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The Battlefield:  
Towards a Modern  
History of War

*by*

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## Introduction

I was delighted when Andreas Gestrich, the new Director of the German Historical Institute London, invited me to give the first Annual Lecture during his tenure. I felt honoured, and I was excited by the thought of coming back and meeting many friends and colleagues, some of whom I had not seen for years. After all, in the 1980s I worked at the Institute for five years and lived in my beloved London for almost seven. Giving the Annual Lecture was therefore like coming home.

But then I pondered the question as to which topic I should address. There were several options. But none of the issues I had been working on seemed to fit the occasion. In the end I decided to offer something extraordinary: a paper on battles and the modern history of war. I knew that this had never been done before at a GHIL Annual Lecture. Yet this topic had in recent years become a major field of my academic interests. Hence I thought it a good idea to try it out in front of an audience that did not consist only of specialists.

I am grateful to Andreas Gestrich, who took the courageous decision to accept my proposed topic for this Annual Lecture. After all, the history of war or military history is not usually regarded as part of mainstream historiography. It largely remains on the fringes. Only recently Reid and Dawson described the current status of military history in the United States in drastic words:

Military historians in the US are not alone in thinking themselves an unappreciated and even shunned minority whose work is at best under-valued, at worst treated as if it should be distributed in the proverbial plain, brown paper wrappings.<sup>1</sup>

This is certainly true of most European countries as well.

The aim of my paper is therefore to demonstrate to non-specialists that military history can indeed provide some important insights that should be of interest to specialists in other academic fields as well as to the general public. In so doing I will concentrate on the traditional core of military historiography: the history of battles and campaigns, a field that is regarded by many as outdated, if not somewhat reactionary. I hope to be able to demonstrate that historiography in general can benefit from a detailed analysis of military history, and that specialists in this particular area should be taken seriously as discussion partners. After some general observations this paper will look at a few examples of the history of war, trying to show that a thorough investigation of battles and campaigns, as well as military history in general, can yield useful results for mainstream historians and also raise important new questions.

### **War in Modern Historiography**

Military history sells well. In many countries bookstores are full of books on war and campaigns, books on weaponry and uniforms etc. TV-programmes dealing with all kinds of wars are almost as popular as war-related movies: *Black Hawk Down*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Flags of Our Fathers*, *Letters from Iwo Jima*, to name just a few recent examples. Many of these popular items are of excellent quality, but many others are less than convincing, to say the least.

The popularity of war-related publications and releases is just as ambiguous. Many people are seriously concerned about war, a problem that after the end of the Cold War has sadly become increasingly relevant rather than a thing of the past. The American guru of neo-conservatism, Francis Fukuyama, was completely mis-

taken when in 1992 he proclaimed 'the end of history', the worldwide spread of democracy, and therefore the disappearance of war altogether.<sup>2</sup> Under these circumstances people have every reason to learn more about the history of war. But there is also a darker side: many readers and viewers (mostly men) are just fascinated by the excitement and by the thrill of explosions, of destruction, of fighting, and of killing. We should not harbour any illusions: the display of violence is popular. Hence it is even more important that the history of war should not be left to military enthusiasts, amateurs in the full meaning of the word, and those who just propagate violence and right-wing ideas. War should be shown in all its horrors, in its absurdity, and with all its dire consequences. War must not be naively reduced to heroism, shining armour, and dramatic displays. The wider context, the social, political, and cultural background, has to be taken into consideration just as much as the suffering and grief that war brings about.

In the academic world military history or the history of war underwent a turbulent development. Originally it remained the domain of the military itself. This was particularly true of Imperial Germany. Here the General Staff and its *Kriegsgeschichtliche Abteilung* (Department of War History) monopolized the analysis of past wars in order to learn lessons for future warfare. Most civilian historians wanted nothing to do with it. Things largely continued along these lines during the interwar period.<sup>3</sup> After World War II a specialized history of war became discredited in West Germany. Only the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* developed an expertise in military history. They produced excellent studies, though they were largely ignored by the academic mainstream. In most other continental countries, such as France, Italy, or Norway, things developed in a similar fashion. In

Anglo-Saxon countries history of war became a more established field of research and teaching. In contrast to Continental Europe, military historians even gained specialized chairs at civilian universities. Yet even under these relatively privileged circumstances military historians remained a somewhat isolated group, who sometimes won the respect but rarely the partnership of historians working in different fields, such as political, economic, social, and cultural history.

