968)*.³¹ Ritter, who was born in 1888, was already a leading figure in the

²⁸ David G. Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (London: Macmillan, 1966).

²⁹ Piero Pieri, *La crisi militare italiana nel Rinascimento nelle sue relazioni con la crisi politica ed economica* (Napoli: Ricciardi, 1934); Id., *Il Rinascimento e la crisi militare italiana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1952); and Id., *Storia militare del Risorgimento: Guerre e insurrezioni* (Torino: Einaudi, 1962).

³⁰ Michael Roberts, *The Military Revolution, 1560-1660: An inaugural lecture delivered before the Queen's University of Belfast* (Belfast: Marjory Boyd, 1956); and his previous: Id., *Gustavus Adolphus: A History of Sweden, 1611-1632* (London: Longmans, 1953).

³¹ Gerhard Ritter, *Staatskunst und Kriegshandwerk: Das Problem des «Militarismus» in Deutschland* (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1954-1968 [vol. 1: *Die altpreussische Tradition (1740-1890)*, 2: *Die Hauptmächte Europas und das*

German historiographical and public debate. Known for his liberal conservative stance, though contrary to totalitarianism, he was incarcerated by the Nazis in 1944. Two years before retiring from academia he published the first of his great four volume work, the final one being published posthumously. Ritter shared clear elements of continuity with the other great German liberal, Delbrück, but there were also distinguishing features: continuity because, as Ritter had written in a strong attack on Fritz Fischer, Germany's problem had been its militarism and expansionism, which emerged with World War One (as distinct as Nazism, from the *Machtpolitik* of Bismarck's liberalism); discontinuity because, in brief, Ritter (who in the same years also wrote *Der Schlieffenplan: Kritik eines Mythos*³²) believed that it was not so much a question of *Kriegskunst*, but of *Kriegshandwerk*, and that Germany had been lacking *Staatskunst*, i.e. political control over the military. From the point of view of methodology, however, Ritter continued to write in the vein of the noble but old political history. Moreover, although he approached a pivotal issue – the German *Sonderweg* – and always maintained very high quality standards, his work was the last of a great but declining historiography, rather than the first of a new one.

We have talked about two decades of concomitance. While official military history proceeded between old and new challenges, while veterans continued to publish their personal memoirs, while academic military history generally expanded its knowledge, albeit in a way which could be described as a positivist storage of knowledge, there were also a few isolated signs of a discontinuity. Isolated scholars, relatively young at the time and destined to play a role of some significance, suggested new patterns of research in those years. Not dissimilar to Delbrück half a century before, it was a matter of individual cases, of exceptions. Later on, historiography was able to contextualise and include them into deep historical trends, but for now they remained what they were: individual scholars able to change the analytical perspective of military history.

It was in France and above all in the United Kingdom, no longer in Germany, that scholars, younger than Ritter, Chandler and Pieri were to write a new page of history: they were from a different generation and able to renew from a methodological point of view, too, the field of military-historical research. In the UK, Michael Howard, who had fought in World War Two and had later been a defence analyst, wrote a fundamental reconstruction of the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian War,³³ which, together with the American Civil War (narrated by Raimondo Luraghi a hundred years after its conclusion³⁴), had been the first truly modern wars. Politics, strategy, battles, first indications of the social composition of the bodies of officers and troops, Howard's work took a fresh look at mass armies and at the wars in which they fought in XIXth and XXth centuries. A few years previously, André Corvisier had begun a systematic analysis of French armies in the Early Modern Age, researching their social composition and their relationship with society and the military and political institutions of their times.³⁵ It was an entirely new look at the history of modern armies. A few years later, in his work on the Middle Ages, another French historian, Philippe Contamine looked at the dimensions of war and their multifaceted relationships with society, politics, the institutions and mentality (one can here perceive the absorption, in a more

Wilhelminische Reich 1890-1914, 3: *Die Tragödie der Staatskunst Bethmann Hollwegs als Kriegskanzler (1914-1917)*, 4: *Die Herrschaft des deutschen Militarismus und die Katastrophe von 1918*)).

³² Gerhard Ritter, *Der Schlieffenplan: Kritik eines Mythos* (München: Oldenbourg, 1956).

³³ Michael Eliot Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870-1871* (London: Hart-Davis, 1961).

³⁴ Raimondo Luraghi, *Storia della guerra civile americana* (Torino: Einaudi, 1966).

³⁵ André Corvisier, *L'Armée française de la fin du XVII^e siècle au ministère de Choiseul: le soldat* (Paris: PUF, 1964); and Id., *Les contrôles de troupes de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris: Ministère des armées, État-major de l'armée de terre, Service historique, Ouvrage publié avec le concours du C.N.R.S., 1968-1970 [vol. 1: *Une source d'histoire sociale: Guide des recherches*; 2: *Contrôles de troupes conservées aux archives de la guerre: Infanterie*; 3: *Contrôles de troupes diverses: Troupes à cheval, artillerie, milices, gardes françaises, troupes suisses, compagnie d'invalides, troupes des colonies et de la marine*; 4: *Supplément, index*]).

mature and clear way in Medieval studies than in modern and contemporary studies, of Febvre and Bloch's lesson as well as of their criticism of the *histoire bataille* that had been advanced thirty years before).³⁶ For the time being it was a question of isolated works, produced however by scholars who would never abandon the field of military-historical studies in their long lifetime and who, very soon, in the seventies, would write the first compendia of the 'new' military history. (We could have chosen many other books: those written by scholars who would not maintain a steady interest in the military-historical dimension, but whose work of those years nevertheless left its mark. To cite just one example, think of Carlo Maria Cipolla, who worked between Italy and the US, and his perceptive and very enjoyable essay on *guns and sails* in which he draws parallels between war, colonial expansion and economics³⁷).

Were there any common traits between these works and their authors? Certainly there were many differences. Corvisier was born in 1918, Howard in 1922 and Contamine in 1932. Their works ranged from medieval to modern and contemporary history and encountered different degrees of success. The authors' personalities, too, were very different: one had a propensity for combining his interests in military history with the contemporary strategic and political debate over national security assets; one was more inclined to maintain the role of the purely theoretical scholar. There were those too, some more than others, who were tied to the institutions of official military history, etc. There were, however, among others, three key features that they had in common:

1. They were academic historians who had not ignored Febvre and Bloch's lessons.
2. For all these new military historians, be their field of study ancient or contemporary history, and albeit with their different methods of inquiry, the military dimension (as indeed for Delbrück before them) had strong political implications and thus made military history worth studying and 'too relevant a discipline to be left to generals', i.e.: to be reduced to a history of technical and practical matters.
3. Although they did not neglect the study of war and battles, they all believed (some of them strongly) that the writing of military history should include the study of the armed forces in times of peace: hence, they studied not simply the blood, the battlefields and the strategies of the commanders, but also the relationships between civilians and the military, the social background of officers and their professional skills and capacity (or lack of it) to encourage soldiers to fight.

It was this study of military institutions in times of peace, in particular, that radically distinguished their military history from that, ever attentive to battles and campaigns, produced by military historians who taught in military academies and that produced by those writing for a wider audience. With these new academic military historians, military history was no longer an isolated sector of research, but rather one with strong links to political history (it is not by chance that on some specific anniversaries, independent historians were the ones who criticised the old way of writing official history – as occurred, for instance, in Italy during the 50th anniversary of World War One³⁸). In some cases, in fact, it was no longer just a history *im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*, but focused increasingly on the history of strategic thought and of societies, of cultures and mentalities.

We were, however, talking about that which was concomitant. It was, in fact, these authors who emerged in their respective fields of study as innovators, though they were far from being representative of the field of military history as a whole. In the fifties and sixties, despite

³⁶ Philippe Contamine, *Azincourt* (Paris: Julliard, 1964); Id., *La guerre de cent ans* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968).

³⁷ Carlo M. Cipolla, *Guns and Sails in the Early Phase of European Expansion, 1400-1700* (London: Collins, 1965).

³⁸ Mario Isnenghi, *I vinti di Caporetto nella letteratura di guerra* (Padova: Marsilio, 1967); and Giorgio Rochat, *L'esercito italiano da Vittorio Veneto a Mussolini (1919-1925)* (Bari: Laterza, 1967).

considerable differences between one country and the next, military history research was still a very traditional discipline, largely produced by retired or active military officers who pursued practical rather than scientific goals and addressed the public at large rather than the community of historians. Academic historians, albeit in the minority, were the ones who showed the way. With them, military history could be integrated into the more general history of politics, society and culture.

It was at the end of these two decades in particular – when *détente* appeared to succeed in laying aside the worst spectres of the era of confrontation and of Mutual assured destruction, when the risk of Cuba was receding and the US showed itself incapable of defeating Vietnam, when, in effect, the spectre of the Cold War seemed to loosen its grip, having demonstrated just how appalling the threat of a generalised nuclear war would be – that a new scientific interest in the areas of war and peace and consequently in military history, too, started to take root both in society and in the universities. A new generation of students and scholars appeared who would find its mentors and models in the authors and works mentioned above. To sum up, after 1968, the history of wars and of the armed forces found new, unexpected enthusiasts and, furthermore, it already had its new teachers in place.

C.3. From the Seventies to the Eighties: a Veritable Turning-Point

While the thirties and forties had been two decades of transition and the fifties and sixties of concomitance, the seventies and eighties marked a real turning-point for military history at an international level.

In fact, over these two decades – the last decades of the Cold War – military history studies finally entered the realm of the most updated historical disciplines. During the same years, too, the gaps between different countries started to decrease, while the degree of circulation of ideas and methodologies between historians increased. Certainly, with respect to academic military history, this was facilitated by the simultaneous expansion of the academic system at an international level. There were more universities, more tenures for history teachers, more space for military history which, thanks also to the innovative works which have been mentioned above, appeared to be a fertile field of study, undergoing a process of renewal without which, it would have been difficult for military history studies to go through the process of academic legitimisation and to conquer the space they actually had conquered by the end of those two decades. Proof of this fact can be found in the importance military history gained in some of the best history compendia of the time. In Geoffrey Barraclough's works (published in the fifties and sixties), which were the first of their kind, military history was but briefly mentioned.³⁹ During the seventies it started to emerge in George Iggers' historical frescos⁴⁰ – and the same, more or less, occurred with that 'bible' of the new French historiography edited by Jacques Le Goff on two separate occasions in the same decade.⁴¹ It was not before the early nineties, when Peter Burke collected the *New perspectives on historical writing*, that a whole chapter was dedicated to military history.⁴² Therefore, it was only

³⁹ Geoffrey Barraclough, *History in a Changing World* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1955); Id., *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (London: Watts, 1964); Id., *Atlante della storia 1945-1975* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1978); Geoffrey Barraclough (ed.), *The Times Atlas of World History* (London: Times Books, 1978).

⁴⁰ George G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1968); Id., *New Directions in European Historiography* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1975); Georg G. Iggers - Harold T. Parker (eds.), *International Handbook of Historical Studies: Contemporary Research and Theory* (London: Methuen, 1979).

⁴¹ *Faire de l'histoire*, sous la direction de Jacques Le Goff et Pierre Nora (Paris: Gallimard, 1974 [vol. 1: *Nouveaux problèmes*, 2: *Nouvelles approches*, 3: *Nouveaux objets*]).

⁴² Jim Sharpe, in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, edited by Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).

during the seventies and eighties that military history underwent a significant qualitative and quantitative expansion and achieved the status of a proper academic discipline, and no longer simply or primarily as a discipline within military institutions or as a popular literary genre.

Together with the deeds of a few praiseworthy pioneers, the expansion military history experienced over these two decades also depended, quite clearly, on the particularly happy conjunction which involved the entire field of historiography. While the “*Annales*” were about to enter their third generation,⁴³ those years also witnessed change and renewal in all historiography. The wishes once expressed by Febvre and Bloch seemed to have come true at last. Social, economic and cultural history (each in its turn having undergone a process of renewal) were to take their place alongside the older fields of political and diplomatic history: gender history was born as was global history at least in outline, the first ‘subaltern studies’ began and, though still in a minority, there appeared the first post-modern attacks on the rationality of historical research. Marxist historiography, too, reached its peak during those years. The field of history was then very fertile. It was not therefore surprising that the old *histoire bataille* should be replaced by a new military history, or by *war and society studies* as they were called (a definition which even from the choice of words pointed to the most innovative approach and to the leading area of studies).

All the best work produced during this phase is similar. Political and diplomatic history is no longer sufficient. Historians dealing with the armed forces and with war look at society and feel the need to locate their issues of study in wider contexts. Of course the boundaries of the said contexts vary in relation to the authors’ inclinations and the availability of sources – in the history of Antiquity as in Medieval history, in Modern as in (from now on) Contemporary history, too. Nevertheless, even studies focused on very technical issues share the need for a wider framework. This occurs for instance in Anderson’s and Rich’s work, as in Ilari’s and Zug Tucci’s.⁴⁴ In a few exceptional cases, intelligent and successful work was still being produced by non-professional historians as was the case with Luttwack.⁴⁵ But now military history was a highly professionalised field, and in some respects a rather internationalised field, too: it is a significant fact that a lot of important summaries were translated into different languages as happened, for instance, with the work of Garlan and Hanson, Contamine and Cardini, Hale and Parker, Keegan and McNeill.⁴⁶

All this happened at a time which, all in all, was for many reasons unhappy for official military history. After 1968, all official histories fell easy victim to criticism and were thrown into crisis. More specifically, in the seventies the military establishment was strongly criticised both in Europe and the Western World, not only as a consequence of the US defeat in Vietnam, but also because it seemed to have lost that image of an authoritative institution, modern yet capable of reform, which it had had in the past. Furthermore, as far as the history offices were concerned, they found themselves in an ambiguous situation. The urgency they once had of explaining World War Two had passed; the Cold War military operations and training were covered by laws of secrecy; the more recent campaigns in which the US had been protagonist were far from exalting (Suez, Algeria, Vietnam). One might indeed go so far as to talk of a crisis of official military history. A crisis in absolute terms, for the reasons we have illustrated, but also in relative terms, due to the

⁴³ Peter Burke, *The French historical revolution. The Annales school, 1929-89*, Cambridge: Polity, 1990.

⁴⁴ J. K. Anderson, *Military Theory and Practice in the Age of Xenophon* (Berkeley - Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970); Virgilio Ilari, *Gli italici nelle strutture militari romane* (Milano: A. Giuffrè, 1974); J. W. Rich, *Declaring War in the Roman Republic in the Period of Transmarine Expansion* (Bruxelles: Latomus, 1976); H. Zug Tucci, ‘Il carroccio nella vita comunale italiana’, in: *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Studien und Bibliotheken*, LXVI (1985), pp. 1-104.

⁴⁵ Edward Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire from the First Century A.D. to the Third* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

⁴⁶ Franco Cardini, *Quell'antica festa crudele: Guerra e cultura della guerra dall'eta feudale alla grande Rivoluzione* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1982).

parallel growth of academic military history. For the first time since Hans Delbrück had started publishing his work, military history no longer appeared to be the exclusive domain of the military nor one in which they might be consider superior to those historians who were civilians.

Researchers who had had an academic education began to use, explore and evaluate the military archives, of which there were an enormously vast number. Thanks to the methods of enquiry developed over the previous decades in a few pioneer studies, they were in a position to document connections that had not thus far been investigated other than hypothetically, between the military institution and politics and society. There seemed, albeit superficially, to be a division of labour: the reconstruction of battles and campaigns was assigned to historians who came from the military, while academic historians were entrusted with the history of peaceful periods and the relationships, over those periods, between the armed forces and society. That it was in fact illusory emerges quite clearly in the work of the pioneers themselves: Delbrück had studied wars in Antiquity, Howard the French-Prussian war, Corvisier the armed conflicts of modern France, Contamine the wars of the Middle Ages. Ignoring all pretence of partition, the blossoming field of academic military history of the seventies and eighties concerned itself with wars, too, demystifying the old myths and producing new and more critical interpretations of the most important conflicts in the modern memory.

