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Australia

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The impact of the First World War on Australia was so profound that its memory dominates the national political culture even today, in the form of the Anzac "legend." The mass casualties suffered in the Gallipoli campaign, Palestine and on the Western Front shattered families and generated bitter debates within Australian society, especially over the issue of conscription for overseas military service. The resulting divisions caused an enduring realignment of Australian politics and left Australian society deeply fractured along sectarian lines and between those who had volunteered for service - the superior citizen - and those who had not.

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1. Introduction

Around 330,000 Australians, of a population of fewer than 5 million, served overseas during the First World War. Of these, more than 61,000 died and over 150,000 were wounded.[1] This was the highest death toll proportionately (some 14.2 percent) of any of the armies of the British Empire.[2] These losses not only brought mass grief but generated an embittering debate about how the burden of the war was being shared. In both 1916 and 1917 the Australian electorate rejected the option of introducing conscription for overseas military service - a topic which came to dominate Australian historiography of the war during the 1960s and 1970s when conscription was resurrected as a policy option during the Vietnam War. The divisions of the conscription debates also left Australia divided along fault lines that lasted for at least a generation. They inflamed class divisions and sectarianism between Protestants and Catholics, and marginalized the Australian Labor Party (ALP) at the level of federal government until at least 1941. The legacy of the war was also to entrench the volunteer soldier as the mythic representation of the Australian citizen in arms. The Anzac legend, a valorizing narrative which originated from the landing on the Gallipoli peninsula, depicted the men of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as egalitarian, resourceful, independent of spirit, resistant to authority, and deeply loyal to their mates — qualities which they supposedly possessed because of the distinctive social and physical environment of 1914 Australia. This mythic representation, which resonated with a population that sought to invest the huge losses of World War I with meaning, shaped national memory throughout the 20th century and continues to do so today. Hence, Australian scholarship of the war has been largely focused on accounts of battle and the character of the individual soldier or "digger," to the neglect of strategic command and the political and social movements within Australian society. Joan Beaumont's *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (2013) is a recent and rare attempt to integrate the multiple facets of the Australian experience of war.[3]

2. The decision for war

In August 1914 Australia was a Dominion within the British Empire, a status it shared with the other white, self-governing colonies, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland. Although the constitution drafted when the Australian federation was formed in 1901 bestowed on the national government the power over "external affairs," this was not interpreted to mean the right to manage diplomacy and international relations. Rather, in the decade after federation Australian

politicians and the public accepted that the imperial government in London would conduct foreign policy on their behalf. Hence, when Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914 there was no questioning that this committed Australia also to war.

The small federal cabinet, many of whom had been born in Britain, rushed to offer Britain material support. Despite the fact that the British government had not consulted with the Dominions on this major foreign policy issue (as it had assured them it would at the 1911 Imperial Conference) on 3 August Australia agreed to offer London the immediate use of the small Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and a force of 20,000 men, to be maintained at Australia's expense and deployed as British military authorities chose. The offer of the RAN to serve within the Royal Navy was not surprising - all pre-war imperial defence planning assumed this would be the case and the RAN was led by a British naval officer. But the offer of the infantry force was far more significant. The Defence Act of 1903 had precluded the deployment of the small Australian regular army overseas precisely because Australians feared being ensnared in imperial conflicts. Hence, all men for the new Australian Imperial Force (AIF) would have to be volunteers. Herein lay the seeds of much of the later political contestation, since the flow of volunteers was rarely adequate to replace the ever increasing casualties of the war.

However, in the first months of the conflict there was almost no opposition to the commitment of the AIF. Many Australians in 1914 had either been born in the United Kingdom or were of Anglo-Celtic descent. They had a profound emotional and cultural identification with Britain, "the mother country," and saw no contradiction in being Australian and British subjects at the one time. Their nationalism was positioned within a framework of imperial loyalty, and as champions of an unashamedly racist immigration policy, White Australia, they reveled in being part of the British "race." More pragmatically, Australians recognized that the security of their vast sparsely populated continent was dependent upon the maintenance of British naval dominance in the Asia–Pacific region. If Britain were defeated in Europe, Australians could come under German dominance, or even worse, the growing influence of Japan which since its victory in the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905 presented an alarming threat to the north. Beyond this, Australians saw in the German occupation of another small nation, Belgium a just cause worth fighting for.