War has played an important part in human history. This fact cannot be denied. Mainstream historians have therefore often dealt with the origins and results of war. Throughout the last decades they have provided us, as they see it, with important insights into the history of wars. In recent years in particular we have learned a great deal about the political, social, economic, and cultural aspects of war. Yet war in itself, and in its own meaning, has rarely figured in these studies. There are, of course, exceptions to the rule. Ian Kershaw, for example, in his outstanding biography of Adolf Hitler, provides an excellent analysis of the Second World War from a German perspective.<sup>4</sup> Yet many mainstream historians still have difficulties in looking more closely at the nasty reality of warfare. In his monumental biography of Otto von Bismarck the German historian Lothar Gall, for example, analyses the origins and the results of the Franco-German War of 1870/1 in every detail. But he devotes just a few sentences on the war itself.<sup>5</sup> This kind of approach to war in history is no exception.<sup>6</sup> But it is not very helpful if we hope to gain a better understanding of history.

### **War and Society**

On the other hand, since the 1960s military historiography itself has undergone important changes. Britain's

‘War and Society School’ in particular, led by Michael Howard, Geoffrey Best, and Brian Bond, virtually re-invented the historiography of war. Later on others like Peter Paret in the United States, or Wilhelm Deist in West Germany, joined the crowd. Today, younger historians such as Hew Strachan, John Gooch, Michael Geyer, and Robert Tombs continue to carry the torch.

The basis of the new approach of the ‘War and Society School’ was the rediscovery, or perhaps the first proper understanding, of the works of Carl von Clausewitz. In 1827 Clausewitz wrote to a friend:

War is nothing but the continuation of political endeavours by different means ... That principle makes the whole history of war understandable. Without it everything is full of the utmost absurdity.<sup>7</sup>

In his famous book *On War* Clausewitz pointed out time and again that war is always governed by policy. War in itself certainly has its own grammar but never its own logic. The latter is provided by policy. As early as 1799 Clausewitz wrote elsewhere:

He who does not recognize the influence of the general and higher circumstances on the specific actions of individuals and who believes that this is somehow coincidental does not understand the true reality of war. We should not trust him to pass judgement on the development of the driving forces within war.<sup>8</sup>

In all his works Clausewitz emphasized that policy meant more to him than the politics of any given government. The notion of policy also included social, economic, and even cultural circumstances that gave any war its specific character. Hence no eternal principles of warfare exist, but rather a great variety of developments that hinge on wider circumstances. This is also one of the main reasons why war is so unpredictable.

Michael Howard and his followers built their own methodology on the concept provided by Clausewitz. As a result, modern military historiography is not limited to the analysis of battles and campaigns but incorporates political, social, economic, and cultural history. This also means that nowadays military history goes beyond war itself and devotes much energy to issues such as civil-military relations, the role and development of armed forces in peacetime etc. Moreover, modern military historians are often more concerned with civilians in peace and war than with warriors and soldiers.<sup>9</sup> All this has broadened the scope of military history enormously.<sup>10</sup> We now not only have a great methodological variety but topics under investigation have also multiplied. There is now research on the import of parades and military culture, or of war memorials and social remembrance. Another interesting development is that modern military historiography has abandoned the traditional focus on military leadership that was paramount to the analysis of military operations. Military history from below has become fashionable.<sup>11</sup> Many publications devote themselves to the fate and views of ordinary soldiers. Analyzing available letters and memoirs of these men has become something of a growth industry, which helps considerably in understanding better the reality of military life and the reality of war.<sup>12</sup>