In keeping with the growth of a field of study, there also appeared the first compendia. They reported what was already known, but also interpreted it in new ways, pointing to the path that the new research should take. In the middle of the seventies Michael Howard published *War in European History*, a highly innovative and bold work of synthesis which made a connection between the evolution of the history of war and of the armed forces and that of society, from Antiquity to the present.⁴⁷

The study of war and society was deliberately something more than Delbrück's *Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte* of the beginning of the century, and it inspired an infinite number of books. Among the many, it is useful to recall the Fontana history of *European war and society*, whose volumes cover the centuries from the Late Middle Ages to the present.⁴⁸ Howard's book, a masterpiece dealing with more general issues, was followed by others, focusing on more specific periods, from Antiquity to contemporary history. One could mention Yvon Garlan's work, published in 1973,⁴⁹ *Guerre dans l'antiquité*; the year before, Philippe Contamine (who over the previous decade had studied Azincourt and the Hundred-Years' War) had published his massive *Guerre, état et société à la fin du Moyen âge. Etudes sur les armées des rois de France, 1337-1494*, and a few years later he would publish his *La France au XIVe et XVe siècles. Hommes, mentalités, guerre et paix* (which, starting with the title, expressed the syntony between his studies in military history and the new French historiography of the time).⁵⁰ As it is natural for an expanding field, the first nuances in the methodology and general characteristics began to become apparent. In the case of the Middle Ages, one year after Contamine's great 'structural' work Georges Duby published his less voluminous *Le dimanche de Bouvines, 27 juillet*

⁴⁷ Michael Eliot Howard, *War in European History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976).

⁴⁸ Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe 1770-1870* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982); V.G. Kiernan, *European Empires from Conquest to Collapse 1815-1960* (Bath: Leicester University Press, 1982); Brian Bond, *War and Society in Europe 1870-1970* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983); John Rigby Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe, 1450-1620* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985); Matthew Smith Anderson, *War and Society in Europe of the Old Regime 1618-1789* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988). Later they were all republished as paperbacks by Fontana.

⁴⁹ Yvon Garlan, *La guerre dans l'antiquité* (Paris: F. Nathan, 1972).

⁵⁰ Philippe Contamine, *Guerre, état et société à la fin du moyen-âge: Etudes sur les armées des rois de France, 1337-1494* (Paris: Mouton, 1972); and Id., *La France au XIVe et XVe siècles: Hommes, mentalités, guerre et paix* (London: Variorum reprints, 1981).

1214, in which he illustrated Medieval mentality and civilisation as reflected in one famous battle.⁵¹ Over the same period and still in France, with his *Anthropologie du conscrit français*,⁵² Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie produced a first ground breaking attempt at combining quantitative history with military sources (this was a pioneering attempt, which several years later was developed in a more systematic way by Jules Maurin⁵³). Nor was there any lack of contemporary history in the great revival of historical study. Of the many summaries one might mention, there was for instance John Gooch's *Armies in Europe*, which meticulously reconstructed the officers' social provenance and the role armies played in inside politics.⁵⁴ And there was Hew Strachan's *European armies and the conduct of war*, published a few years later, which also investigated the relationships between civilians and the military but, as the title implies, did not forget the primary objective of the military establishment – war.⁵⁵

The vitality of this area of studies, which is also reflected in the bibliographies, is impressive. It was evident who published the most, what the most innovative works were and what language they were written in. In the early seventies, the scholarly review published by the military history office of the Bundeswehr, the "Militargeschichtliche Mitteilungen", realised that there was an ever increasing amount of new research and it decided to publish an annual bibliographic review: thus, the "War and Society Newsletter: A Bibliographical Survey" was born. With the exclusion of the German section, its management was entrusted to academic military historians, and it was published in English. A few years later the ICMH also became involved in this activity: in 1977 it published a "Bulletin de bibliographie", which in 1978 became the "Bibliographie internationale d'histoire militaire / The International Bibliography of Military history" (BIHM/IBMH). For more than three decades "War and Society" covered the publications which appeared in journals, while the BIHM/IBMH offered a selective list of volumes until 2005 (when the Italian Ciro Paoletti announced the transfer of the "Bibliography" online – which eventually took place almost ten years later). But it is not so much the diverse history of these two publications that is important, as the fact that they were born more or less around the same time, which confirms and reflects (and at the same time supports) the considerable growth of studies in military history on an international scale during the seventies and eighties.

The expansion in academic studies involved, simultaneously but in different ways, all the fields of research in military history: from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, from the Modern Era to the present day. This fact is of paramount importance. Indeed, while the official military history, given its specific function, had concentrated on the XIXth and especially the XXth centuries (above all on the two World wars), military history as it was studied in the universities guaranteed the same dignity and the same attention to historical periods which were very different one from the other. Their study had no relation whatsoever with the need to compile official reports nor were they related to the issues of nation building or state building which official military history was obliged to investigate.

Obviously, the considerable quantitative and qualitative expansion on so many fronts renders it impossible, at this stage, to illustrate all the developments in such a brief paper as this. Furthermore, the great diversity of the fields of research, of the authors' personalities and of the number of important works, obliges us to transform our narrative from one centred on a few

⁵¹ Georges Duby, *Le dimanche de Bouvines 27 juillet 1214* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

⁵² Jean-Paul Aron - Paul Dumont - Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Anthropologie du conscrit français d'après les comptes numériques et sommaires du recrutement de l'armée, 1819-1826: Présentation cartographique* (Paris - La Haye: Mouton, 1972).

⁵³ Jules Maurin, *Armée, guerre, société, soldats languedociens 1889-1919* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1982).

⁵⁴ John Gooch, *Armies in Europe* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980).

⁵⁵ Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: Routledge, 1983).

dominant features of the works of a single period, to one which resembles a form of list (which we hope has a clear rationale) of some of the most relevant fields and issues of study.

We have already touched on Ancient history and the Middle Ages. Among the classic texts on the Early Modern period, Geoffrey Parker, who had already investigated from an unconventional perspective *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries' Wars* and *The Thirty Years War*, published in 1988 *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*,⁵⁶ which would reignite the international debate. Parker, who was himself acquainted with economic history, would have found himself at ease in Prato (Italy) in the same years, where, under the direction of Fernand Braudel, some of the best military historians specialising in the Middle Ages and Early Modern periods gathered for a large international convention entitled *Gli aspetti economici della guerra in Europa, secc. 14-18: Atti della 16. Settimana di studi, 4-9 maggio 1984 [Economic features of war in Europe, 14th-18th centuries, Research week, 4th-9th May 1984]*. This demonstrates just how strong the attention directed at the relationship between war, the economy and society was in those two decades.⁵⁷

The two decades that followed 1968 and the World economic crisis of 1973 put an end to 'thirty glorious years' of huge economic expansion and it is not surprising, therefore, that military historians focused their attention on the issue of social and political changes. The concern for society in times of peace as well as in times of war was the main reason behind the growth of *War and society studies*. As a rule, the new military historians were primarily interested in understanding how society was mirrored, in a more or less deformed way, in the armed forces. But there were also those who systematically researched the relationship between the two from the opposite perspective. In the UK, for instance, after deconstructing the national myth of 'the people's war' in *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War*, Arthur Marwick used the Open University as an open laboratory in which the interactions between *War, Peace and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Europe*⁵⁸ could be studied, resulting in the publication of a multi-volume series which was something between a didactic text, historiographical reflections and a research essay on the issue of how the total wars of the twentieth-century had transformed society, if at all.

The focus on the role of politics, too, was one of the main issues of the new military history. While historians who came from the military had put the great commanders in times of war at the centre of their narrative, the new military historians were very interested in the relationship between politicians and the armed forces in times of peace and to what extent this might contribute to the construction of those institutions which would become operational in the event of war. In the seventies and eighties, therefore, one of the most traditional areas of study in academic military

⁵⁶ Geoffrey Parker, *The Army of Flanders and the Spanish Road, 1567-1659: The Logistics of Spanish Victory and Defeat in the Low Countries' Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Id., *The Thirty Years War* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984); and Id., *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

⁵⁷ Simonetta Cavaciocchi (ed.), *Gli aspetti economici della guerra in Europa, secc. 14-18: Atti della 16. Settimana di studi 4-9 maggio 1984* (Prato: Istituto internazionale di storia economica F. Datini, 2000).

⁵⁸ See the less recent Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge: British Society and the First World War* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965); Id., *Britain in the Century of Total War: War, Peace and Social Change, 1900-1967* (London: The Bodley Head, 1968). The series *War, Peace and Social Change: Europe 1900-1955* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1990) included Arthur Marwick - Bernand Waites - Clive Emsley - Ian Donnachie, *Europe on the Eve of War 1900-1914*; Henry Cowper - Clive Emsley - Arthur Marwick - Bill Purdue - David Englander, *World War I and its Consequences*; John Golby - Bernand Waites - Geoffrey Warner - Tony Aldgate - Anthony Lentin, *Between the Two Wars*; Clive Emsley - Arthur Marwick - Bill Purdue - Tony Aldgate, *World War II and its Consequences*; Arthur Marwick - Bernand Waites - Clive Emsley - John Golby, *War and Change in Twentieth-Century Europe*.

history was the reconstruction of government defence policy, in every country and historical period. The impact of politics was believed (not always correctly) to have been greater within the twentieth-century totalitarian political systems. For this reason, too, German and Italian military historians were among those who were most interested in the 'political history of the military'. One of the first institutes which systematically approached this issue was the *Militärgeschichtliche Forschungsstelle*, which soon became the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* (MGFA), based in Freiburg im Breisgau (later transferred to Potsdam, it is now called *Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr* (ZMSBw) following its amalgamation with the *Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut* (SOWI) in 2013). In 1971 one of the many projects it launched was *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*,⁵⁹ which resulted in a vitally important ten volume series which contained a reappraisal of the history of the 'nazification' of the armed forces in Germany under Hitler. Meanwhile, in an unsurprisingly less systematic way (due in part to the fact that there was absolutely no encouragement from the establishment), some Italian scholars embarked on a radical revision of the history of the Italian armed forces under fascism. Giorgio Rochat, who had already published the volume *L'esercito italiano da Vittorio Veneto a Mussolini 1919-1925* [*The Italian Army from Vittorio Veneto to Mussolini, 1919-1925*] in 1967 and the volume *Militari e politici nella preparazione della campagna d'Etiopia 1932-36* [*Military Personnel and Politicians in the Preparation of the Ethiopian Campaign, 1932-36*] in 1971, published, together with Giulio Massobrio, in 1977, a *Breve storia dell'esercito italiano 1861-1943* [*Brief History of the Italian Army 1861-1943*], which would spur a full revision of the military history of Italy since its unification.⁶⁰

The attention given to the relationships between war, the armed forces and society meant that many scholars were themselves forced to adopt a position. Relative both to traditional military history centred on the role of the commanders, and to more recent history which aimed at systematically inquiring into the relationships between the politicians and the high commands, both in peace and in war, in a word, with regard to 'top-down' traditional military history, the seventies and eighties witnessed the blossoming of 'bottom-up' studies. The wars conducted by mercenaries and militias in Antiquity, by foot soldiers in the Middle Ages, by soldiers in the Early Modern period and, above all, the wars conducted by mass armies during the XIXth century became the object of several groundbreaking studies. The enforcement of discipline, training, propaganda, military justice, postal censorship, eye-witness accounts of war: a vast series of sources, often previously unheeded, were now examined in order to better understand what soldiers, and to a lesser extent sailors in the Navy, experienced during war.

It was in this way that the experience of war became a characteristic feature of new military history studies. All variations on this theme, from Duby's history of the battle of Bouvines, to Corvisier's on Malplaquet⁶¹ and the many histories of Waterloo, were influenced by national myths and by the adopted approach: social history, the history of a nation's mentality and so on. Clearly

⁵⁹ *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, herausgegeben vom Militärgeschichtlichen Forschungsamt (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1979-2008 - 10 vols. [vol. 1: *Ursachen und Voraussetzungen der deutschen Kriegspolitik*; 2: *Die Errichtung der Hegemonie auf dem europäischen Kontinent*; 3: *Der Mittelmeerraum und Südosteuropa: Von der "non belligeranza" Italiens bis zum Kriegseintritt der Vereinigten Staaten*; 4: *Der Angriff auf die Sowjetunion*; 5: *Organisation und Mobilisierung des deutschen Machtbereichs: Kriegsverwaltung, Wirtschaft und personelle Ressourcen*, 5.1: 1939-1941, 5.2: 1942-1944/45; 6: *Der globale Krieg: Die Ausweitung zum Weltkrieg und der Wechsel der Initiative, 1941-1943*; 7: *Das Deutsche Reich in der Defensive: Strategischer Luftkrieg in Europa, Krieg im Westen und in Ostasien, 1943-1944/45*; 8: *Die Ostfront 1943/44: Der Krieg im Osten und an den Nebenfronten*; 9: *Die deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945*; 10: *Der Zusammenbruch des Deutschen Reiches 1945*]).

⁶⁰ Giorgio Rochat, *L'esercito italiano da Vittorio Veneto a Mussolini (1919-1925)* (Bari: Laterza, 1967); Id., *Militari e politici nella preparazione della campagna d'Etiopia: Studio e documenti 1932-1936* (Angeli: Milano 1971); Id., Giulio Massobrio, *Breve storia dell'esercito italiano dal 1861 al 1943* (Torino: Einaudi, 1978).

⁶¹ André Corvisier, *La bataille de Malplaquet, 1709: L'effondrement de la France évité* (Paris: Economica, 1997).

though, they were all overshadowed by the debate which had already begun in the seventies and would develop further over the next decades concerning the experience of World War One conscripts. The American literary scholar, Paul Fussell, rereading the memoirs of British officers, found a tragic irony in their accounts and realized that modern memory was born in the experience of that conflict.⁶² Eric Leed, on the other hand, read the experience as one which was on the verge of the absurd and of the loss of reason.⁶³ While Fussell's critical essay was being published, John Keegan (who at the time had been lecturer in Military History at the Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst for about fifteen years) published *The Face of Battle*,⁶⁴ In this highly influential work he examined three conflicts: the battle of Azincourt, the battle of Waterloo and the battle of the Somme in the First World War. Unlike Fussell and, to an even greater extent, Leed, Keegan saw in the experience of war confusion and uncertainty (what Clausewitz, who was not much appreciated by the Sandhurst teacher, would have called 'the friction'), but also the ability of the military institution both to organise men, starting from the smallest group or unit, and to help them overcome their fears.

Clearly, the experience of war depended on the kind of conflict that was being fought. During the seventies and eighties it was generally the major military conflicts, the historically most important wars, that attracted scholars. Particular attention was therefore paid to the XXth century World Wars, above all to the Nazi war. During the eighties, these military-historical studies intersected with one of the most significant historiographical (and political) debates of modern Germany, the *Historikerstreit*.⁶⁵ Omer Bartov, for example, in the same decade, while analysing the post 1941 Nazi aggression against Eastern Europe, introduced the concept of 'the barbarisation' of warfare.⁶⁶ After all, the barbarisation of the conduct of war, the transformation of a war among regular troops into a war against civilians too, represented – for the perpetrator as well as the victim – the worst possible experience of war of the XXth century. (It was neither by chance nor the first time that military history studies had intertwined with political-historiographical debates in Germany: see for instance the studies on World War One and the *Fischer-Kontroverse* in the sixties.⁶⁷)

The attention given to the experience of war, or to the war from a bottom up perspective, at a time when social history – *Alltagsgeschichte* – history of pluralities and even micro-history achieved their greatest glory, meant that there was for the first time a coordinated investigation into how wars were 'suffered' by the most humble combatants. It was no longer therefore simply commanders convinced of their own strategies and officers aware of the selected tactic, nor even just (in the case for example of the two World Wars) complementary officers enthusiastic about their newly created professions but, oarsmen in the Greek triremes, legionaries in the Roman legions, hired city foot soldiers or bondmen in the medieval wars between knights, forcibly recruited in His Majesty's British ships, soldiers dragged into the French armies, be they of the *Ancien régime* or the new revolutionary and Napoleonic France or conscripts in the two World Wars. The shift in the interests of military historians over these two decades must be underlined. This shift, too, explains the innumerable studies on the *objecteurs*, *insoumis*, *déserteurs*,

⁶² Paul Fussell, *The Great War And Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975).