Hence, the government's call for 20,000 volunteers was met within a few weeks of the outbreak of war and by the end of 1914 over 50,000 men had enlisted. In the absence of opinion surveys, we know little about why they volunteered, but it seems they were motivated by a mix of idealism, peer pressure, a sense of adventure and the opportunity of well-paid employment, all of which were couched in the rhetoric of imperial loyalty and duty.

There were, however, some voices of dissent, if only on the margins of politics. The press of the large trade union movement, which was influenced by syndicalism and Marxism, saw the real war as being one between labour and capital. As the left saw it, the only people who would benefit from the slaughter and carnage of war would be businessmen, which radical cartoons depicted as bloated plutocrats raiding the family larder in the absence of the soldier. These suspicions were

confirmed by the rapid disruption of the Australian economy after the outbreak of war. With a high level of dependence on international trade Australia was affected badly by the shortage of shipping and the British embargo on trade with enemy countries. Moreover, wages failed to keep up with rising prices, particularly of food. The failure of the federal government to control prices would soon become a running sore in Australian political life and the question of inequality of economic sacrifice would parallel the debate about equity in military service.

3. Australian's military contribution to the war

It is, however, the story of how Australian forces were used in battle that has dominated Australian historiography of the war. More particularly, it is the story of Australian infantry. The RAN was rendered largely invisible within the operations of the Royal Navy: for example, escort duties in the North Sea and the Mediterranean. The only naval operation which captured the Australian public's imagination, then and now, was the sinking of the German cruiser SMS *Emden* by HMAS *Sydney* near the Cocos Islands on 9 November 1914. The Australian Flying Corps, meanwhile, though it would play a role in the Palestine campaign and on the Western Front, consisted of only four squadrons.

The first Australian troops to fight overseas were part of a mixed-service force quickly raised in September 1914 to occupy German colonies in north-east New Guinea and the nearby islands. At the same time New Zealand occupied German Samoa, South Africa took South-West Africa and, much to the concern of Australia, Japan seized the islands of Micronesia to the north of the equator.

3.1. Gallipoli

Some weeks later, in November 1914 the first infantry division of the AIF (there would ultimately be five) left Australia. It was bound for Europe, but with training camps in England being crowded with Canadians troops and the Ottoman Empire entering the war, the Australians were disembarked in Egypt. In April 1915 they were included in the Anglo-French force that invaded the Gallipoli peninsula. The landing of the Australians at what later became known as Anzac Cove was, like the campaign as a whole, a strategic failure. But it almost immediately became the stuff of legends. Lauded by a euphoric press, the landing laid the seeds of a narrative of Australian exceptionalism: courage and resourcefulness in the face of impossible odds, heroism despite terrible wounds, and extraordinary physical feats in a profoundly challenging terrain. Although the battle for the Gallipoli peninsula soon settled into a stalemate comparable to that on the Western Front, and an attempt to break open the Ottoman lines in August would fail, the image of Australians perched in dugouts on precipitous cliffs gave the campaign a particular hold on the popular imagination.

By the time the Gallipoli campaign ended with the Allied withdrawal in December 1915 and January 1916, Australians had suffered around 8,000 deaths. It was a minority of the total Allied losses of about 46,000 deaths in this campaign, but this did little to inhibit the growing

appropriation by Australians of Gallipoli as a campaign was essentially "Australian." Even the NZ in "Anzac" tended to be marginalized in later years, despite the New Zealanders suffering nearly 2,500 deaths at Gallipoli.