But there are also downsides to the diversification of military historiography. In general one gets the impression that there is an increasing lack of focus. It is strange, for example, that almost all the contributions to a recent book on military and society in the Western world during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries find ways to avoid the topic of war almost completely.<sup>13</sup> In fact 'hard core' military historians, who still, and with innovative meth-



ods, write on battles and campaigns, have become somewhat marginalized even within their own community. It is significant in this context that prominent experts such as John Keegan and others are occasionally ridiculed as members of a 'New School of Battle History'. In Germany Karl-Heinz Frieser, who has just published the monumental volume 8 of the series *Germany and the Second World War*, was given a scathing review in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* for having concentrated too much on battles and campaigns at the Eastern Front.<sup>14</sup> There can be no doubt that military operations should not be analyzed without taking the wider context into account. Decades ago none other than the famous military historian Sir Basil Liddell Hart gave a damning verdict on the narrow-minded approach to war in history: 'To place the position and trace the action of battalions and batteries is only of value to the collector of antiques, and still more to the dealer of faked antiques'.<sup>15</sup>

But does this really mean that battles and campaigns should no longer figure in modern military historiography? Is the history of military operations useless to historiography in general? I hope to demonstrate by the following examples that things can be quite different.

### **Battles in Context**

First we should take a look at some random historical events to demonstrate that battles and campaigns must indeed be seen in a wider context.

#### *Gaugamela and the Macedonian Revolution*

In 331 B.C. an army of Macedonians and their allies (about 42,000 men) under Alexander the Great defeated the huge Persian army (more than 200,000 men) under Great-King Dareios. This decisive victory over the Per-

sian Empire was the result of excellent leadership by Alexander and his generals, professional training, long fighting experience, and strong coherence of the troops. The courage and audacity of Alexander and his men also played an important role. In addition, the smaller Macedonian force was able to manoeuvre more easily under difficult conditions: low visibility because of dust in the desert plain of Gaugamela. The battle was decided by a fierce attack by Alexander's elite cavalry.

Yet, what happened at Gaugamela cannot be explained just by the way the battle was fought. There was, of course, the wider context of Alexander's invasion of the Persian Empire and of the politics involved. But of utmost importance for a proper interpretation are the social, political, and military reforms that Alexander's father, Philipp II, introduced in Macedonia. He limited the traditionally powerful role of the nobility and reached out to the commoners. Philipp raised the social status of small farmers and herdsmen, who now became the 'king's friends'. In this way they could be incorporated into the military structure and formed a professional infantry that was the core of Alexander's army. Social and political change was therefore the basis for Alexander's military success.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Conquest of Northern China and the Mongolian Revolution*

Between 1211 A.D. and 1215 A.D. the Mongols under Genghis Khan conquered Northern China in two extensive campaigns. In the end Beijing, the capital of the Jin Empire, was stormed and plundered. It was a stunning victory and the first big step on the road to the creation of the Mongol Empire. Certainly Genghis Khan's political and military genius, as well as the quality of his generals and his troops, made this enormous success

possible. But it all began with a political and social revolution in Mongolia. In 1206, after decades of fierce fighting, Genghis Khan had united all Mongolian tribes under his sole leadership. He then proceeded to abolish the traditional clan system almost completely. It was replaced by a meritocracy, in which not birth but loyalty, courage, and skill counted most. Genghis Khan also forbade blood feuds, robbery, and the custom of abducting women. Instead he claimed a monopoly for the state on the use of force. Finally he militarized the whole of Mongolian society. Hence the fierce but individualistic fighters of the steppe became amalgamated into the most powerful army of its time. Nothing could stop them anymore – except nature.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Panipat and the Gunpowder Revolution*