⁶³ Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat & Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

⁶⁴ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (London: Cape, 1976).

⁶⁵ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Entsorgung der deutschen Vergangenheit: Ein polemischer Essay zum Historikerstreit* (München: Beck, 1988).

⁶⁶ Omer Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-45: German Troops and the Barbarisation of Warfare* (Houndmills, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1985).

⁶⁷ Fritz Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/18* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1961).

réfractaires in the French Revolution and imperial armies⁶⁸ (studies which were supported by a well documented series of sources, at least from the time the *loi Jourdan* had introduced a compulsory draft), and of the two World conflicts, especially World War One. For the first time, extending its view downwards, military history legitimated *de facto* and to some degree encouraged the study of objection to military service, the study of anti-militarism. It was no longer possible to demonise it. On the contrary, it became normalised, as part of the history of the historical relationships each society has with war and the armed forces. Similarly, during the seventies military history legitimated the study of military repression, of violence inflicted on soldiers by officers, of regular and irregular military justice, of summary shootings. These, by the way, were the years in which *Peace Studies* was growing and becoming part of proper academic study. Among those who studied pacifist theories, from Erasmus on, and those who studied military objection at a grass root level, there were obviously some common traits. To the point that even the old distinctions between disciplines started to fade. How was one to 'classify' a study of the repressive Italian military justice in the Great War⁶⁹ or a study of the international debate on militarism?⁷⁰ *War and Society Studies* had permeable boundaries.

The history of military politics, of the social transformations inside and outside military institutions, of military expenses, of the experience of war, of conscientious objection – in brief, a full history of the relationships between war, the armed forces and society, in Antiquity as well as in the Middle Ages, in the Early Modern era as well as in the Contemporary era: the transformation which had started at the end of the previous two decades and had fully flourished during the seventies and eighties had something of a 'historiographical revolution'. Nor did the topics stop there. Much was undertaken during these decades, though not necessarily brought to a conclusion: for example the initial attempts at *World History* focusing on the global military dimension and its changes over time which were sketched by William H. McNeill in his *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force and Society since AD 1000*,⁷¹ or by Charles Tilly in his *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990*.⁷² Not that all these issues had been unknown to previous studies, but it was in these years that they appeared and contributed to the image of two decades of truly historiographical revolution which even today, despite the passage of time, cannot be overlooked.

It would be wrong to accept the (erroneous) criticism brought to bear on several occasions on the studies of the seventies and eighties and in particular on the *War and society studies*, that they had simply been a deviation from or a concession on the part of sober military history to the highly politicized and ideologically divided climate of the seventies. More than once these studies were accused of, utterly losing sight of the wealth of knowledge that they added when compared with more traditional military history, having lost their way in the study of the years of peace rather than of the years of war. These critics believed that if war was the primary objective and the 'heart' of the mission of the armed forces, then war and combat should be (almost) exclusively the subjects into which military history enquired. It was maintained (and sometimes still is) that with regard to

⁶⁸ To give just two among the most significant examples: Michel Auvray, *Objecteurs, insoumis, déserteurs: Histoire des réfractaires en France* (Paris: Stock/2, 1983); and Alan Forrest, *Déserteurs, insoumis sous la révolution et l'empire* (Paris: Perrin, 1988).

⁶⁹ Giovanna Procacci, *Soldati e prigionieri italiani nella Grande Guerra, con una raccolta di lettere inedite* (Roma: Editori riuniti, 1993).

⁷⁰ Volker R. Berghahn (ed.), *Militarismus* (Köln: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1975); and Volker R. Berghahn, *Militarism: The History of an International Debate, 1861-1979* (Leamington: Berg, 1981).

⁷¹ William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society Since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

⁷² Charles Tilly, *Coercion, Capital and European States, AD 990-1990* (Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

this 'heart' all the rest was not military history but something different: the history of politics, social history, the history of the subaltern classes, and so on. It was as if this approach were a post 1968 juvenile illness from which military history needed to be cured as soon as possible.

To insist on such a criticism today would be wrong not only because of the obvious acknowledgment that the armed forces do not exist exclusively in times of war but that they are ready for combat, should it arrive, after long preparation in times of peace – we shall not linger on this predictable objection to such a criticism. It is also wrong because during the seventies and eighties, above all within official military history though also inside the scientific debate of military history that was more academic, there was already something else. It should be remembered that, in the discussion of the experience of war, a distinction was drawn between Keegan's perspective and that of Fussell or Leed. Nor was Keegan alone. It was in those very years that, having worked on *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941* and the *Balkan Clue*, and shortly after having published his *Military Lessons of the Yom Kippur War*, the Israeli Martin van Creveld published one of his most interesting books on the long-term evolution of the military institution: *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton*. While studying an inside and apparently technical aspect of the life of military institutions, he outlined the bigger picture of the transformation of modern war (and, indirectly, of the combatant's experience of war). Relentlessly van Creveld continued addressing the problem of the *Fighting Power* and comparing the *German and US Army Performance* during World War Two, then investigating the issue of *The Training of Officers: From Military Professionalism to Irrelevance*, while publishing his ambitious *Technology and War: From 2000 BC to the Present*.⁷³ But what was van Creveld's *fil rouge*, or *noir*? It was this: that despite its apparent stasis and traditionalism, the military establishment had undergone exceptional changes. Contrary to what the *War and society studies* claimed, he believed that the most important of these changes had not been prompted by contingent political choices or by the impact of society on the military, but that they were internal, ultimately technical transformations. Still in the eighties another writer began to take his first steps. He was destined, some years later, to make his voice heard in the field of the study of military history in Antiquity (though with clear implications for the present). In 1983 Victor Davis Hanson published *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece*, a short English book which, curiously enough, was published in Italy. It was ignored, but a further book from the same author, *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*,⁷⁴ aroused some interest. The thesis it contained was that in Ancient Greece, and thereafter in the West, war was aimed at the final confrontation, for which combatants were staunchly ready to sacrifice themselves. If we mention this point here it is because, while the *War and society studies* struggled to find connections and influences of *society* on war and the armed forces, Hanson claimed that it was *culture*, the culture of war and the culture of the military, that influenced society. Why did we wish to bring together Keegan, van Creveld and Hanson? We are aware that, each one being an influential writer, they are military historians who were different from one another and who dealt with different issues. Nevertheless, during the seventies and eighties they shared the implicit and sometimes also explicit desire to distance themselves from the preconditions and consequences of the *War and society studies*.

⁷³ Martin L. van Creveld, *Hitler's Strategy 1940-1941: The Balkan Clue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); Id., *Military Lessons of the Yom Kippur War: Historical Perspectives* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975); Id., *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

See also Id., *Fighting Power: German and US Army Performance, 1939-1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1982); Id., *Command in War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985); Id., *The Training of Officers: From Military Professionalism to Irrelevance* (New York: Free Press - London: Collier Macmillan, 1990); and lastly Id., *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present* (New York: Free Press - London, Collier Macmillan, 1989).

⁷⁴ Victor Davis Hanson, *Warfare and Agriculture in Classical Greece* (Pisa: Giardini, 1983; Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998), Id., *The Western Way of War: Infantry Battle in Classical Greece*, with an introduction by John Keegan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

Keegan, van Creveld and Hanson, by the way, were not the only ones who preferred to insist, with concern for the evolution of the armed forces and wars, on factors of change that were internal-technical-military rather than external-political-social. In the same years (and especially during the eighties) other scholars were even more radical. As we shall see, for them military history should immediately 'return' to the study of battle fields, tactics, armaments and military doctrine, which they believed to be the core of military history. They therefore vigorously opposed, albeit still implicitly, the new trend in academic military history studies.

In truth, much more than they could admit to, they had been influenced by all this. They too, as the new military historians, had ceased to look up, but rather, looked down towards the lower end of the hierarchy. Theirs, too, was a history, at least in form, which started from the bottom: the difference being that they looked at combat doctrines, regulations, armaments technology and so on, and that on these grounds – instead of society or culture – they explained the outcome of battles and the life of the armed forces, with very few concessions to their relationship with society. The tendency towards an 'internal' explanation came natural to them, not least because they were rarely university teachers. Most of them came from the military, where they worked for the military educational system, or as journalists and so on. Since they came from the army, it was natural that military history should primarily explain combat, both past as well as future. For them, history was a true *historia magistra vitae*.

It is not easy to give a picture of those who might be defined as *combat historians*, even though it was Anglo-Saxon in origin, having been born on both sides of the Atlantic. Among the first of their kind, at the beginning of the eighties, one should perhaps recall John Terraine and his *The Smoke and the Fire*, which purposely aimed at deconstructing the *Myths and Anti-Myths of War, 1861-1945*.⁷⁵ But also Paddy Griffith made an important contribution with his *Fighting Tactics from Waterloo to Vietnam*⁷⁶ (with, not by accident, an introduction by Keegan). Then there were Shelford Bidwell and Dominick Graham with their *Fire-Power: British Army Weapons and Theories of War, 1904-1945*,⁷⁷ and Richard Holmes, more oriented towards the general public, with his *Firing Line*.⁷⁸ Another significant work was Tim Travers' *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918*.⁷⁹ And who knows whether they had already read on the other side of the Atlantic, Robert A. Doughty's reconstruction of *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76*?⁸⁰

This *combat history* abandoned the study of the big theories about social transformations and their relationships with war and aimed to look instead – from the bottom upwards – at the dirty practices of fighting and killing and what it meant for soldiers who did so in a repetitive manner (as practised during training), following pre-established tactical rules and with weapons which had a

⁷⁵ John Terraine, *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War, 1861-1945* (London: Leo Cooper, 1992).

⁷⁶ Paddy Griffith, *Forward into Battle: Fighting Tactics from Waterloo to Vietnam*, preface by John Keegan, (Chichester: Bird, 1981). Cf. also Paddy Griffith, *Military Thought in the French Army, 1815-51* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989); Id., *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Art of Attack, 1916-18* (New Haven: Yale, 1994); Id. (ed.), *British Fighting Methods in the Great War* (London: Cass, 1996); and Id., *The Art of War of Revolutionary France, 1789-1802* (London: Greenhill Books, 1998).

⁷⁷ Shelford Bidwell, Dominick Graham, *Fire-Power: British Army Weapons and Theories of War, 1904-1945* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982).

⁷⁸ Richard Holmes, *Firing Line* (London: Cape, 1985); US edition: *Acts of War: The Behaviour of Men in Battle* (New York, 1985).

⁷⁹ Tim Travers, *The Killing Ground: The British Army, the Western Front and the Emergence of Modern Warfare 1900-1918* (London: Routledge, 1987); Id., *How the War was Won: Command and Technology in the British Army on the Western Front, 1917-1918* (London: Routledge, 1992); and Id. and Christon Archer (eds, *Men at War: Politics, Technology, and Innovation in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Precedent, 1982).

⁸⁰ Robert A. Doughty, *The Evolution of US Army Tactical Doctrine, 1946-76* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan.: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1979).

fixed range. In the beginning, this historiographical trend was mostly focused on the contemporary era, also because of the availability of sources and of the formalisation of protocols and regulations which historically seemed to have appeared only during the XIXth and XXth centuries. There were also some attempts at exporting these analytical methods and at applying them to previous periods: for example, by John A. Lynn in his volume on *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791-1794*.⁸¹ But these attempts (with the exception of Hanson's suppositions) were isolated cases. Someone suggested that there was a similarity, or at least a parallelism, between these *combat historians* and the frenetic activity in Western (and particularly the US post Vietnam) armies in the same years to equip themselves with an operational doctrine and to win again on the battlefield, be it in the Vietnamese jungle or around Fulda with the AirLand Battle. Although this parallelism is undeniable, it is difficult to say today whether there was also a relationship of cause-effect between the two. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that authors who differed from one another, such as John A. English, Jonathan M. House, Barry R. Posen, Robert Allan Doughty, John P. Rose, John L. Romjue, Bruce I. Gudmundsson,⁸² were often only part-time historians, since they had to work for the Tradoc or for other sections of the military educational system of their own country.

It would be easy, but wrong, to assume that during the seventies and eighties the two trends we have just illustrated – the *War and society studies*, with their variety of issues and sources, and these *combat historians*, almost exclusively focused on fighting effectiveness and the improvement of tactical doctrines and so on – ignored their reciprocal existence and did not communicate. Clearly, they came from and intended to take different directions, but fundamentally they had much in common. Both criticised traditional military history, i.e. academic history as well as history produced by historical offices, for having focused too often on officers, strategies and campaigns and having failed to look down at the common combatant. Above all, both operated during the same years: they coexisted, and in many respects they took advantage of each other.

For this reason, it would be wrong to give just one impression of the seventies and eighties, no matter how limited the impact and interest was that *combat historians* generated when compared with the exceptional variety and innovation brought about by the *War and society studies*, which changed military history forever. A few attempts were made to put these two trends on a common footing. In the late eighties, Allan R. Millet and Williamson Murray edited three huge volumes dedicated to the military effectiveness of Western armed forces over the first half of the XXth century.⁸³ Their attempt had a praiseworthy comparative approach and the three volumes were rich in stimuli for reflection. Nevertheless, those who contributed to them were mostly scholars, who remained within the field of the *War and society studies*, paying special attention to civil-military

⁸¹ John A. Lynn, *The Bayonets of the Republic: Motivation and Tactics in the Army of Revolutionary France, 1791-1794* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1984).

⁸² John P. Rose, *The Evolution of U.S. Army Nuclear Doctrine, 1945-1980* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1980); John A. English, *On Infantry* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1981) – see also Id. and Bruce I. Gudmundsson, *On Infantry* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1994); Barry R. Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine: France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine, 1973-1982* (Fort Monroe, Va.: Historical Office, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1984); Id., *American Army Doctrine for the Post-Cold War* (Fort Monroe, Va.: Historical Office, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, 1997); Jonathan M. House, *Toward Combined Arms Warfare: A Survey of 20th-Century Tactics, Doctrine, and Organization* (Fort Leavenworth, Ks.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1985); and Id., *Combined Arms: Warfare in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence, Ks.: University Press of Kansas, 2001); Robert Allan Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919-1939* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1985); Bruce I. Gudmundsson, *Storm Troop Tactics: Innovation in the German Army 1914-1918* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

⁸³ Allan R. Millet – Williamson Murray (eds.), *Military Effectiveness* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988 – 3 vols. [1: *The First World War*, 2: *The Interwar Period*, 3: *The Second World War*]). Later: Williamson Murray – Allan R. Millet (eds.), *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

relations: in fact, they dealt with military effectiveness rather than combat effectiveness (which is a narrower concept).

Whether the encounter between these two trends succeeded or not is, ultimately, of secondary importance. What is noteworthy is that during the two decades, vis-à-vis new academic military history and the new *combat historians*, traditional military history, though it did not disappear altogether, it nevertheless seemed to have moved into the background. This fact was indicative of the historiographical shift, which had occurred during this decade.