3.2. The Western Front

"Gallipoli" is now coded in Australia for the First World War, a phenomenon that tells us more about the processes of memory making than it does about the history of the war. In fact, the casualties at Gallipoli were rapidly eclipsed by those of the AIF on the Western Front. Deployed to France in the first half of 1916, the Australians were engaged in a diversionary action from the Battle of the Somme on 19 July, at Fromelles (also known as Fleurbaix). Almost a classic of poor planning by the British command, this action resulted in the highest casualty rate, 5,533 dead and wounded, in any twenty-four hour of action by the AIF on the Western Front. However, the subsequent use of the 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions in the Battle of the Somme proper, most notably at Pozières and Mouquet Farm in July to September 1916, caused far higher casualties: some 23,000 casualties were suffered in forty-two days, making the Windmill site at Pozières, in the word of Charles Bean, "a ridge more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth."[4]

After enduring a wretched winter on the Somme, Australian troops were deployed at Bullecourt in April and May 1917, as part of the Battle of Arras launched by the British in support of the disastrous French offensive of General Robert Nivelle (1856-1924). Notable for the botched use of the first generation of tanks, and the capture of the largest single number of Australian prisoners of war (1,170), Bullecourt fuelled an Australian perception that they were being misused by the British high command. The subsequent attack at Messines, near Ypres, in June 1917, however, was a major operational, if not strategic success.

All five Australian divisions, Australian artillery units and medical support teams, were drawn into the protracted Third Battle of Ypres, from 31 July to mid-November 1917. The actions at Menin Road (20 September 1917), Polygon Wood (26 September 1917), and Broodseinde (4 October 1917) all gained most of their objectives, and might have been remembered as victories, had not the British Commander-in-Chief General Douglas Haig (1861-1928) insisted on continuing the attacks on the wasteland of Passchendaele in October and November 1917. This ensured that in Australia, as in Britain, Passchendaele became synonymous with futility and the horrors of fighting in the mud of Flanders. With 21,800 Australian deaths being incurred (more than a third of all dead during the entire conflict), 1917 was the worst year of the war.

In 1918 Australians played a significant role in, firstly, holding the German attack on Amiens in March–April 1918. The recapture of the strategic town of Villers-Bretonneux on the night of 24–25 April would become one of the dominant memories of the war: partly because of its coinciding with the anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli, or Anzac Day, and partly, because the grateful French population constructed their town's identity around the memory of this battle in later decades.

Then, after a preliminary action at Le Hamel, which displayed the power of the new weapons system of tanks, artillery, aircraft and infantry working in combination, the Australians Corps, for the first time under an Australian commander in the person of John Monash (1865-1931), led the offensive near Amiens on 8 August 1918, the battle which General Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937) famously described as "The Black Day of the German Army." The attack was spearheaded not just by Australians but by the Canadian Corps. Both Australians and Canadians would soon claim this victory as their own, and in Australian popular memory Amiens would be mythologized as the event which precipitated the German defeat in the war.

The last months of the war saw Australian forces, showing the tactical innovation for which both they and the Canadian Corps were now justly renowned, pushing along the banks of the Somme, capturing the strategic town of Péronne and then, in September and early October 1918, breaking through the Hindenburg Line in the vicinity of Bellenglise and the St Quentin Canal. The Australian divisions were now seriously understrength, thanks to the decline of voluntary recruitment at home, and there were several instances of "collective ill-discipline," verging on mutiny, when battalions were cannibalized into each other. This reorganization violated one of the core values which had sustained the morale of the soldiers of the AIF during their four years of service without any home leave: comradeship, or as Australians would put it, mateship. At the insistence of William Morris "Billy" Hughes (1862-1952) the AIF was withdrawn from the frontline in October 1918; hence, only the Australian Flying Corps was in action in France and Belgium when the war ended in November 1918.

3.3. The Palestine campaign

Lesser known than their involvement at Gallipoli and the Western Front is the role that Australians played in the Palestine campaign against the Ottoman forces. When the AIF infantry divisions left Egypt for France in early 1916, the Australian and New Zealand Mounted troops remained to counter the Ottoman threat against the Suez Canal. When by August 1916 the Ottoman push through Sinai had been contained in the Battle of Romani, the multinational forces of the British desert forces (which had various titles throughout the war) gradually moved onto the offensive: first, the Mediterranean outpost of El Arish was occupied, and then, in December 1916, the Ottoman position at Magdhaba. This was the kind of warfare which resonated with the popular image of the Australian Light Horsemen—men for whom life in the outdoors, or the Australian "bush," had naturally equipped them for battle on horseback. But, in fact, the intractable logistics of warfare in the desert, the chronic shortage of water, command errors and the competing demands of the Western Front all meant that progress in Palestine was slow in 1917. It took three assaults to capture Gaza, an operation which was facilitated on 31 October 1917 by a spectacular attack, including a charge by Australian mounted troops, against Beersheba. (This operation was immortalized in two later chauvinistic cinematic productions, one produced when Australians were again fighting in the Middle East during the Second World War.) By the end of 1917 Allied troops under General Edmund Allenby (1861-1936) had ridden triumphantly into Jerusalem, taking the