In 1526 the army of Zahir ud-Din Muhammad Babur, ruler of Afghanistan and founder of the future Mughal dynasty, marched into Northern India. Ibrahim Lodi, Sultan of Delhi, assembled an army of 100,000 men and 1,000 elephants to stop the invasion. Babur had less than 10,000 fighters with whom to face the Indian army. He therefore took up defensive positions at Panipat, to the North West of Delhi. He fortified the village and built up a stronghold that consisted of carts tied together. Behind the carts he placed infantrymen equipped with firearms and a large cannon. His fast and efficient cavalry, armed with compound bows, was to encircle the enemy. And indeed, on 20 April, everything worked according to plan. The Indian war elephants were unable to penetrate the cart stronghold and suffered heavy losses from Babur's infantry. Chaos broke out, as wounded elephants fled in panic and trampled their own troops. Ibrahim Lodi's army was hemmed in and contracted ever more under a hail of arrows from

Babur's horsemen. It was sheer slaughter. About 50,000 Indians, among them Ibrahim Lodi, were killed. Thus began the conquest of India by the Mughals.

Babur was an excellent military leader, whose mind was always open to innovations. When he learned that the Osman army had destroyed the fearsome Iranian cavalry at the battle of Chaldiran in 1514 by employing firearms, he rushed to hire some Osman specialists to train his troops in the use of this new weapon. Babur was therefore able to add powerful infantry and even artillery to his famous Central Asian cavalry. In this way Babur laid the foundations of a new gunpowder empire in Asia. By contrast, the Sultanate of Delhi had been in turmoil ever since the invasion of Tamerlan in 1398. The empire had lost control over much of India. Its population had become poor and backward. The ruling elite was engaged in almost constant strife. Under these circumstances energetic government was impossible. Moreover, the Sultanate was faced with the old problem that horse breeding on a large scale was impossible in the plains of Northern India due to the climate. Hence there was little chance to build up a powerful cavalry that could match the Central Asian horsemen. Military reforms and the introduction of new weaponry were out of the question under the weak conditions of the Sultanate. Ibrahim Lodi could therefore assemble only a rather old-fashioned army that also suffered from a profound lack of loyalty to the Sultan. In the days before the battle of Panipat many men deserted. The outcome of that battle must therefore be understood against the background of two profoundly different social, political, and economic systems. In spite of the large number of men it could muster the Sultanate stood little chance against an innovative enemy who had embarked on a military revolution.<sup>18</sup>

It is, indeed, safe to say that in history innovation, social change, and revolution often lay at the heart of the most monumental achievements in war. Carl von Clausewitz came to a similar conclusion when he analysed the French victories after the Revolution and under Napoleon:

Suddenly war again became the business of the people – a people of thirty millions, all of whom considered themselves to be citizens ... The people became a participant in war; instead of governments and armies as heretofore, the full weight of the nation was thrown into the balance. The resources and efforts now available for use surpassed all conventional limits; nothing now impeded the vigor with which war could be waged, and consequently the opponents of France faced the utmost peril.<sup>19</sup>

But things did not always run smoothly for the French armies. The upheavals of the Revolution sometimes also led to defeats.

#### *The Battle of Würzburg and the French Revolution*

On 3 September 1796 44,000 Austrians and 30,000 French fought a great battle near the German city of Würzburg. When the French commander, Marshall Jourdan, ordered his infantry to launch a counterattack against the advancing and numerically superior Austrians the fighting reached its climax. At this point Archduke Charles brought his cavalry to bear. The French army suffered heavy losses and had to retreat across the river Rhine. Germany had been saved – for the time being.

The French defeat at Würzburg was the turning point in a campaign that had begun in spring 1796. Jourdan originally had 150,000 men under his command. Had he managed to keep his army together, the

Austrians would have stood no chance at Würzburg. But the Directory in Paris refused to send any supplies to Jourdan's army. The invading French soldiers therefore had no alternative but to gather their supplies on the march. Essentially this meant the brutal plundering of the German towns and villages along the road to Würzburg. The notorious lack of discipline among the revolutionary troops that often led to the rape of German women made matters worse. As a result, ever more German civilians took up arms and fought back. Jourdan's army was faced with the first guerrilla war. Jourdan had no choice but to leave an increasing number of troops behind to guard his communications. These men were missing at Würzburg.<sup>20</sup>

It was therefore not the battle itself that led to the failure of Jourdan's campaign, but the economic and political crisis in France and the weakness of the Directory in Paris. No wonder then that three years later the ambitious General Napoleon Bonaparte took matters into his own hands.