C.4. From the Late Nineties to early Two-Thousands: an Explosion of Research in Military History

We are only going to deal with the last twenty years briefly. The nineties and the first decade of the new century are perhaps the most difficult to analyse. While the last two decades of the Cold War coincided with quantitative growth and qualitative innovation (and therefore witnessed a real historiographical shift), the first two post-bipolar decades produced a true boom in military historical research. This boom consisted of an unstoppable increase in research: in every field, in every direction employing every available methodology.

Without any kind of determinism, some of the changes in military historical research interests, frameworks and outcomes were also due to the transformation of warfare, which took place during the two post-bipolar decades following the end of the Cold War.⁸⁴ This transformation, in fact, clearly changed the notion of the nature of war in the eyes of today's public. And as to what war is, contemporary historians, too, are still trying to find a definition.⁸⁵

Moreover, the two decades we are going to examine are so recent as to be practically still on-going, with on-going trends and even keeping an up-to-date bibliography is no easy task. If the attempt to get a clear overview of mobilized troops engaged in fighting has always been problematic for a general stationed on top of a hill, it is equally true for an observer who writes, and this renders the ensuing considerations all the more provisional than those which appear above.

Before embarking on any analysis, part of our overall conclusions will be revealed. The quantitative boom in research that we have already mentioned seems to imply a positive evaluation, which is generally, though not entirely, the case. The same quantitative and, to a lesser extent, qualitative boom also created difficulties, crises within well-established hierarchies and the loss of a centre.

This can be observed even in the best historiography. Innovative research monographs multiply and as a consequence so do the points of view. Alongside these monographs, in a context of perpetual revision, some compendia have tried to bring some kind of order to the fields of Ancient history, the Middle Ages, the Early Modern period and especially the Contemporary era. Among these works there are those by van Wees and Lendon,⁸⁶ Le Bohec, Brizzi and Loreto,⁸⁷ DeVries and France,⁸⁸ Hall and Lynn.⁸⁹ These are just a few names selected with difficulty from

⁸⁴ Hew Strachan, *The Changing Character of War* (Geneva: Europaem, 2007).

⁸⁵ Martin van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991); MacGregor Knox – Williamson Murray (eds.), *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); George Kassimeris – John Buckley (eds.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Modern Warfare* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); David Jordan – James Kiras – David Lonsdale – Ian Speller – Chris Tuck – Dale Walton, *Understanding Modern Warfare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁸⁶ Hans van Wees, *Greek Warfare: Myths and Realities* (London: Duckworth, 2004); J.E. Lendon, *Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁸⁷ Yann Le Bohec, *César chef de guerre: César stratège et tacticien* (Monaco: Rocher, 2001); Giovanni Brizzi, *Il guerriero, l'oplita, il legionario: Gli eserciti nel mondo classico* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2002); Luigi Loreto, 'La convenienza di perdere una Guerra: La continuità della grande strategia cartaginese, 290-238/7 a. C.', in: Yann Le Bohec (ed.), *La premiere guerre punique: Autour de l'oeuvre de M. H. Fantar, Actes de la table-ronde de Lyon (mercredi 19 mai 1999)* (Paris: Diffusion De Boccard, 2001), pp. 39-106.

⁸⁸ Kelly DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology* (Peterborough, ON.: Broadview, 1992); John France, *Western Warfare in the Age of the Crusades 1000-1300* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁸⁹ Jeremy Black, *The Cambridge Illustrated Atlas of Warfare: Renaissance to Revolution 1492-1792* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Bert S. Hall, *Weapons and Warfare in Renaissance Europe: Gunpowder, Technology, and Tactics* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001); John Lynn, *Giant of the Grand Siècle: The French Army, 1610-1715* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

many others. The boom has produced a wealth of research, but it has also created the problem of how to preserve unitary discipline. Contrary to what happened during the previous decades, today the study of military history is so widespread that each country expresses its own historiography, ever richer and with ever more diverse personalities. In such a variety of national situations, it would be useful to focus on the Italian case. In Italy, prior to World War Two the study of military history had been limited and it failed to produce any out-standing figure before the war. During the two decades that we have been referring to as 'decades of concomitance', only Piero Pieri emerged as a leading historian (with works which went from the Early Modern era to the Contemporary period). In the twenty years which were a turning point in the field, and in the two more recent decades of the boom, many different authors have appeared: to give just a few examples we shall mention Marco Bettalli and Giovanni Brizzi in the field of ancient history, Franco Cardini and Aldo Settia in medieval history, Piero Del Negro in early modern history and Giorgio Rochat in contemporary history.⁹⁰ Beyond the case of Italy and its authors, it is incumbent on us to demonstrate the quantitative and qualitative increase in national historiographies, which are ever more interrelated.

Let us proceed in an orderly fashion, making some general observations first, followed by more specific exemplification.

The first general observation concerns the methodology of military history research which after the two 'turning point' decades, now appears to be well-established and qualified. With regard to many fields of inquiry, the research methodology is now clear, repeatedly applied and strong, and it produces research comparable one with the other. Military history is now a serial history: for instance, the methodology that should be applied when examining the social composition of officers, the relationships between civilians and the military, the impact of wars on civil society and public opinion and so on is a well-known one, and legions of doctoral students apply tried and tested methods to a huge variety of cases and different historical periods. This is what we mean by well-established methods, and it is a good thing. Obviously, this situation also has a partially negative side: today military history journals (of which, as we shall see, there are more and more these days) tend to be somewhat boring and monotonous when compared to those of some years ago, when methods had yet to be put to the test and there was a greater degree of innovation.

The consolidation of the methodology has resulted in a certain formalisation of the fields of inquiry. In the sixties and seventies, for example, dealing seriously with colonial military history was an absolute exception and a novelty (there were just a few monographs and articles per year that one had to take into consideration). Today, however, there are in this field true areas of studies, different areas of expertise and specialised journals. This specialization has created the need for, and also made possible, the production of compendia. With procedures common to all fields of study, often those who, in the two previous decades, had published one or more successful monographs, in the next twenty years and in the current two decades have published at least one work of general synthesis. This, in turn, allowed a generation of new scholars to examine in depth other issues related to the main theme thus stimulating the production of other monographs. At this point the publishing houses, given the expanding field of studies and, more generally speaking, the interest shown by libraries and readers, permitted or prompted the inauguration of new journals or series of publications. This was, of course, nothing particularly new or exceptional, even though

⁹⁰ Marco Bettalli, *Mercenari: Il mestiere delle armi nel mondo greco antico, età arcaica e classica* (Roma: Carocci, 2013); Giovanni Brizzi, *Scipione e Annibale: La guerra per salvare Roma* (Roma - Bari: Laterza, 2009); Franco Cardini, *Alle radici della cavalleria medievale* (Firenze: La nuova Italia, 1981); Aldo A. Settia, *Rapine, assedi, battaglie: La guerra nel Medioevo* (Roma - Bari: Laterza, 2002); Piero Del Negro, *Esercito, Stato, società: Saggi di storia militare* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1979); Id., *Guerra ed eserciti da Machiavelli a Napoleone* (Roma - Bari: Laterza, 2001); Mario Isnenghi - Giorgio Rochat, *La grande guerra 1914-1918* (Firenze-Scandicci: La nuova Italia, 2000); Giorgio Rochat, *Le guerre italiane 1935-1943: Dall'impero d'Etiopia alla disfatta* (Torino: Einaudi, 2005).

military history had so far had been kept at a distance, either because it was considered the sole domain of those belonging to military institutions, or because it had been relegated to a genre destined for wider public consumption. The boom in academic military history research of the last two decades grew out of this positive spiral, an experience common to all scientific fields.

A second general observation should perhaps point to the small but qualified agencies that promoted the process delineated above. Which agencies were they? Official military history has always counted on the support of public or governmental national agencies: the historical offices of the armed forces, which have received assistance (to varying degrees and with different results depending on each country) from the International Commission of Military History since 1938-39. David Kostewicz's work offers an initial overview of the history of the ICMH.⁹¹ But the histories of the different national commissions are still missing and they will need to include information about the make-up of each commission, the roles played by their academic and military elements and how they interacted, the degree of freedom of action they enjoyed, and the funding they received. Putting these commissions to one side, naturally official military history remained within the military history offices. With perhaps the exception of Eastern Europe during the communist era, where the Academies of Science played an important role, the academic research did not have intermediate institutions comparable to the military history offices. Moreover, history research (including military history research) rarely reached the dimensions of other scientific fields engaged in huge research projects. Clearly, there is a vacuum in this area, which leaves the door open to private associations. Among these, the biggest one is certainly the American Society for Military History, which also publishes an important journal and a very useful newsletter. Equally important, though inevitably smaller, is the British Army Records Society. Nevertheless, neither the American society, nor its pale imitations belonging to other countries, have among their aims the promotion of historiographical innovation. Lacking history offices and with only weak societies, the academic military historians invented small agencies, varying considerably depending on the national context. Often with little funding but a lot of good will, they act as mediators, promote research and the renovation of military historical studies. In the UK and Ireland there are the Military History Seminar and, more recently, the War, Society and Culture Seminar at the Institute for Historical Studies in London, other war studies institutes in Glasgow (Scottish Centre for War Studies), Birmingham (Centre for War Studies), Dublin (UCD Centre for War Studies); in France there is the *Historial de la guerre* in Peronne and the more recently founded and lively CRID (*Collectif de recherche international et de débat sur la guerre de 1914-1918*), together with other periodical initiatives which take place in Montpellier (UMR 5609 del CNRS, ESID), Metz and elsewhere; in Germany there are the *Arbeitskreis Militärgeschichte e. V.*, and the *Arbeitskreis Militär und Gesellschaft in der Frühen Neuzeit*; in Italy there is the *Centro Interuniversitario di Studi e Ricerche Storico-Militari*, which is an academic organization, and the *Società di storia militare*, which is more similar to a History Office and many others (the Society of Ancient Military Historians, the *Re Militari*, The Society for Medieval Military History etc.). All these agencies are not comparable to similarly-functioning institutes devoted to other fields of studies (for instance, for the social sciences, the Chicago-based Armed forces and society seminar). Nor can the resources they enjoy match their ambitions and potentialities. Moreover, they are influenced by the traditional relationships that exist between the military and civilians and which are usually very different from country to country. Finally, they do not form a more or less strong international network, as today it would be possible for them to do. Despite these flaws, it would be impossible to write the history of military history research in the last two decades without taking these agencies into consideration.

⁹¹ David Kostewicz, 'A 'Clearing House' for Military Historians: The International Commission of Military History from 1938 until today', in: *1938–2013: 75 Years International Commission of Military History* (= *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire* 95, Wien: CIHM & Verlag Militaria, 2013), 83-157. Preceding Kostewicz' article, the original version of this essay was published, in Italian language.

A third general observation derives from what we have illustrated so far: during the last two decades this field of studies has been more structured than it was in the past. Some prominent national publishing houses have not only published more books dedicated to military history studies than in the past, aimed at the wider public as well as the smaller community of scholars, but they all have at least one collection specifically dedicated to military history. In the UK, for instance, we could mention not only the collections of the Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press, but also the following: The Cold War History Series (Cass, Routledge), Contributions in Military History (Greenwood), Cultural History of Modern War (Manchester), Military History and Policy (Routledge), Praeger Illustrated Military History Series, Studies in Military and Strategic History (Palgrave Macmillan), Studies in Military History and International Affairs (Praeger), The International Library of Essays on Military History (Ashgate), War and Society (Routledge), War, History & Politics (Routledge), War, Society, Culture (Johns Hopkins University Press), War, Technology, and History (Praeger), Yale Library of Military History etc. A few years prior to the appearance of the above, the publication of specialised historical journals had already begun, and in some cases had gained significant success. For instance, there was the “Journal of strategic studies”, which published important contributions in the field of military history, too, thanks to the fact that one of its editors was passionate about this field. Other publications beside the national ones, but of major significance, are worthy of mention here, such as “The Journal of Military History”, “*Militärgeschichtliche Mitteilungen*” (later: “*Militärgeschichtliche Zeitschrift*”), the “*Revue historique des armées*”. We are referring to very prestigious journals, such as the “War in History” and “War and society”, which is also very lively. In the context of the military history boom which has marked the last decade, some specialist journals, too, have published a significant number of contributions in the field of military history. To give just a few examples: “Small Wars and Insurgencies”, “Civil Wars”, “Terrorism and Political Violence”, “Studies in Conflict and Terrorism”, “Journal of War and Culture Studies”, “Media, War and Conflict”, “Journal of Medieval Military History”, “Journal of Cold War Studies”, “Cold War History”, “*Revue de droit militaire et de droit de la guerre*”, “Journal of Conflict Archaeology”, and so on. Thus, the collections, journals and other periodical series have helped to structure the field of military history, at the same time mirroring and increasing the number of studies and the available knowledge: this, in turn, contributed in a crucial way to the positive spiral of formalisation and the boom in this field of studies.

If we move from the general observations to those concerning the methodology, we notice that there is an increasing fragmentation in the field of military history studies.

These are integrated into the more general trends and dynamics of historical research, and this in turn means that this field of studies (or field of expertise, bigger than it was in the past) witnesses the same changes, which have occurred in the study of history in general. It means, for instance, that after the decline in the history of politics studies, substituted by an interest in social history over the two previous decades, these last twenty years witnessed a significant growth in the fields of cultural history, history of representations, of images and even history of feelings. This linguistic turn and, more generally speaking, cultural turn, have affected military history studies, too. Johanna Bourke’s challenging book on face-to-face killing⁹² is a noteworthy example of this phenomenon.

Gender studies, too, have acquired a greater relevance in this field, though obviously not so great as they have in other fields of studies, since the military profession has long been a male

⁹² Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Granta, 1999).

domain. Nevertheless, even before the appearance of studies dealing with the military performance of female soldiers in contemporary armed forces (an issue which is still dealt with exclusively by the social sciences), it is not uncommon to read books and articles both on the historical construct of man as soldier (an issue which, as is well known, varies relative to different national contexts), and on the social relevance of war and the military (also and especially in times of peace).⁹³ This last issue had been anticipated by George Mosse many years before.⁹⁴ Finally, as is the case across the spectrum of international historical studies, there is an ever increasing call for an international or global history approach. For instance, Jeremy Black, together with many others, assessed the need for military history, too, of taking the history of apparently distant countries into consideration, more than was the case in the past, and he indicated that the inclusion of such histories into the reconstruction of Europe's military history might prompt an alteration of many a point of view.⁹⁵ To move from the realm of historiographical theorisation to that of obtaining actual results has proven to be quite difficult, because writing global history does not mean simply juxtaposing different paragraphs dealing with different national histories. Nevertheless, what is important here in the call for a global historical approach, as well as for an approach based on cultural and gender history, is that they confirm the picture of military historical research which is no longer fragmented, but one that has a firm place in the main trends of historical research of its time.

Beside this framework, which is easy to identify in the fields of academic military history studies, other trends have emerged which have been practised by historians working for military institutions.⁹⁶ On this matter we shall first introduce some general considerations, and only afterwards shall we point out the historiographical content and its findings. Generally speaking, once the Cold War was over, despite those observers who enthusiastically believed in the end of history itself, in the victory of democracy over any other political system and also in the fact that

⁹³ Social scientists and the feminists were the first to study the armed forces from a gender perspective. Their point of view had a strong impact. Among the vast bibliography on the subject, cf. Darlene M. Iskra, *Women in the United States Armed Forces: A Guide to the Issues*, foreword by Vincent W. Patton III (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010); Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via (eds.), *Gender, War, and Militarism: Feminist Perspectives*, foreword by Cynthia Enloe (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2010); Helena Carreiras, *Gender and the Military: Women in the Armed Forces of Western Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2006). See also Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and vice versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Leo Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity* (New York: Random House, 2003); Barton C. Hacker - Margaret Vining (eds.), *A Companion to Women's Military History* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

For an overview on the issues, among the many possible reading pathways, cf. Stefan Dudink - Karen Hagemann - John Tosh (eds.), *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); Erika Kuhlman, *Reconstructing Patriarchy after the Great War: Women, Gender, and Postwar Reconciliation Between Nations* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Raya Morag, *Defeated Masculinity: Post-traumatic Cinema in the Aftermath of War* (Bruxelles et al.: Peter Lang, 2009); Susan Jeffords, *Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1989); Brenda M. Boyle, *Masculinity in Vietnam War Narratives: A Critical Study of Fiction, Films and Nonfiction Writings* (Jefferson, N.C., - London: McFarland, 2009); Susanne Kord - Elisabeth Krimmer, *Contemporary Hollywood Masculinities: Gender, Genre, and Politics* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011); Kathy J. Phillips, *Manipulating Masculinity: War and Gender in Modern British and American Literature* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006).