city which over the centuries had inspired the Christian crusade against Islam.

Progress again slowed in 1918, thanks to the Allied crisis when the Germans broke through on the Western Front in the spring, but after holding a large Ottoman offensive in July, the Allied forces shattered the enemy armies at Megiddo in September 1918. Advancing with the forces of the Arab revolt, under the leadership of Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935), they captured Damascus on 30 September. In late October two cavalry divisions went on to capture Aleppo, the strategic railway junction some 300 kilometers to the north. Though much of this detail of the Palestine campaign has now been eclipsed in popular memory by other campaigns of the war, it is noteworthy in that it was in this theatre that the first Australian was appointed to Corps command, General Sir Harry Chauvel (1865-1945).

3.4. Remembering battle

The experience of Australian forces in 1915–1918 spawned a number of popular beliefs which have endured to this day. One is the conviction Australian infantry were used profligately by the British command as shock troops. Their casualty rate was indeed high, but this was probably attributable to the fact that the AIF had very little administrative and logistical "tail." Secondly, Australian troops are remembered as ending the war with a reputation for being, as Bean put it, "the most effective of all the forces on the side of the Allies."[5] There is indeed ample evidence that the AIF was viewed by many British authorities as a formidable, if undisciplined, fighting force. But the Australian reputation for tactical innovation has to be shared with the Canadian Corps. In the opinion of Christopher Pugsley, it was the Canadians who pioneered some of the tactics in which Australians later excelled.[6] Finally, there persists, at least among some of the more chauvinistic commentators, the belief that Australians effectively won the war in the Hundred Days Offensive after the Battle of Amiens. The fact that the depleted AIF formed only a small proportion of the huge multinational armies confronting the Germans in the last months of the war is rarely conceded.

4. Australians at home

Against the backdrop of these battles, another "war" was being fought out on the Australian home front. The initial consensus about the decision to support Britain remained largely unchallenged until mid-1915. This was a period in which Australia suffered very few battle casualties and the Labor Prime Minister Andrew Fisher (1862-1928) refrained from being very interventionist in recruitment. Gallipoli, however, transformed the political landscape. Not only did the casualties incurred in the landing and the consolidation of the ANZAC position in the following weeks generate a demand for new recruits to replace the men lost, but the news of Australian heroism galvanized the forces of patriotism into a more intense and intrusive mobilization.

The efforts of these patriots were focused, firstly, on raising funds to purchase "comforts" for the

troops abroad and to support their families at home. It was initially assumed that this charitable work would be supplied by voluntary forces rather than the embryonic social welfare state. Across Australia patriotic funds sprang up, the most notable of them being the Australian branch of the British Red Cross established in August 1914 by Lady Helen Munro Ferguson (1865-1941), wife of the Scottish Governor-General. By 1918 there would be 82,000 women and 20,000 men and boys employed in the Red Cross - this at a time when the number of women in paid employment was around 55,000.[7] Overseas, the Red Cross followed the men to the front while entrepreneurial women established an Australian Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau in London to meet the demands of anxious families for information about the missing.

The patriotic fund movement was a remarkable industry in its own right but it has been largely forgotten in the historiography of the war. Its very success reflects the fact, troubling to later generations of feminist historians, that the First World War did not transform prevailing ideas about femininity in Australia. Instead, traditional gender stereotypes were reinforced by the war. Australian men were expected to fight while their women remained at home, "waiting and weeping." In contrast to Britain, the war did not offer Australian women many new employment opportunities, and women generally did not replace men in factories, transport and public administration (though there was some shift of women from domestic work to industrial employment, office work, banking and insurance).