However, all this does not mean that the analysis of battles and campaigns is of no value to historians. Quite the contrary: the importance of the wider political, social, and economic context only becomes fully apparent if we take a look at the details of warfare. More than that, some of the wider issues can only be understood if we deal with the nitty-gritty of developments on the ground.

*Gaugamela*: The import of social and political change in Macedonia, for instance, only becomes clear if we analyse the complex fighting technique of Alexander's infantry. A purely aristocratic army would never have been able to achieve such outstanding results.

*Northern China*: Raphael Lemkin, the man who coined the term 'genocide', and others, have accused Genghis

Khan and his followers of planning to wipe out the peasant population of Northern China completely. Indeed, it is true that during their campaign against the Jin Empire the Mongols resorted to widespread destruction of the countryside. Millions may have perished during this scorched earth campaign. But the main reason for this was not that they were intent on genocide. Rather, during the first years of their invasion of Northern China the Mongolian horsemen proved unable to deal with Jin castles and fortified cities. Hence the only thing they could do was to lay waste to the countryside and thereby starve the fortified places into surrender. If recent detailed research on the Mongolian campaign against the Jin had not provided us with new information, we would still believe in Lemkin's accusations.

*Panipat:* It would be a mistake to explain Babur's triumph just by his employment of firearms. Just as important was another weapon: the archers on horseback. This was an age-old tradition in Central Asia and had long been the terror of many battlefields. The compound bows had an astonishingly wide range and could penetrate with great power. Equipped with these weapons the fast-moving cavalry could not be reached by ordinary infantry. They could, at the time, only be matched by similar cavalry or by infantry equipped with firearms. At Panipat Babur's infantry stopped the advance of Ibrahim Lodi's army. But it was Babur's cavalry that went in for the kill. In general terms Babur combined military innovation with the traditional Central Asian mode of warfare. This was a powerful combination that laid the ground for the creation of new Empires in Asia.

*Würzburg:* I hope you found my description of the battle of Würzburg and the analysis of its real meaning interesting. But how would we know about all this, if

Tim Blanning, in an excellent piece of research, had not investigated all the details of Jourdan's campaign? There is no alternative but to learn about the importance of logistics and supply, the impact and meaning of guerilla warfare, and the gradual weakening of invading forces by the requirements of occupation if you really want to know what happened to Jourdan's operation. It will not suffice just to look at contemporary French domestic politics.

### **Battles as Such**

There are some even more striking examples to illustrate why we cannot afford to do without 'battle history'. So let me return to the volume mentioned earlier on the Eastern Front in the Second World War, edited and largely written by Karl-Heinz Frieser, of the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* in Potsdam.<sup>21</sup> This book, recently published, deals exclusively with battles and operations in the years 1943 and 1944. Other volumes in this series concentrate on social, political, and economic aspects.<sup>22</sup> Frieser and his team were therefore free to dwell on campaigns alone. Within our context Frieser's book is a prime example of what a modern 'battle history' can achieve.

#### *Prochorovka, 12 July, 1943*

In summer 1943 German forces started *Operation Citadel*, their last big offensive on the Eastern Front.<sup>23</sup> Using the brand new 'Panther' and 'Tiger' tanks the aim of this operation was to destroy as many Soviet forces as possible. The offensive consisted of a two-pronged attack on the large Soviet pocket to west of the city of Kursk. The Germans did indeed make some progress. The southern wing in particular, led by General von Manstein, smashed through Soviet defences, as the Red



Army initially found no means to stop the new and superior 'Panthers' and 'Tigers'. According to conventional knowledge the operation culminated in the tank battle of Prochorovka on 12 July, 1943. Here 850 tanks of the Fifth Guard Tank Army allegedly fought almost 700 tanks of the II SS-Panzer Corps. The Soviets sustained extremely heavy losses, but the SS-unit disappeared from the Eastern Front for good. Prochorovka is generally regarded as one of the decisive turning points in the war. Today a huge monument and a museum, erected in the 1960s on the battlefield, commemorate this important victory over the fascist aggressors.