⁹⁴ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁹⁵ Jeremy Black, *War and the World: Military Power and the Fate of Continents, 1450-2000* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998); Id., *War: Past, Present and Future* (Stroud: Sutton, 2000); Id., *European Warfare 1494-1660* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Id., *Warfare in the Western World, 1882-1975* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002); Id., *War: An Illustrated History* (Stroud: Sutton, 2003); Id., *Rethinking Military History*; Id., *Introduction to Global Military History: 1775 to the Present Day* (London: Routledge, 2005).

⁹⁶ On this matter, partly see Robin Higham (ed.), *Official Military Historical Offices and Sources* (Westport: Greenwood, 2000 - 2 vols.).

international conflicts would be replaced by a future of peace,⁹⁷ the armed forces attained a greater awareness of the usefulness of military history. For the half century after 1945, the prospect of one global atomic war, itself utterly new in comparison to wars, which had been fought in the past, had raised doubts about the usefulness of studying traditional conflicts (both generalised and limited). A new phase then emerged, generally less characterized by international conflict, but with the greater daily engagement of military forces, almost always as part of large scale operations conducted far away from their country of origin. This situation prompted military decision-makers to review their prejudices against military history. Surely it is not by chance that, in all Western countries, the military history of colonial operations came to be reread and studied in the most official military history institutions.

But despite all this, it is difficult not to have the impression that the history offices of the armed forces, the institutes belonging to the military education system, the research centres in charge of extracting learned lessons from today's and past military operations are increasingly interested in an ever more efficacious military history, which is attentive to the combat effectiveness of the military units. A military history which should therefore be ever more directly involved in the provision of information on how to bring men into the field, losing as few of them as possible, on how similar enemies behaved in territories which have once more become decisive. For the decision-makers in uniform, this is the military history that counts: a military history dealing with ages past and conflicts that were so different from those being fought today might remain in place, but it is to be downgraded and used exclusively as an instrument of propaganda or as an interface with the civilian world. The most useful and effective military history needs a brief, if not immediate, time frame, not the inevitably lengthy and uncertain window required to do archival research, the philological analysis of the sources and their contextualisation – which are the very basis of scientific and academic military history. In other words, what is required and is of interest to increasingly operational and expeditionary armed forces is almost only an effective, rapid and immediate military history, which is barely distinguishable from the actual operational activities of the military institutions. What would therefore seem to be of paramount importance is the total and immediate inclusion of the activity of the unit historians in the lessons learned cycle: when a unit is sent on a mission, the chain of command examines it and the historian, too, contributes *de facto* to its evaluation. His reports are then deposited both in archives and included, albeit in synthesised form, in the institutional cycle of the lessons learned. In this process there is clearly continuity but also considerable discontinuity: in the past, the historic journals of the units were sent to the archives at the end of each year; today the reports produced by historians, once they come back from their operational term with their unit, are also used, if at all, to instruct commanders or the members of the unit who are to replace the returnees within the same field of operations.

If this is clearly a transformation in the old cycle of production of official military history and poses complex methodological problems (to what extent is this still 'history'? What role is left for the military history offices, given that official histories are published less and less frequently or, in the best possible scenario, their writing is left indeed to civilians, as was the case in UK, for the official history of the Falklands war, which was written by Lawrence Freedman?⁹⁸), other data are more reassuring and comforting. One has the impression that over the last two decades the more traditional military history, i.e. history produced for teaching within the military educational systems, has quantitatively increased. Since this system has expanded enormously, it produces more history than in the past. The overall impression is that this history is also much more serious, more

⁹⁷ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

⁹⁸ Lawrence Freedman, *The Official History of the Falklands Campaign* (London: Routledge, 2005 [vol. 1: *The Origins of the Falklands War*, 2: *War and Diplomacy*]).

aware of proper historiographical methodologies, and that from a qualitative point of view it often competes with the best academic military history. In the very best cases there is in the end very little to distinguish between military historians and historians of the military.

To conclude our general observations on the last two decades, while academic military history is ever more integrated into the best historical studies, official military history has diverging tendencies: on the one hand, there is an ever more pressing request on the part of top military leaders that part of its production should be ready for immediate use; on the other, there is a qualitative improvement in the rest of the more general output (even relative to the scientific criteria of academic historiography). These trends are not necessarily in conflict, especially if they involve different elements of the history produced by uniformed historians. Certainly, there will be consequences, the nature of which is difficult to foresee at present, on the institutional configuration of military history research produced within the armed forces.

That this is an ongoing transformation can be observed in some specific but exemplary changes, which have recently affected two significant institutions. As early as 1994, in Paris, an audacious experiment was undertaken whose aim was to encourage greater contact between academic and military scholars, by the establishment of a research centre financed by the Ministry of Defence, but exempt from the control of the history offices of every single armed force with which the centre was asked to cooperate. More recently, a decision was taken to accelerate the integration between the history institutes belonging to different armed forces and to create one big Historical Service of Defence, the *Centre d'études d'histoire de la défense* (CEHD) being *de facto* closed down. Meanwhile, it was decided to promote a more direct involvement of non-military scholars (at least of those who accepted these changes), enhancing the *Institut de Recherche Stratégique de l'Ecole Militaire* (IRSEM), the research centre belonging to this vast military academy. Therefore, the lesson from Paris has been an inter-forces centralisation together with a new pivotal role acquired by the military. This French centralisation (which took the form of a dual regency rather than a monarchy) was mirrored by a similar centralisation in Germany. Here an inter-forces historical service had already existed for some time (the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* founded in 1957) where there already existed long-standing cooperation between civilians and the military: by the end of 2012, more than 150 people were already employed in this institution, half of them as researchers, more than half of whom were civilians. Also significant, since 2005 in Potsdam alongside traditional military history there was historical research with a more operational focus, the aim being twofold: first and foremost, to equip units operating abroad with information about the foreign countries and the modes of intervention within the new peace-keeping operations; secondly, to give a clear signal to public opinion that the activities of these units were supported by information and that they followed verifiable guidelines. In 2013 the MGFA was merged with the SOWI (*Sozialwissenschaftliche Institut der Bundeswehr*), another *Bundeswehr* research centre which had a more sociological approach. From then on, the Potsdam institute (now called *Zentrum für Militärgeschichte und Sozialwissenschaften der Bundeswehr*), which is even bigger than before thanks to the new merger, has been working on three lines of action, each having different dimensions and traditions but overlapping and legitimising one-another. The lesson from Berlin is therefore threefold (not counting the inter-force element, which already existed): centralisation, history but also operations, history but also social sciences.

It is too soon to tell whether these institutional changes are built on a clear vision of the future or are simply a cost cutting exercise. Above all, it is too soon to tell whether they will work or not. What the relationship is between this institutional transformation and the structural transformation of the military history profession caused by the establishment of unit field historians and their inclusion in the institutional process of the *lessons learned* is not particularly clear. Historians do not give evaluations. It is nonetheless difficult to deny (and there is no need to visit

the US to become aware of this fact) that the work of the official military historian is changing and the problems related to these changes are those we have been considering: the relationship between historians and new overseas operations (with a new drive towards an ever more operational military history); the relationships between uniformed and academic historians (and scholars in other disciplines, such as military sociology). The US and Europe do not share a unique framework, nor is there a unique European one, and maybe even the two institutional attitudes we have illustrated do not represent a solution which could be universally applied. The only certainty is, that there is an ongoing transformation and that those who stay still will surely be left behind.

In conclusion, over the last two decades, academic as well as official military history has undergone some structural transformations. These, in turn, have produced, and are still producing, changes in the inner and mutual hierarchies belonging to the various components that contribute to the structure of military history. In the previous paragraphs we talked about the emergence, among military historians not related to the army, of a significant and organised third category made up of non-scholars who are, nevertheless, very passionate about their field of study and who have recently attained a high level of expertise. We then talked about the transformations that occurred within the community of uniformed historians. All these changes cannot but affect the mutual relationships between these groups, and first and foremost between scholars who are civilians and those who come from the military. Once more, we would like to stress that this process affects particularly the historians specialising in the contemporary era and above all certain countries. But it also has more indirect influences on the entire field of studies.

This trend emerges from the fact that there are some issues which are recurrent areas of study right across the discipline, though obviously they are dealt with in different ways (they correspond to big chronological periods: Ancient history, history of the Middle Ages, Early Modern and Contemporary history). Some of these had already been studied in the previous two decades, others are specific to the two more recent ones.

In the seventies and eighties society and, in the second place, politics, represented the two most innovative areas of study on the armed forces and war. Conversely, during the last two decades the most ground-breaking historians shifted their interests and either zoomed in on an 'individual' dimension or zoomed out on a 'universal or global' one. We would furthermore like to insist on the fact that the last two decades have seen a lot of interesting military history research which has taken a gender perspective: the issues of how the military profession has shaped men and how it represents a fundamental element of male identity has received considerable attention. Paradoxically, these studies emerged at a time when the greater part of the armed forces was opening their doors to women.

On the other hand, as we have already mentioned, military history studies adopted a global approach, something that had already started on a smaller scale in the two previous decades.⁹⁹ This was done in many ways and produced findings with varying degrees of success. Some tried to identify what connected wars globally, in the true sense of this word, for instance which aspects one national armed force tried to copy from another nation's. Others looked for similarities in the military history of countries that were very different one from another, adopting an interpretation which implicitly referred to the theories of diffusionism. Above all, while the debate over the 'clash of civilisations' was still ongoing, many tried to undermine – often successfully – the presupposed

⁹⁹ A few attempts, noteworthy because of their intentions rather than for their findings, can be found in: Jeremy Black, *Introduction to Global Military History: 1775 to the Present Day*; and Stephen Morillo - Jeremy Black - Paul Lococo, *War in World History: Society, Technology, and War from Ancient Times to the Present* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009 - 2 vols.).

superiority of the Western World in the field of military history: i.e. in this respect, too, some global approaches to military history tried to account for the Eastern origins of what became the Western success...

Analogous interests in such issues spread throughout all historiography. It was therefore unthinkable that military history studies – above all those which were integrated into the most advanced historiographical debates – should remain untouched by the fascination for things postcolonial. Obviously, this interest occurred mainly in the fields of Early Modern and Contemporary history. Thus, experts specialising in area studies (from African to Asian and Latin American studies) tried to deconstruct the supposed superiority of European or Western military history: they studied in detail the not insignificant number of defeats suffered by the European armies which made the colonial expansion of the European powers possible, they analysed the pivotal role of colonial troops in the overseas domains, and they tried to better understand the dynamics which regulated the participation of sectors of the local populations with those troops (colonial units), as well as the historical consequences thereof. Interest in the colonial campaigns of the past has increased due to the recent operation of counter-insurgencies.¹⁰⁰ At a time of ‘war of civilisation’, the supra-sectorial relevance of such post-colonial military history studies is evident to all.

Gender, global and postcolonial studies have been three of the key areas that have characterized, in an innovative way, all historical studies, regardless of their actual extent, over the last two decades. There were other new and significant approaches, although the influence they had was more limited (they were only of interest to some contemporary historians). In the first decade following the end of the bipolar confrontation, i.e. after the end of the Cold War, research based on the archives of the countries which had formed the ‘socialist bloc’, having finally been opened to the public, gained particular relevance. From a quantitative point of view, western research on the military apparatus of countries which had had a planned economy based on the Soviet model and had joined the Warsaw Pact decreased, perhaps, if compared with when it was supported, in no small part, by the US intelligence and security system. The quality, however, has increased significantly now that they can take advantage of the opening, after 1991, of the rich archives of the former Soviet bloc. Regardless of their quantity, then, these studies marked an era. Moreover, understanding in detail the military plans and education systems which the West had fought against for half a century was one of the most important results achieved by Cold War Studies and the research projects which supported them, such as the *Nuclear History Project*, the *Parallel History Project on Cooperative Security* (previously called *Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact*)¹⁰¹ What is more, during the same years studies of the Cold War armed forces and conflicts made significant progress and were also subjected to new analysis in the West. The

¹⁰⁰ Ian Beckett, *Modern Insurgencies and Counter-Insurgencies: Guerrillas and their Opponents since 1750* (London: Routledge, 2001); John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002, 2nd ed. 2005).

¹⁰¹ On the Cold War cf. Lawrence Freedman, *Cold War: A Military History* (London: Cassell, 2001); Jonathan M. House, *A Military History of the Cold War, 1944-1962* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012); Jeremy Black, *War since 1945* (London: Reaktion, 2004); Norman Friedman, *The Fifty Year War: Conflict and Strategy in the Cold War* (London: Chatham, 2000); Melvyn P. Leffler - Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

On the two main contestants cf. Vojtech Mastny - Malcolm Byrne (eds.), *A Cardboard Castle? An Inside History of the Warsaw Pact, 1955-1991* (New York: Central European University Press, 2005); Lawrence S. Kaplan (ed.), *NATO After Thirty Years* (Wilmington, DE.: Scholarly Resources, 1981); Id. (ed.), *NATO After Forty Years* (Lexington, KY.: University Press of Kentucky, 1984); Id., *The Long Entanglement: NATO's First Fifty Years* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1999), *NATO Divided, NATO United: The Evolution of an Alliance* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2004). And also Id., *NATO and the United States: The Enduring Alliance* (New York: Twayne, 1994), and Id., *NATO 1948: The Birth of the Transatlantic Alliance* (Lanham, MD.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

debates and controversies which emerged during the 50th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, including the controversy which followed the exhibition on *Enola Gay*,¹⁰² revealed that a major part of public opinion, and scholars too, no longer accepted propaganda of war (of the Cold War), which insisted on the use of atomic weapons both in the case of 1945 and, as a deterrent, over the following fifty years.¹⁰³

The two decades following the end of the Cold War, which was itself the product of the end of World War Two, witnessed, perhaps not by chance, many revisions of the interpretations of the 1939-1945 conflict.¹⁰⁴ These revisions also had a wider impact, inspiring military history studies on other historical periods, too. For instance, there was a significant shift in the interpretation of the performance of the Nazi army in World War Two, particularly (though not exclusively) on the Eastern front. During the first half of the nineties, some scholars revitalized the debate, which had arisen long before and had undergone a renewal at the time of the *Historikerstreit*. The work Christopher Browning dedicated to the 'ordinary men' from a militarised unit and to their participation in the Final Solution had a significant impact.¹⁰⁵ His study confirmed that, beyond the work on the many branches of the leading structures of the Nazi regime and on its key decision makers, there was a need for far more extensive research on the common masses, in other words on 'ordinary men'. Browning revealed quite specifically that the capacity of the Nazi military institution to impose complete conformism had a dramatic impact on the soldiers' performance not only in the conventional war, but also in the Nazi racist war. As is well known, Browning's thesis was then generalised in an almost 'ethnic' sense by the controversial book by Daniel Goldhagen, who represented as 'willing executioners' not only men who took part in a specific institution, but also the whole of the German people.¹⁰⁶ Between the publication of Browning's and Goldhagen's works, an exceptional historical exhibition on the crimes of the *Wehrmacht*, held in Hamburg in 1995,¹⁰⁷ had an immense impact on military history studies. This exhibition transformed the military history scenario: the German armed forces had not simply been subject to the regime, they had also participated in the Nazi war with conviction, i.e. the military were no longer exclusively those of July 1944. Not only the SS units, but the *Wehrmacht*, too, had committed crimes. In reality, the exhibition had been somewhat flawed and it had to be re-examined by a commission, despite which the interpretation it gave was confirmed as being valid. The two editions of the Hamburg exhibition catalogue, followed by Browning's work as well as that of other scholars, clearly had a tremendous impact in Germany. Though this interpretation should not be generalised (not all units took part in the war of extermination), it transformed the general picture of the German war in the East. And the process did not stop there: in relation to the Balkans, other studies documented behaviour analogous to that which Germany had adopted; Gerhard Schreiber (a member of the MGFA) discovered that similar modes of behaviour had been deployed in the German war against

¹⁰² Among the many works on this issue, see: Martin Harwit, *An Exhibit Denied: Lobbying the History of Enola Gay* (New York, NY: Copernicus, 1996); Robert Newman, *Enola Gay and the Court of History* (New York: Lang, 2004); Charles T. O'Reilly - William A. Rooney, *The Enola Gay and the Smithsonian Institution* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2005).