Moreover, voluntary work at home was seen by some women - then, and later - as a poor substitute for serving in the "real war." Many Australian women sought employment as cooks, stretcher bearers and drivers at the front. But the Australian military authorities deemed only nursing, an occupation that affirmed women's traditional role as nurturers, to be acceptable service. For feminists, then, the war was a lost opportunity. Although the patriotic workers gained new skills of organization and had a high public profile, they did not challenge gendered stereotypes and accepted patriarchal leadership of their organizations.

Finally, the values that patriotic women espoused were ones which we struggle now to comprehend: imperial loyalty, militarism and support for conscription. In Australia, as elsewhere in Europe, the Red Cross became militarized, appropriated for the cause of nationalism and facilitating the work of the State by relieving it of many of its obligations to provide for its citizens.

4.1. Recruitment

The second element of the home-front mobilization was the campaign for recruitment. In June and July 1915 major enlistment campaigns were launched by the Victoria and New South Wales governments, their energies being fuelled by some residual inter-colonial rivalry. In July 1915 some 36,575 men enlisted, the highest total, it would eventuate, for any year of the war.[8] The federal government, meanwhile, established a bi-partisan Federal Parliamentary War Committee to coordinate recruitment across the states and develop schemes for supporting returned soldiers and the families of the dead. Progressively, a vast system, known as "Repatriation" or "the Repat,"

was created, offering veterans medical care, preferential employment, pensions and opportunities for land settlement. Bereaved families were also entitled to financial support. As the authorities saw it, these benefits were the obverse side of the coin of recruitment. How could a man be expected to risk his life, if he were not confident that he and his family would be cared for in the event of his injury or death?

4.2. Conscription

Despite these efforts to induce men to volunteer, the demand for conscription mounted from mid-1915 on. For many loyalists this was not simply a question of the need for more men to replace the losses on Gallipoli. It was the moral obligation of all citizens to serve their country and the Empire. In September 1915 a Universal Service League (USL) was created by leading political and community leaders in New South Wales. Modeled on the British National Service League, it demanded that the federal government move to modify the 1903 Defence Act to permit conscription for overseas service.

This demand presented the leaders of the ALP government with profound difficulties. Although Hughes, had no problems with the principle of compulsion - his political base was the trade union movement in which the "closed shop" principle was sacrosanct - many of his Labor colleagues and the wider industrial movement were bitterly opposed to conscription. When the USL was created, a national trade-union meeting responded with a counter organization, the Anti-Conscription League, while union councils around the nation declared themselves opposed to compulsion. As they saw it, military conscription might be the precursor to industrial conscription which would challenge hard-won workers' rights. Given the declining standards of living for the working classes, there should be also a "conscription of wealth" as well as men.

The Fisher government therefore initially decided to hold a War Census. Taking its inspiration from the British National Service Registration Act, this required all males between eighteen and sixty years of age to complete a survey about their potential for military service (their age, occupation, health, amount of military training) and their personal wealth (assets, property and income). Seemingly an attempt to compile data, the War Census when conducted in late 1915, inflamed the suspicions of anti-conscriptionists, particularly as it was followed in December by a government demand that men answer a set of intrusive questions including: "If [you are] not willing to enlist now, are you willing to enlist at a later date? Reply 'Yes' or 'No' and if willing, state when. If [you are] not willing to enlist, state the reason why, as explicitly as possible."

The issue of conscription was kept under control in the first half of 1916 while Hughes was in London for consultations with the British government. However, he returned in August 1916 convinced of the need to force through conscription. Britain had introduced conscription for single men and childless widowers in January 1916 and extended this to married men in May. New Zealand too, Australia's close Dominion "cousin" and partner in the ANZAC forces, passed legislation in May 1916, conscripting non-Maori males. This would be extended to Maoris in June

1917.