It took Karl-Heinz Frieser years of extensive research and the discovery of many hitherto unknown documents to put things right. The result is nothing but sensational. According to Frieser's findings the battle of Prochorovka never took place. There was indeed a Soviet counter-offensive in which almost 700 tanks participated. The Germans had only 186 tanks in the area, most of which were not even involved in the encounter. The Soviets certainly did lose 543 tanks, but the Germans lost only three due to engine failure! In fact the bulk of the Soviet tank army had destroyed itself by running into a huge anti-tank ditch that had been dug by Soviet soldiers some weeks before. The remnants of the Soviet tank army were then easily smashed by a few German tanks. Afterwards, however, Hitler gave orders to transfer the II SS-Panzer Corps to Italy to fight off the Allied landing in Sicily. It is for this reason that they could no longer take part in *Operation Citadel*.

How did the legend of the Soviet victory at Prochorovka end up in the history books? The commander of the Fifth Guard Tank Army, General Rotmistrov, was summoned to Stalin in order to account for the heavy losses at Prochorovka. Naturally the general was afraid

of being severely punished for this disaster. Hence he and his superior, a certain Nikita Khrushchev, drew up a faked report on the alleged battle to dispel Stalin's anger. This report entered the official history of the Soviet war effort and, for lack of alternatives, formed the basis for all subsequent analysis of *Operation Citadel*.

This remarkable story contains several new insights into the history of the Second World War. The so-called battle of Prochorovka, and to some extent *Operation Citadel*, represented a tactical success for the Germans. But it did not help them very much, as at that time the Allies were opening up a new front in Italy. According to Frieser the German tank armies were indeed superior, but no matter how many Soviet tanks they destroyed, Soviet industry was capable of producing ever more. The Germans lost the war on the economic front.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand Frieser's analysis sheds an interesting light on the Soviet system and war effort. It was Stalin himself who had ordered Rotmistrov to stage his hasty and ill-planned counter-offensive. As orders were to be executed without dispute, there was no leeway for reacting to the situation on the ground. An important detail is also indicative of the way the Red Army fought the war. Most Soviet tanks did not possess radio communications and were therefore helpless when the unit commander's tank was destroyed. The reason for this terrible mistake was that subaltern officers were not trusted to show any initiative. Hence the rigid command system caused enormous losses. This, however, was in any case the guiding principle of Stalinist warfare: human casualties did not matter. Consequently the Red Army lost about 26 million men during the war. Above all Frieser's detailed research reveals how long-lasting historical legends can be fabricated.

*Nemmersdorf, October 21, 1944*

One final example: in mid-October 1944 the Red Army smashed through the German lines defending East Prussia.<sup>25</sup> On 21 October, near the village of Nemmersdorf, Soviet units took an undamaged bridge over the River Angerapp. As there were no more German reserves in the area the roads to Königsberg and Danzig lay open to Soviet tanks. The German supreme command was horrified. But then they learned that the Soviet unit was not exploiting the situation but had chosen to stay put at Nemmersdorf. This allowed the Wehrmacht to assemble additional forces and to stage a counter-attack to encircle the enemy. The Red Army lost 80,000 men during the process. East Prussia was saved – for a few weeks.

What had happened on the ground? When the Soviet soldiers reached Nemmersdorf they encountered German civilians on German soil for the first time. In their eyes this was an opportunity to take revenge. They dismounted from their tanks and trucks and began an orgy of rape and murder. Forty-six people were killed in the most gruesome way. This terrible incident gave the German command time to rally their remaining forces.