¹⁰³ R.J.B. Bosworth, *Explaining Auschwitz and Hiroshima: History Writing and the Second World War 1945-1990* (London: Routledge, 1993).

¹⁰⁴ For an important work on the subject see Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: Norton, 1995). For a general approach see Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁵ Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1993).

¹⁰⁶ Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996).

¹⁰⁷ Hannes Heer (ed.), *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941-1944* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition HIS Verlag, 1995). The first exhibition title was: *Vernichtungskrieg: Verbrechen der Wehrmacht 1941 bis 1944*; the second exhibition title was: *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht: Dimensionen des Vernichtungskrieges 1941-1944*.

the Italian anti-fascist Resistance in its Italian campaign, and so on.¹⁰⁸ Even war that had been represented as ‘without hatred’ now was now revealed in all its horror.

When we talked about the resonance and influence these studies had, we were thinking about the fact that the concentric waves created by the pebble thrown into the water went beyond the Nazi war and World War Two. In fact, over the last two decades, war in a more general sense has been described as being horror without limit, as being a fight to the very last man. It would not be surprising if this was claimed by anti-militarists and pacifists, who have (often good) reasons to criticise the recourse to arms. Over the last years, however, the image of war as messy and violent has been promoted – and, we repeat, not only in the case of the contemporary era – even by people who do not share the moral scruples of non-violent pacifists. With regard to Antiquity, Hanson – who started working on this issue at the end of the two previous decades, going against the mainstream trends of that period – almost made this interpretation the distinguishing mark of his research. Criticising what Delbrück had reconstructed almost a century before, the American historian claimed that ‘Western’ warfare is centred (in general) on its ruthlessness and determination: a war that is *à outrance*, to annihilate the enemy. His compendium *Carnage and Culture* (published in Australia as *Why the West Has Won*) is significant starting even from its title. In a later work, *The Father of Us All: War and History, Ancient and Modern*, a *de facto* collection of essays, in the chapter *The Postmodern Meets the Pre-Modern* he insists on the lessons the contemporary era should learn from Ancient Greece, highlighting the historical relevance of (and, in the author’s opinion, the wish for) battles¹⁰⁹ that end in annihilation. We do not wish to judge his theses (which are anyway under debate – Liddell Hart, for instance, would not have agreed, nor would John Keegan who – despite the fact that he did not hide the soldier’s fear in *The Face of Battle* – never described a modern or contemporary battle as a disorganised and bloody assault).

But we do acknowledge that Hanson’s works have been representative of, at least in part, ideas that have been circulating among politicians, public opinion and even some historians over the last decade.

Moreover, Hanson interpreted, in his own way, another major thread in the studies of the last two decades. According to this contemporary American historian of the Ancient world, one of the fundamental elements behind Greek victories was culture (in his interpretation one that was both democratic and consensual). Indeed, the cultural dimension, even more than the dimension of combat, had been pivotal to the studies of this decade – even more than the gender, global and postcolonial dimensions. As maybe politics triumphed during the fifties and sixties, and society in the seventies and eighties, culture has triumphed during the last twenty years.

Culture, then, at all levels. John Keegan, in a general work on the history of war, seemed to put partly aside the institutional-organisational dimension, which he had explored in his 1975 book,

¹⁰⁸ Gerhard Schreiber, *Die italienischen Militärinternierten im deutschen Machtbereich, 1943 bis 1945: Verraten, verachtet, vergessen* (München: Oldenbourg, 1990), and id., *Deutsche Kriegsverbrechen in Italien: Täter, Opfer, Strafverfolgung* (München: Beck, 1996).

¹⁰⁹ Victor Davis Hanson, *Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power* (New York: Doubleday, 2001); and Id., *The Father of Us All: War and History, Ancient and Modern* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010). See also, on both ancient and modern wars, Id., *The Soul of Battle: From Ancient Times to the Present Day, How Three Great Liberators Vanquished Tyranny* (New York: Free Press, 1999); Id., *An Autumn of War: What America Learned from September 11 and the War on Terrorism* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002); Id., *Ripples of Battle: How Wars of the Past Still Determine How We Fight, How We Live, and How We Think* (New York: Doubleday, 2003); Id., *Between War and Peace: Lessons from Afghanistan to Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2004); Id., *A War Like No Other: How the Athenians and Spartans fought the Peloponnesian War* (New York: Random House, 2005); Id., *War, Ancient and Modern: What the Conflicts of the Past Teach us about the Fighting of Today* (Berkeley: Berkeley Public Policy Press, University of California), 2007.

and to embrace a cultural, almost anthropological-cultural, explanation.¹¹⁰ Historians have enquired into military culture, the military dimension of culture, the military myths on every level: not only among commanders, intellectuals, combatants, veterans and survivors, but in society as a whole. For instance, almost at the same time and in the same way, though obviously with nuances depending on each country, post-conflict celebrations and commemorations have been studied systematically. In the wake of the successful *lieux de mémoire* series, all cultures of commemoration have been examined, from Ancient inscriptions to Roman and Early modern tributes and the XXth century commemorations and monuments to the fallen of the two World Wars. Among the historians who had a major international influence in this field we should certainly recall George Mosse¹¹¹ and Jay Winter.¹¹² Around these issues a wide debate has developed.

Johanna Bourke wrote a history of modern war in which she claims the repulsion but sometimes the fascination for face to face killing – in male culture. Opting for a more traditional and certainly less confrontational approach, the Israeli scholar Azar Gat, in a monumental work, reconstructed the history of military culture through the writings of major thinkers, from Machiavelli to the Cold War theorists and beyond.¹¹³ In 2003 the American John Lynn, too, who in the previous years had seemed to highlight the more practical and technical aspects of war (he edited *The Tools of War: Ideas, Instruments, and Institutions of Warfare, 1445-1871* and *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present*) retraced the history of centuries of war, looking at it from a cultural perspective, in his *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture*, where the role of culture is underlined even in the title.¹¹⁴ Military culture has been investigated in its more disturbing manifestations, too, such as those traits Isabel V. Hull sought in the German armed forces at the time of Imperialism in her *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*, in which she outlines elements of continuity and a military *Sonderweg* of sorts between the Wilhelmine Reich and the Nazi Reich.¹¹⁵

In any case, what has generated the most heated debate, over the last two decades, almost to boiling point, is perhaps the French one concerning ‘the culture of war’. In France, as elsewhere, the debate over World War One and in particular over the spirit of the combatants had been constant. In some countries, such as Italy, in the sixties and seventies some scholars had already questioned the combatants’ agreement with the governments’ war aims and their support for the tactical decisions taken by the supreme command: it was in those years, the fiftieth anniversary of the war, that dissidence, desertions and, as a consequence, the weight of military justice – summary shootings and so on – were being re-discovered. Over the last twenty years all this has returned to the limelight, particularly in France, and especially after some authors, such as Stephane Audoin Rouzeau and Annette Becker (but above all the former), had spoken relative to the *poilus* of a

¹¹⁰ Keegan’s evolution, after *The Face of Battle*, went through John Keegan - Richard Holmes, with John Gau, *Soldiers: A History of Men in Battle*, with a preface by Frederick Forsyth (London: Hamilton, 1985); and went from Id., *A History of Warfare* (New York: Knopf, 1993), to Id., *War and Our World: The Reith Lectures 1998* (London: Hutchinson, 1998).

¹¹¹ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

¹¹² Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

¹¹³ Azar Gat, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); and Id., *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹¹⁴ John A. Lynn, *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (Boulder, Co.: Westview, 2003).

¹¹⁵ Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca - London: Cornell University Press, 2005).

‘culture of war’.¹¹⁶ These authors identified, and theorised, the existence of a widespread culture shared by the French combatants in the Great War who, independent of their specific and conscious consent to government policy (which might have been missing), were ultimately able to interiorize the war objectives and participate willingly in the fighting which permitted, among other things, such a long war and accounted for its being so lethal but eventually successful. No longer soldiers, then, caught in the moment of their refusal to fight, but rather in the moment, considered more relevant and effective, of their being (or at least their having been convinced to be) willing participants, despite their subordination, in the great massacre that was the war. This, the killing and making die culture, would in the end be the ‘culture of war’ that the soldiers seemed to share with the highest command and those responsible for the conflict. On the contrary, when faced with these theses, other authors continued to recall and emphasise the desire of the vast majority of troops not to fight, but to resist war or to come to terms with it.¹¹⁷ This brief taste, which is all that we can offer, struggles to give an idea of the discussions and debates on the subject of these two theses that have polarised the majority of French historians dealing with World War One,¹¹⁸ even though the opinions that occupied the middle ground often seemed to be the most farsighted.¹¹⁹

The discussion sometimes veered towards the opposition consent/ dissent (or coercion) and could be further complicated by the fact that the two interpretations seemed to be divided into two sides, depending on the research institutes or publishers for whom some of the authors worked. In the bigger picture, however, it has been a significant debate, whose value is in no way limited to World War One, and it has often functioned as a means of clarification, thanks also to some scholars who – while adopting an apparently intermediate position – have reminded us that in a war the mass of soldiers, and more generally speaking of combatants, can rarely be considered either just willing or just unwilling, or deserting. And they have also reminded us that the eye-witness accounts of combatants should of course be subjected to careful and critical examination, but that they remain a unique source, especially in a time when war is fought by mass armies, for the understanding of the logic of combat.

As anticipated, combat was, alongside culture, the other great and recurrent keyword. In the wake of what John Keegan had started to do in his *The Face of Battle*, military historians, from those specialising in Antiquity to those specialising in the Contemporary Era, have analysed the fighting units. Not just great armies, and not just divisions either: more often companies or even some specialized units. It was, furthermore, no longer simply the case of the grand strategies of high commands (and often politicians) which had already been reconstructed by the official reports or in

¹¹⁶ Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau - Annette Becker, ‘Violence et consentement: la “culture de guerre” du premier conflit mondial’, in: J-P. Rioux - J-F. Sirinelli (eds.), *Pour une histoire culturelle* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), pp. 251-271; Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau - Annette Becker, *14-18: retrouver la guerre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000). Cf. first Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *14-18: Les combattants des tranchées, A travers leurs journaux* (Paris: Colin, 1986); then Id., *Combattre: Une anthropologie historique de la guerre moderne (19.-21. siècle)* (Paris: Seuil, 2008); and Annette Becker, *La guerre et la foi: De la mort à la mémoire 1914-1930* (Paris: Colin, 1994); Ead., *Oubliés de la Grande Guerre: Humanitaire et culture de guerre 1914-1918, Populations occupées, déportés, prisonniers de guerre* (Paris: Editions Noesis, 1998).

¹¹⁷ Frédéric Rousseau, *La guerre censure: Une histoire des combattants européens de 14-18* (Paris: Seuil, 1999); Id., *Les procès des témoins de la Grande Guerre: L’affaire Norton Cru* (Paris: Seuil, 2003), pp. 273-275; Nicolas Offenstadt, *Les Fusillés de la Grande Guerre et la mémoire collective (1914-1999)* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1999, rééd. 2009); Remy Cazals, ‘Culture de guerre, culture de paix: Retour sur les témoignages de combattants’, in: *Histoire, défense & sociétés*, 2004, 1; Remy Cazals - Frédéric Rousseau, *Le cri d’une génération* (Toulouse: Privat, 2001).

¹¹⁸ For an evaluation cf. Jules Maurin - J.C. Jauffret (eds.), *80 ans d’historiographie et de représentations: Colloque international, Montpellier 20-21 novembre 1998* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 2002); and Hubert Heyriès (ed.), *Histoire militaire, études de défense et politiques de sécurité: Des années 1960 à nos jours*.

¹¹⁹ Antoine Prost - Jay Winter, *Penser la Grande Guerre: Un essai d’historiographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2004); François Cochet, *Survivre au front 1914-1918: Les poilus entre contrainte et consentement* (Saint-Cloud: Soteca, 2005); Id., ‘Pace e guerra nel Ventesimo secolo: Un bilancio storiografico della ricerca francese’, in: *Mondo contemporaneo: Rivista di storia*, 2005, 1.

any case by previous historiography, nor even the case of the soldiers' experience of war, which had been dealt with by the *War and Society studies*, but it was now a question of the tactics adopted by minor units in the theatre of war: tactics based on the military doctrines developed by pre-war general staffs, improved upon by officers often while under fire, strongly influenced by the availability of weapons, sometimes based on the authors' actual personal knowledge of the battlefield.¹²⁰ In a word, the triumph of the history of the art of being operational, from the highest commands to the very last of the soldiers, and at the same time it was an exercise in trying to understand how military units had been trained over the centuries, which doctrinal military manuals had been used for the training of officers, with which weapons they could fight and how – when under fire – they often had to adjust and integrate the lessons learned. It does seem a very technical history, almost a return to Delbrück – but to the Delbrück who would measure how much the Greek soldier's armour weighed and how many steps he could have taken, certainly not the Delbrück who embedded military history into the history of politics. This new history of combat,¹²¹ which has indeed given us immensely fruitful details on the knowledge of military history, belongs entirely to the inner workings of the military establishment. In order to explain combat, these authors seem to suggest it is not necessary (or in any case it is not sufficient) to question society, politics, high culture: it is enough to look inside the military institution, to understand the most practical and technical features of weapons (the speed of spears, the precision of arrows and crossbows, the recharge time and range of fire arms) and to re-read the military doctrinal texts on which middle and lower ranking officers based their education, i.e. their professional culture. Some scholars who criticised *War and society studies* have theorised that this was how military history returned to the study of the real core of their interests: war and, indeed, combat. In truth, as we have already seen, military history research had never abandoned it, and it was in fact thanks to the innovative studies of the seventies and eighties that it had been possible for the military institution to understand better how it functioned, initially in times of peace, then also in times of war. To some extent, since their origin was to be traced to Keegan's work which had gained so much success among social and cultural historians, this *combat history* – notwithstanding the authors' claims of independence and of having revealed the truth – became complementary to the *War and society studies*: twins, non-identical rather than identical, or better perhaps brothers, an older one and a more aggressive, younger one, whose behaviours often diverge and who often bear feelings of hate (rather than love) for each other.

It seems useful to recall that, over the last two decades, there has been a veritable explosion in terms of the quantity of military history research produced – either dealing with conduct during combat or the culture of war, with local conflicts or total wars, either following a traditional approach or opting for a more innovative perspective such as gender, global and post-colonial – when compared with the past (even though it had also increased significantly then). The proliferation of journals, collections and websites has been, at one and the same time, both effect of and generator of this growth. This permitted the enormous expansion of entire fields of study. We shall mention only a few of them and their illustration will have something of the appearance of a

¹²⁰ Here are some authors and their books: Christopher Bellamy, *The Evolution of Modern Land Warfare: Theory and Practice* (London: Routledge, 1990); James S. Corum, *The Luftwaffe: Creating the Operational Air War, 1918-1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1997); Robert Citino, *The Path to Blitzkrieg: Doctrine and Training in the German Army, 1920-1939* (Boulder, Co.: Lynne Rienner, 1999); Id. - Robert Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operations Warfare* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

¹²¹ Richard Holmes, 'Battle: the Experience of Modern Combat', in: Charles Townshend (ed.), *The Oxford History of Modern War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Nicola Labanca, '“Combat style”: Studi recenti sulle istituzioni militari alla prova del fuoco', in: Nicola Labanca - Giorgio Rochat (eds.), *Il soldato, la guerra e il rischio di morire* (Milano: Unicopli, 2006).

list, whose breadth alone will be confirmation of the extent of these studies and of the aforementioned formalisation of military history over the last twenty years.

For instance, the studies on the navies and maritime war, unfortunately often forgotten, multiplied, profiting at the same time from the development of maritime history methodologies, from a greater natural interest shown by a globalised society in the theme of connections (among which maritime connections have an extremely ancient history), and from the more practical interests the navies had, in an era of radical transformation of the armed forces, in better understanding the dynamics of their own history and in seeing reflected, also on a historical level, their new relevance.¹²²

Studies on the air forces, too, witnessed a great increase in interest. Technology, organisation, professional culture and links with industry, all issues which are at the root of the experience of war in the air, have been among the themes central to the interests of historians in recent years. The aura of success and the horror and opposition which air operations received during these last two post-bipolar decades have not impacted negatively on the success of the studies on the air forces. It is not readily quantifiable, but it is probably correct to assume that the idea (albeit misguided) that air war could solve complicated local conflicts without the need for Western armed forces to 'put their boots on the ground' has somehow prompted the study of historical precedents. At the same time, it is probable that, although starting from a different viewpoint, it was the lack of precision of many so-called 'intelligent bombs', that re-awoke interest in the history of aerial bombardments during World War One and World War Two in particular, and rekindled the debate not only on their moral validity, but also on their actual impact on the fighting.¹²³

Studies on the secret services, in which military institutions have played no small part, have multiplied over the last few years. The collation of sources in this field has always been fraught with difficulty, and historians have to contend with institutions and members who are often resolutely determined not to leave any trace of their actions. Despite this structural problem, studies of intelligence agencies have expanded in all countries producing a small number of official histories, the first independent compendia and even specialised journals.¹²⁴

Studies on the war of words, i.e. war propaganda, have also increased considerably. Already in the preceding years handful of researchers had written pioneering summary works: among them

¹²² For an overview: Andrew Lambert, 'The Construction of Naval History 1815-1914', in: *The Mariner's Mirror*, vol. 97 (2011) n. 1 (February), pp. 207-224; J.B. Hattendorf (ed.), *Ubi sumus? The state of naval and maritime history* (Newport: Naval War College Press, 1994); Paul Kennedy, 'Levels of approach and contexts in Naval history', and Jon Tetsuro Sumida - David Alan Rosenberg, 'Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management, and Money: The study of Navies as Complex Organizations and the Transformation of Twentieth Century Naval History', in: J.B. Hattendorf (ed.), *Doing Naval History, Essays toward Improvement* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995); John B. Hattendorf, *Talking about Naval History* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010); Gelina Harlaftis, 'Maritime History or History of Thalasa', in: Gelina Harlaftis - Kostas N. Karapidakis - Kostas Sbonias - Vaiopolus Vaios (eds.), *The New Ways of History: Developments in Historiography* (London - New York: Tauris, 2010).

¹²³ Eric Markusen - David Kopf, *The Holocaust and Strategic Bombing: Genocide and Total War in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995); Yuki Tanaka - Marilyn B. Young (eds.), *Bombing Civilians: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York - London: The New Press, 2009); Anne Fuchs, *After the Dresden Bombing: Pathways of Memory, 1945 to the present* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2012); Richard Overy, *The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War over Europe 1940-1945* (New York: Viking, 2013).

¹²⁴ An important author is Christopher Andrew. See Christopher Andrew - David Dilks (eds.), *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Christopher Andrew, *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London: Heinemann, 1985); Id. - Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990); Id., *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1996); Id., *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Id. - Richard J. Aldrich - Wesley K. Wark (eds.), *Secret Intelligence: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2009).

there were the British professor, the late Philip Taylor, the Spanish Alejandro Pizarroso Quintero, David Welch and others.¹²⁵ Over the last twenty years, however, studies on how states and the armed forces, in the course of all of their history from Antiquity to the present, have tried to influence internal public opinion and the enemy's, as well as their own and the enemy's combatants, have veritably flourished. In this field, too, encyclopaedias and specialised journals have appeared. It is hard to deny that in this there is also reflected the transformation that war is currently undergoing.

Other fields of study, be they traditional, new or simply reinvented on the basis of the innovations of the two preceding decades, have increased. A traditional field was, for instance, the study of strategy, which has witnessed considerable innovation in recent years.¹²⁶ A field which has just started, or rather has simply been updated, is the study of the technology of war and its influence on the ways the history of wars has changed, in the wake of Martin van Creveld e D.R. Headrick's teachings. This field, too, has aroused considerable attention which is not surprising given that it has occurred during the trend of the *revolution in military affairs*,¹²⁷ a phenomenon which historians rightly demonstrated to be unexceptional, having found antecedents in all places and eras, and which they have managed to intertwine with the afore-mentioned debate over the 'military revolution'.¹²⁸ Also the study on logistic, which has been previously neglected, has produced extensive research in military studies of Antiquity as well as those of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. The international military organisation, or at least the war of alliances, from the less strict ones of the past to those more rigidly formalised in the Cold War years and the post-bipolar era, has generated new interest among historians, who have been struck by its historical

¹²⁵ Philip M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Era* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 3rd ed. 2003); Alejandro Pizarroso Quintero, *Historia de la propaganda: Notas para un estudio de la propaganda politica y de "guerra"* (Madrid: Eudema, 1990); David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983); Id., *The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda* (London: Routledge, 1993); *Germany, Propaganda, and Total War: 1914-1918. The Sins of Omission* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

¹²⁶ Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, with the collaboration of Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); John Baylis - John Garnett (eds.), *Makers of Nuclear Strategy* (London: Pinter, 1991); Williamson Murray - Macgregor Knox - Alvin Bernstein (eds.), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Victor Davis Hanson (ed.), *Makers of Ancient Strategy: From the Persian Wars to the Fall of Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

¹²⁷ Daniel R. Headrick, *Power Over Peoples: Technology, Environments, and Western Imperialism, 1400 to the Present* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Max Boot, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (New York: Gotham, 2006).

¹²⁸ With the exception of the heterodox Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *War and Anti-War: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), for a very short list cf. Lawrence Freedman, *The Revolution in Strategic Affairs* (= Adelphi Paper, London: IISS, 1998); Colin Gray, *Strategy for Chaos: Revolutions in Military Affairs and the Evidence of History*, with a preface by Williamson Murray (London: Cass, 2002); MacGregor Knox - Williamson Murray (eds.), *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Then see at least: Michael Howard - John F. Guilmartin, Jr., *Two Historians in Technology and War* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1994); Clifford J. Rogers (ed.), *The Military Revolution Debate: Readings on the Military Transformation of Early Modern Europe* (Boulder: Westview, 1995); Andrew Ayton - J.L. Price (eds.), *The Medieval Military Revolution: State, Society and Military Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London: Tauris, 1995); Michael Duffy (ed.), *The Military Revolution and the State, 1500-1800* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1980); Jeremy Black, *Beyond the Military Revolution: War in the Seventeenth Century World* (Houndmills: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011); Id., *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1550-1800* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1991); Peter A. Lorge, *The Asian Military Revolution: From Gunpowder to the Bomb* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Weston F. Cook, Jr., *The Hundred Years War for Morocco: Gunpowder and the Military Revolution in the Early Modern Muslim World* (Boulder: Westview, 1994).

relevance and have become interested in the emergence of new institutions, sometimes aided in their research by the supporting policies of the very same supranational institutions.

As can be seen then, at an international level, no field in the history of war and of the armed forces over the last two decades has been left unturned. Nor should it be thought that these were studies in appeasement. In the wake of the terrible memory of the great tragedy of the Nazi attempt at the Final Solution, and of the great academic and editorial success of the studies relating to it, many scholars have examined the very worst episodes in the history of wars. Slaughters, massacres and mass killings in antiquity, in the middle ages, and in the early modern as well as the contemporary era have been the focus of both the historians' work¹²⁹ and of the interest of public opinion. In these cases, as we have already seen, over the centuries not just states, but also governments, institutions and even 'ordinary people' have accumulated a series of specific historical responsibilities. Case for case, scholars have attempted to define when this was the result of a 'pathology', of a deviant behaviour of the military institution and its men, and when – which was not rare – it was the result of the deliberate adoption of a specific military strategy. The spread of laws on military international human rights have attempted to bring a stop to such procedures and strategies,¹³⁰ but the struggle to impose them – as has become clear in the case of armed conflicts in the last two decades – is anything but easy.

In a sense, the history of war crimes is and must be part of the history of war: from the abduction of the Sabine women to the atrocities of World War One and World War Two, from colonial wars and wars of decolonisation, to Vietnam and to certain highly controversial features of recent post-bipolar conflicts. The 'juridification' of history and of historical evaluation has sometimes caused a problem, more in public opinion than among scholars: the problem has occurred when studies have addressed the history of genocides, and especially when they have focused on the Nazi regime's attempt at the Final Solution of the Jewish problem, or on colonial genocide and the role played in it by the military. While it was (or should have been) perfectly well-known to scholars that war – even when at its most lethal – is not genocide, the distinction between the two was sometimes more blurred in the eyes of public opinion, especially when decades (in the case of the Holocaust) or even centuries (in the case of colonialism) separated it from the events.¹³¹ There was the risk that genocide, massacre, atrocities, war crimes and eventually death in combat

¹²⁹ Among an immense bibliography: Daniel Pick, *War Machine: The Rationalisation of Slaughter in the Modern Age* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1993); Benjamin A. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century* (Ithaca - London: Cornell University Press, 2005); Christian Gerlach, *Extremely Violent Societies: Mass Violence in the Twentieth-Century World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Philip G. Dwyer - Lyndall Ryan (eds.), *Theatres of Violence: Massacre, Mass Killing and Atrocity throughout History* (New York - Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012). Important: Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

¹³⁰ Geoffrey Best, *Humanity in Warfare: The Modern History of the International Law of Armed Conflicts* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980); Id., *War and Law Since 1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

¹³¹ The Jewish genocide and the role the war context and military or paramilitary institutions played in it are such great issues for the history of the Twentieth century and beyond that it would be impossible to summarize them in the little space of a footnote. For just a first overview cf. Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Howard Ball, *Prosecuting War Crimes and Genocide: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999); Donald Bloxham, *Genocide on Trial: War Crimes Trials and the Formation of Holocaust History and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Martin Shaw, *War and Genocide: Organized Killing in Modern Society* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003); Adam Jones (ed.), *Genocide, War Crimes and the West: History and Complicity* (London - New York: Zed, 2004); Geoffrey P. Megargee, *War of Annihilation: Combat and Genocide on the Eastern Front, 1941* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007). Discussions were arisen by Marc Ferro (ed.), *Le livre noir du colonialisme, XVIe-XXIe siècle: de l'extermination à la repentance* (Paris: Laffont, 2003); and Jürgen Zimmerer - Joachim Zeller (eds.), *Genocide in German South-West Africa: The Colonial War (1904-1908) in Namibia and its aftermath*, translated from German (Monmouth, Wales: Merlin, 2008).

might become confused beyond distinction and emerge as elements of one and the same continuum. Historians have tried to clarify this matter, and also to demolish false truths that had developed over time,¹³² although there can be no doubt that they too might have been affected by the spirit of the time in which they lived and worked. Moreover, the confusion over war, massacre and genocide – in societies that were kept at a distance from the direct experience of war as a consequence of fifty years of Cold War and two decades of military operations conducted exclusively by professional armed forces – generated the need to ‘measure’ wars again. Opinions and historians, not surprisingly, given the great political import of the issue, are divided.¹³³

All of this has, in the end, intersected with a new attention, on the part of public opinion and the community of historians, to the issues of memory and its construction. Clearly, this subject does not belong exclusively to military history: historical research in general is a constant reflection of, and confutation of, how individual and collective memories work over time. In recent decades in particular, collective memory has gained even more relevance since scholars of history of nationalism and, more generally, of ‘imagined communities’ have once more adopted it as an issue. Whatever the reasons behind why memory has regained the attention of military and war historians might be, it is easy to see how over the last two decades – i.e. from the end of the Cold War, at a time when some ideologies had crumbled and new states started to be rebuilt – the study of the construction and circulation of war memories has intensified. The memories of epochal conflicts, such as the great wars of Antiquity, the Thirty Years War or the two World Wars, have been studied in depth using a wide range of documentary sources. Anniversaries and commemorations – as well as new research methodologies – have encouraged such studies¹³⁴ and what emerges is the central role that the collective memories of the great wars still plays in certain national contexts (the German¹³⁵ and Italian¹³⁶ cases after World War Two are exemplary in this respect).

The explosion of studies in military history also on such important issues as the ones cited above has been significant, without actually exhausting the entire field. Space has also been left, albeit with ambivalent results, for a series of publications of the ‘What if...?’ variety.¹³⁷ What if the

¹³² For an example see: John Horne - Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2001).

¹³³ After the first assessments made by projects such as the ‘Correlates of war’ (for instance, Melvin Small - J. David Singer, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars 1816-1980* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1982)), for more recent works cf. Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World. History's Age of Hatred* (London: Allen Lane, 2006); Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Worse than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (London: Little, Brown, 2010); and Steven Pinker, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined* (New York: Viking, 2011).

¹³⁴ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006); Jay Winter (ed.), *Legacy of the Great War: Ninety Years on* (Columbia, MO - London: University of Missouri Press, 2009).

¹³⁵ This endless debate started anew at the time of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War Two: Alon Confino, *Germany as a Culture of Remembrance: Promises and Limits of Writing History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Laurel Cohen-Pfister - Dagmar Wienroeder-Skinner (eds.), *Victims and Perpetrators, 1933-1945: (Re)Presenting the Past in Post-Unification Culture* (Berlin - New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006); Bill Niven (ed.), *Germans as Victims: Remembering the Past in Contemporary Germany* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2006); Helmut Schmitz, *Nation of Victims? Representations of German Wartime Suffering from 1945 to the Present* (Amsterdam - New York: Rodopi, 2007).

¹³⁶ Mario Isnenghi, *Le guerre degli italiani: parole immagini ricordi 1848-1945* (Milano: Mondadori, 1989); John Foot, *Italy's Divided Memory* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009); Filippo Focardi, *Il cattivo tedesco e il bravo italiano: La rimozione delle colpe della seconda guerra mondiale* (Roma - Bari: Laterza, 2013).