Nemmersdorf became infamous. After the re-occupation of that village German soldiers discovered the corpses of the victims. Goebbels used this event to intensify his propaganda against the ‘sub-human’ Soviets in order to encourage the German people to fight to the last – with some success.

Much has been written on Soviet mass rapes and other atrocities during the conquest of Germany in 1945. Some feminist historians argue that men are rapists by nature and only need an opportunity to go berserk. Others hint at the widespread desire for revenge in the Soviet Union. Some allege that Stalin and his command-

ers actually allowed their soldiers to have some fun.<sup>26</sup> But Frieser's account that puts the rape of Nemmersdorf into the larger context of military operations provides different answers. What happened at Nemmersdorf was first of all a collapse of military discipline. It was not in the interests of the Soviet leadership for advanced army units to run amok instead of exploiting a strategically favourable situation. Moreover, the subsequent catastrophic losses caused by the negligence of Soviet soldiers at Nemmersdorf constituted a strong warning that it was of the utmost importance to keep the army under control as it advanced on German soil. Yet in 1945 the Red Army committed unspeakable atrocities. Clearly officers on the ground and the leadership in Moscow lost control over their soldiers. This fact does not only explain a great deal about the reality of the allegedly all-powerful Stalinist system, but it also provides some answers to the question as to why the Red Army soiled its image at the moment of its greatest victory.

## **Outlook**

Clausewitz was right. War does not have its own logic, but only its own grammar. This grammar consists to a large extent of battles, operations, and campaigns. It may be a tedious business to investigate the details of these historical events. But some people are prepared to do it for us. Their results should be taken seriously, as they can be of interest to other historians. And after all, how can you hope to learn a language if you refuse to understand its grammar?

It would be a mistake for historians and related scholars to continue to ignore the research of specialists in this particular field, just as the history of battles and campaigns can no longer be written without regard for the wider historical context. Modern historiography

provides us with an astonishing variety of methodological approaches, fields of research, new questions and new answers. But let us not allow history to be atomized, to be broken up into smaller and larger pieces that are insulated from each other. Let us communicate across the boundaries of our special interests without any missionary intentions. Let us not aim to dominate, but let us exchange ideas, questions, and new answers. We will all benefit from such an exchange. An integrative modern historiography that is open to all contributions will also generate more interest in the general public and that – in the end – may help to acquire future funding, something for which historians in this competitive world should, of course, always aim.

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- <sup>3</sup> Markus Pöhlmann, *Kriegsgeschichte und Geschichtspolitik: Der Erste Weltkrieg. Die amtliche deutsche Militärgeschichtsschreibung 1914-1956* (Paderborn, 2002).
- <sup>4</sup> Ian Kershaw, *Hitler*, 2 vols (London, 1998 and 2000), particularly vol. 2: *Nemesis*.
- <sup>5</sup> Lothar Gall, *Bismarck. Der weiße Revolutionär* (Frankfurt/Main, 1980), pp. 435-446. This is even more surprising since the question of how to conduct the war against France caused considerable tensions between Bismarck and the generals. This conflict had a serious impact on Bismarck's further policy. See Stig Förster, 'The Prussian Triangle of Leadership in the Face of a People's War: A Reassessment of the Conflict between Bismarck and Moltke 1870-71', in: Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler (eds.), *On the Road to Total War. The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification 1861-1871* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 115-140, and Michael Schmid, *Der 'Eiserne Kanzler' und die Generäle. Deutsche Rüstungspolitik in der Ära Bismarck 1871-1890* (Paderborn, 2003).
- <sup>6</sup> See for example the otherwise excellent study by Carsten Goehrke, *Russischer Alltag. Eine Geschichte in neun Zeitbildern vom Frühmittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, 3 vols (Zürich, 2005). Astonishingly, Goehrke's impressive analysis of daily life in Russia since the early Middle Ages only vaguely mentions the experience of war and its impact on the people. Even World War II is almost completely neglected.
- <sup>7</sup> Clausewitz to Major i. G. von Roeder, 22. 12. 1827, in: Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege* (Bonn, 1952), 16th edn, ed. by Werner Hahlweg, pp. 1119-1120 (translation by S.F.).
- <sup>8</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *Werke*, vol. 6: *Die Feldzüge von 1799 in Italien und in der Schweiz*, part 2 (Berlin 1837), p. 336 (translation by S.F.).
- <sup>9</sup> Outstanding British examples are Arthur M. Marwick, *The Deluge. British Society and the First World War* (New York, 1965);

id., *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1974); id., *Women at War* (London, 1977); Jay M. Winter, *The Great War and the British People*, (Basingstoke, 1985).