¹³⁷ Harold C. Deutsch - Dennis E. Showalter (eds.), *What if? Strategic Alternatives of WW2* (Chicago, Ill.: Emperor's Press, 1997); Robert Cowley (ed.), *What if? The World's Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been, Essays* (New York: Putnam, 1999); Id. (ed.), *What if? 2: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been, Essays* (New York: Putnam, 2001); Philip E. Tetlock - Richard Ned Lebow - Geoffrey Parker (eds.), *Unmaking the West: "What-if" Scenarios that Rewrite World History* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006); Dennis Showalter -

battle of Teutoburg had had a different outcome from the one it actually had?, or if Hernan Cortes had been killed rather than the Aztec emperor?, or if the northern states of America had lost their war of independence? Questions such as these have been posed (and attempts have been made to answer them) by historians or publicists, sometimes in order to actually seriously assess the forces involved in those situations, more often in order to gratify the vast general reading public. On the other hand, counterfactual history and uchronia can be methods to whet reflection, when employed in a methodologically aware manner, otherwise they are little more than simple pastimes. It might be surprising that, when faced with the innumerable new themes which are still in need of serious research, crucial but not exactly new issues are sometimes approached in such a banalizing way. In truth, we must say that sometimes even some of the best military historians have toyed with such issues. Certainly, the good fortune, at least in the editorial market, of these questions and these publications confirms the said market is very wide and has space for everything.

So as not to create the impression that the explosion of studies has ended up in trifles, it will be right and proper to try to conclude this overview of the last two decades by recalling how during these years the most solid bases for the advancement, the renewal and the improvement of military history studies have been established. Some very important compendia of national histories have been written, as well as a few important transnational, or at least multinational and international, projects. Moreover, profiting from the increase in the studies that had occurred during the two previous decades, or from the boom in the available knowledge which emerged over these years, a number of compendia have been compiled. There are so many that it is not possible to mention them all. Sometimes they tried to hold together the entire thousand-year old military history: either by summarising, going into more details, keeping on a more general level¹³⁸ or by focusing on a single country. Among them, the work that perhaps cannot be ignored is the military history of France, in four volumes, edited by André Corvisier.¹³⁹ More often than not, these general works focused on a specific historical period, always on a national level. To mention just a few of them, we have the military history of Ancient Greece, Rome and the Byzantine empire, of medieval England, France and Italy, of the different European powers in the Early Modern, and we have many histories of the national armed forces of the XIXth and XXth centuries. It is impossible to give a full list or even to mention the best of them, here. Alongside these works, we should mention some international editorial projects, which only publishing houses enjoying a global market could afford, often in English: certain general histories of war, or of specific wars – for instance the Napoleonic wars or the two World Wars – which can count on a vast public of readers.¹⁴⁰ We believe that these general works, and especially those focused on a single nation, have played a key role over the last two decades.

As we have now so often recalled, military history studies in recent years have flourished; the available knowledge and monographs on every issue have multiplied; the work of serious scholars has been at risk of rubbing shoulders with the production of fanatics of military history on the same shelves (or web pages); the increase in publications has brought a challenge to both the old seriousness of official reports of military history produced within the armed forces and to the scientific validity of academic military history. For these reasons, it has been and it is of the utmost

Harold Deutsch, *What If the Allies had Fallen? Sixty Alternate Scenarios of World War II* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Pub., 2011).

¹³⁸ See among many Michael S. Neiberg, *Warfare in World History* (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹³⁹ *Histoire militaire de la France*, dirigée par Andre Corvisier (Paris: PUF, 1992-1994 [vol. 1: *Des origines a 1715*, sous la direction de Philippe Contamine, 2: *De 1715 a 1871*, sous la direction de Jean Delmas, 3: *De 1871 a 1940*, sous la direction de Guy Pedroncini, 4: *De 1940 a nos jours*, sous la direction de Andre Martel]).

¹⁴⁰ For instance Geoffrey Parker (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare: The Triumph of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and Charles Townshend (ed.), *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

importance to have unbiased summary works and balanced guides. After all, much is indeed owed to such works if the consolidation of methods, the formalisation of research themes and the organisation of fields of study has not led to the sectorization of military history research, but has fully integrated it into that of more general historical research.

Fortunately, in the thick of so many more or less centrifugal forces and groups gone mad, the last two decades of studies have produced these syntheses: in future they will form the basis of the advancement and improvement of military history, in the fields of Ancient, Mediaeval and Early Modern history as well as that of the Contemporary Era.

D. Conclusions

How much of this traversal of international military historical research that we have here so briefly outlined, has been reflected in the activities of the ICMH in the last seventy-five years since its foundation? To what extent has the Commission been an active part of this process of constant renewal? Have its activities been more biased towards military or academic history, have they tried to build a bridge not just between nations but also between different places and modes of production of military historical research? Even if the answers belong elsewhere in this publication, a number of very brief notes cannot be left out of a text which has been requested and stimulated by the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the ICMH.

First and foremost it should be repeated once again that the path taken is only an attempt at giving bearings and summarizing and that has taken on board the major variations for each of the great historical periods concerned – from ancient to contemporary history – and above all in the case of the different cases at a national level. Despite being ever more sensitive to international development, the logic behind the production of military-historical research is still very much affected by the dynamics at national level.

Secondly, it is worth remembering that the ICMH has been many different things at one and the same time. It is an international Commission with its meetings and division into committees and workshops. It is also the IRMH with its articles. And finally it is the series of conferences, in part created at a central and international level, but above all – especially recently – a reflection of the proposals of various national commissions, to whom, thanks to a particular system of proportions, a quota of participation and visibility is guaranteed. It is its Bibliographic Committee, with its yearly output. It is its Archival Committee, with its very interesting “Mars and Janus” (since 1990). Whatever unity and constancy (and perhaps it was not much) the ICMH had been able to maintain at this international level, was then divided, fragmented and multiplied in a number of national contexts by the hands-on activity of the individual local Commissions. Their make-up and activities, as already stated above, are so different from country to country that one might in fact question if one is talking about the same institution. Some of these commissions are made up of renowned scholars, others by the heads of the historical department of the armed forces, some work uninterruptedly, while others only become active on the occasion of special festivities and in the pre-dispatch briefing of delegates (usually their own) to international conferences. Some of them, then, are a true reflection of the composite national community of military historians, while others – despite their official state recognition – are one of their protagonists and not always the most dynamic or important.

Given so much diversity, it is difficult to give even an initial response to the questions that we posed at the outset. Furthermore, much of the requisite knowledge is still missing. There is no real history of the ICMH or complete record of the issues of its IRMH or of the reports of international conferences, not to mention the fact that almost the entire history of the various National Commissions is also missing. Bearing this in mind, we hope that this 75th anniversary might mark the beginning of the writing of the knowledge that we still lack today. Our observations might therefore be completely rethought in future.

One thing however is certain, the breakdown into twenty year blocks that has been used above, seems to be particularly useful as an approach to the history of the ICMH, too. In its very earliest years and up to the forties (including the immediate post-war years), the Commission represented a laudable result of the process of internationalization of historical studies as well as the first product of the burgeoning Cold War, but with some unique peculiarities among which should be mentioned the central role of France and French research, rather than American. In the twenty

International Commission of Military History

Argentina * Austria * Belgium * Brazil * Bulgaria * Cameroon * Canada * China * Cyprus * Czech Republic * Denmark * Finland * France * Germany * Great Britain * Greece * Hungary * Indonesia * Ireland * Israel * Italy * Japan * Jordan * Morocco * Netherlands * Norway * Poland * Portugal * Republic of Korea * Rumania * Senegal * Slovakia * Slovenia * South Africa * Spain * Sweden * Switzerland * Tunisia * Turkey * United Arab Emirates * United States of America

year period between the fifties and sixties, the Commission grew very little, nor does it seem to have had a central role in the development of international military historical studies though, at the same time, partially reflecting it. It was above all in the following twenty years, in the seventies and even more in the eighties, that the international reputation of the ICMH grew, perhaps primarily, in the spirit of Helsinki, given that it was a meeting point for historians from the two Europes: the western capitalist and the eastern Soviet. It was this, on the one hand, that pushed the US to participate with greater conviction in this initiative despite the fact that it was born in Europe (the first transatlantic international congress was in 1982 and the first publication of the IRMH edited by the American commission was in 1992). And it was this too, on the other hand, that pushed new countries and governments to create their own commissions, multiplying the number of those belonging to the ICMH. With the end of the Cold War and its division of Europe, this organization inherited a broad international representation that was ready to respond to a cultural challenge that had now become global.

That the ICMH grew considerably in the eighties, as a result of governmental political choices and the expansion of military historical studies already in place in the different countries is demonstrated not only by the number of international conferences that became annual from 1980, but also, more clearly, by the number of IRMH publications: there were ten of them in the difficult period 1939-1949, thirty in the thirty years between 1959 and 1980 and no fewer than thirty in the decade between 1980 and 1990.

Table. 1. *From Revue d'histoire militaire: analysis of the contents, great historical periods, percentage of dedicated titles (from the total)*

	General history	Ancient history	Medieval history	History of the modern age	History of the 19th century	History of the 20th century	General 20th century history	History of the 20th century: first world war	History of the 20th century: the period between the two world wars	History of the 20th century: second world war	History of the 20th century: the period following the second world war
1939-1949	17,14	2,86	20,00	51,43	5,71	2,86					
1950-1969	8,72	4,13	6,88	20,18	21,10	38,99	24,31	4,59	1,38	8,26	0,46
1970-1989	4,76	3,02	5,40	13,17	15,24	58,41	15,40	6,83	6,83	21,43	7,94

Thanks also to the very useful indexes prepared by Micheline Corvisier, it is possible to outline an initial reconstruction of the IRMH, not least up to 1990. In the first ten years, the French presence was particularly evident. Between the '50's and '60's, articles were written by (among others) well-known scholars such as Piero Pieri and John Nef, or those who were to become so, such as André Martel and Hans Umbreit, but not those who in the same decades were renewing military history in their own countries. In the '70's and '80's, however, we find some of the best writers of military history in French of that period and, finally, of the period before (Corvisier, Contamine, Bertaud, Godechot, Waquet, Delmas, Michel, Bodinier, Masson, Buffotot, Maurin, Pedroncini, Facon, Chagniot, Quatrefages) and also in German (Messerschmidt, Geyer, Reichel, Rauchensteiner) and, to a lesser extent, of other nations (among the Italians Ceva, Luraghi e Santoni). Considering the power and quality of the French presence, proof that its national Commission knew how to put into the IRMH the very best forces of academic historiography, and the more limited but always qualified presence from the German speaking world, proof of the MGFA's ability to hold together both official and independent and critical historiography, the

renewed absence of Anglo Saxon historiography is all the more striking, despite the fact that in those years it had perhaps been the most innovative: Michael Howard, Ian Beckett and Richard Preston were occasional contributors, producing just one article each. Thanks to the indexes it is also possible to cast a first comprehensive look at the topics of the articles, at the historiographical methods used and the major historical periods which had been the focus of attention. Still maintaining the breakdown of the analysis into three periods thus far outlined (1939-1949, 1950-1969, 1970-1989), it is possible to observe that within the pages of the IRMH, ancient history has never been more than an obscure presence, between 2 and 3 percent of published articles, while mediaeval history, which in the first decade attracted one article in five (a sign of the engagement, at that time, of the IRMH in the most crucial debates of international academic military history), soon fell to a miserly 5-6 percent in the ensuing twenty years. If modern history had always been the centre of attention in the early years, with more than half of the articles, already by the '50's and '60's it was the XIXth and XXth century that attracted the greatest attention of the IRMH's collaborators with around 60 percent of titles (and this despite the presidency of Corvisier): an attention which in the '70's and '80's was to be concentrated in almost the same percentage on the XXth century alone. In the last twenty years, the attention that in the previous century had been dedicated to an entire century, the XIXth century, with more than 20 percent of articles, was now dedicated to the seven years of the second world war alone. Without wishing to over-evaluate these figures, which are simply indicative, there appears the profile of a magazine (and of a Commission?) that is very French and very European in terms of its best collaborators, very focused on contemporary history and profoundly interested in the second world war (with more than one article in five in the twenty year period spanning the 1970's and 1980's).

We have already stated that studies of the ICMH have still to be further developed and that it cannot be reduced simply to the IRMH. The picture, however, that emerges from the initial data is one that is at odds with the general one which we have attempted to outline of the studies of military history at an international level as a whole; if for no other reason than the fact that innovation in the field of military history had arrived prior to its appearance in the ICMH review. Innovation had had national characteristics which were in part less in accordance with (that is to say more Anglo Saxon) those evident in the review and has demonstrated interests broader than that pertaining to the historical period studied (in other words, less concentrated on contemporaneity, which is of course the focus of attention of academic military history, but to a far greater extent of official military history). It will fall, however, to future studies to confirm, or otherwise, this partial imbalance.

Not that this is the most important issue with regard to the ICMH and its history.

Maybe the importance of the Commission is the simple fact that it exists. It is *not* and has no ambition to be *all* the military history produced at an international level: it reflects just one *part* of it, but has constituted and continues to constitute a highly useful *forum* for its various members coming from different nations. It is an important, though by no means, easy task not least when, in the outside world, historiographic innovation is at your heels; when there is a quantitative explosion in production; when communication between scholars, in the era of digital knowledge, passes ever less through official and state channels.

To make the future activity of the extremely useful *forum* more effective than it has thus far been, it will be of no small advantage to have a deep awareness of one's past, of the structural plurality of the sources of military historical research, of the need to become ever more open to all its members, without precluding or excluding themes and approaches and always keeping open dialogue between the best of academic military and official military history.

As long as its national and international directors are capable of keeping such a dialogue open, the role of the ICMH within international military historical research will be assured.

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He is in the Editorial Advisory Boards of "War in History" (London, since 1994), and "Revue historique des armées" (Paris, since 2012). He was Italian correspondent to "War and Society Newsletter" (Freiburg im Breisgau, since 1986).

Among his main publications are:

- *Il generale Cesare Ricotti e la politica militare italiana (1884-1887)* (Roma: Ufficio storico, Stato maggiore dell'esercito, 1986);
- *In marcia verso Adua* (Torino: Einaudi, 1993);
- *Caporetto: Storia di una disfatta* (Firenze: Giunti-Castermann, 1997);
- *Posti al sole: Diari e memorie di vita e di lavoro dall'Africa italiana* (Rovereto: Museo storico della Guerra, 2001);
- *Oltremare: Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2002);
- *L'istituzione militare in Italia: Politica e società* (Milano: Unicopli, 2002);
- *Una guerra per l'impero: Memorie dei combattenti della campagna d'Etiopia 1935-36* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2005);
- *Guerre contemporanee: Dal 1945 ad oggi* (Firenze: Giunti, 2008);
- *Storia illustrata delle armi da fuoco: Dall'archibugio alle bombe intelligenti invenzioni e tecnologie che hanno cambiato l'arte della guerra* (Firenze: Giunti, 2009);
- *La guerra italiana per la Libia 1911-1931* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2012).

Among others books, he has edited the following:

- *L'Africa in vetrina: Storie di musei e di esposizioni coloniali in Italia* (Treviso: Pagus, 1992);
- *Fra sterminio e sfruttamento: Militari internati e prigionieri di guerra nella Germania nazista (1939-1945)* (Firenze: Le Lettere, 1992);
- *La memoria del ritorno: Il rimpatrio degli Internati militari italiani (1945-1946)*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 2000);
- *Un nodo: Immagini e documenti sulla repressione coloniale italiana in Libia*, (Manduria: Lacaita, 2002);
- *La Libia nei manuali scolastici italiani (1911-2001)* (Roma: Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2003);
- *Fare il soldato: Storie del reclutamento militare in Italia* (Milano: Unicopli, 2007);
- *Guerre vecchie, guerre nuove: Comprendere i conflitti armati contemporanei*, (Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 2009);
- *Le armi della Repubblica: dalla Liberazione ad oggi* (vol. V of Mario Isnenghi, ed., *Gli Italiani in guerra: Conflitti, identità, memorie dal Risorgimento ai nostri giorni*) (Torino: Utet, 2009);
- *Storie di guerre ed eserciti: Gli studi italiani di storia militare negli ultimi venticinque anni* (Milano: Unicopli, 2011);
- *I bombardamenti aerei sull'Italia: Politica, Stato, società (1939-1945)* (Bologna: il Mulino, 2012).