<sup>10</sup> On the current state of military history see, for example, Thomas Kühne and Benjamin Ziemann (eds), *Was ist Militärgeschichte?* (Paderborn, 2000) and Jutta Nowosadtko, *Krieg, Gewalt und Ordnung. Einführung in die Militärgeschichte* (Tübingen, 2002).

<sup>11</sup> A good example is Wolfram Wette (ed.), *Der Krieg des kleinen Mannes. Eine Militärgeschichte von unten* (Munich, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> Michael Epkenhans, Stig Förster and Karen Hagemann (eds), *Militärische Erinnerungskultur. Soldaten im Spiegel von Biographien und Selbstzeugnissen* (Paderborn, 2006).

<sup>13</sup> Ute Frevert (ed.), *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Johannes Hürter, 'Choreographie des Untergangs', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Nr. 117, 22. 5. 2007, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Basil H. Liddell Hart, *Sherman. Soldier, Realist, American*, 2nd edn (New York, 1958), p. VIII.

<sup>16</sup> Hans-Joachim Gehrke, 'Weltreich im Staub: Gaugamela, 1. Oktober 331 v. Chr.', in: Stig Förster, Markus Pöhlmann and Dierk Walter (eds), *Schlachten der Weltgeschichte. Von Salamis bis Sinai* (Munich, 2003), pp. 32-47; id., *Alexander der Grosse* (Munich, 1996).

<sup>17</sup> Stig Förster, 'Die Militarisierung der Steppe: Tschingis Khan ca. 1162-1227', in: Stig Förster, Markus Pöhlmann and Dierk Walter (eds), *Kriegsherren der Weltgeschichte. 22 historische Portraits* (Munich, 2006), pp. 110-127; Paul Ratchnevsky, *Cinggis-Khan. Sein Leben und Wirken* (Wiesbaden, 1983); Leo de Hartog, *Genghis Khan. Conqueror of the World* (New York, 1989); David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Stig Förster, 'Feuer gegen Elefanten: Panipat, 20. April 1526', in: Förster, Pöhlmann, Walter (eds), *Schlachten*, (note 16), pp. 123-137.

<sup>19</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and transl. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, 1989), p. 592.

<sup>20</sup> Timothy C. W. Blanning, 'Die französischen Revolutionsarmeen in Deutschland: Der Feldzug von 1796', in: Ralph Melville et al. (eds), *Deutschland und Europa in der Neuzeit. Festschrift für*

*Karl Otmar Freiherr von Aretin zum 65. Geburtstag*, 2 vols, (Stuttgart, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 489-504.

<sup>21</sup> Karl-Heinz Frieser (ed.), *Die Ostfront 1943/44. Der Krieg im Osten und an den Nebenfronten* (Munich, 2007).

<sup>22</sup> *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, ed. by the Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt, 10 vols, (Munich, 1979-2008).

<sup>23</sup> For the following see Frieser, *Ostfront*, (note 21) pp. 83-210.

<sup>24</sup> This view of matters has only recently been strongly confirmed by Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction. The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London, 2006).

<sup>25</sup> On the following again Frieser, *Ostfront*, (note 21), pp. 612-622.

<sup>26</sup> For the debate on rape, sexual violence, and war see Birgit Beck, *Wehrmacht und sexuelle Gewalt. Sexualverbrechen vor deutschen Militärgerichten 1939-1945* (Paderborn, 2004), pp. 13-61.