However, Hughes' options were limited. Although Labor had a majority in both houses of parliament, legislation for conscription would split the ALP. Furthermore, Hughes could not be confident of the support of his Labor ministers if he used the emergency powers of the War Precautions Act. This Act, passed in October 1914, had given the federal government extensive powers of control, censorship and coercion, which Hughes had no hesitation in using against his political opponents. But the Chief Justice of Australia advised that its use to introduce conscription could be unconstitutional. So Hughes decided to seek a mandate from the Australian people, by means of a referendum or plebiscite.

The campaign which followed in September and October 1916 (only to be repeated in late 1917) was the most bitter and divisive in Australian political history. Against a backdrop of the Battle of the Somme, Australians exploded in an eruption of mass grief and anger. The core issue in dispute was whether conscription was needed militarily. But underpinning the debate was a clash of principles: about the obligations of citizenship, the equality of sacrifice in times of national crisis, and the exercise of power by the Australian State. All of this was fuelled by an explosive mix of anxieties: about the demographic implications of denuding the country of its fittest and best men, about military compulsion paving the way for industrial conscription, and about soldiers being replaced in the workforce by women or cheap Asian labour. Civil libertarians meanwhile questioned the morality of the State's compelling individuals to kill and were further alienated by the heavy-handed censorship and repression of dissent by the Hughes government. The debate was also infused with a noxious sectarianism as Catholics, who constituted 22 percent of the Australian population and were mostly working class and of Irish extraction, were radicalized by declining standards of living and the ruthless suppression by the British of the Easter uprising in Dublin.

In the event, conscription was narrowly defeated in October 1916. The impact on the political landscape was dramatic. Even before the vote had been taken, Hughes' Cabinet had split (when he had called up men, supposedly for home defence, but presumably because he thought the vote would be yes). Hughes was also expelled from the NSW branch of the Labor movement, the state in which he had his electorate. Then in November 1916, as the federal Labor parliamentary party, or caucus, prepared to cast a vote of no confidence, Hughes stopped the debate, left the room and called on those who agreed with him, to follow him. Twenty-four Labor parliamentarians did. This group of defectors then rapidly created a new political party, the National Labor Party, stitched together a new cabinet, and with the support of the Governor-General, formed a new government. Hughes anticipated, correctly, that he would get the support of the Liberal Opposition. Two months later, after prolonged jostling for position, his new Labor and the Liberals formed a coalition, the Nationalists.

Hughes would lead this hybrid party to the polls in May 1917 and, despite allegations of corruption, would win a handsome majority on a "Win the War" ticket. The vote against conscription, it turned

out, had not been a vote against the war. In the months that followed the Nationalists effectively stigmatized their opponents as "disloyal." The ALP, which in 1914 had the potential to dominate Australian politics, was pushed to the margins of federal politics (though less so at the state level) for almost two decades. In retrospect it is clear that the Labor split of 1916 heralded a major shift to the right in Australian federal politics.

The issue of conscription, however, did not go away: nor would the losses in battle which were on such a scale in 1917 that voluntary enlistment could never bridge the gap. The Nationalists, on whom Hughes was now dependent for power, would not let the issue rest.

4.3. The Great Strike

Before conscription was again put to the vote, the labour movement erupted in a great strike in August 1917. For the first two years of the war the trade unions, which had a membership of over 500,000,[9] had voluntarily limited their industrial action, but by 1917 their patience was exhausted. A relatively minor dispute in the New South Wales Tramways Workshops in Sydney triggered strikes in sympathy by over 69,000 workers along the eastern seaboard, from a broad range of industries. At the height of the strike more than a quarter of all NSW unionists were on strike.[10] In Melbourne, the capital of Victoria, the streets erupted in violence as women, angered at the continuing high prices of food, smashed shop fronts and factories using non-union labour. In turn, the government responded viciously, deregistering unions, mobilizing a volunteer "scab" workforce and blocking unionists from returning to work. Ultimately, the workers were defeated in what was arguably the most cataclysmic event in the class struggle of early 20th century Australia. Yet for all the passion and polarization that the great strike engendered, it does not figure prominently in Australian histories of the war. While Australians are routinely exhorted to remember the mateship of soldiers in battle, the solidarity of the workers who banded together in a collective resistance against industrial oppression is scarcely recalled. Since the dominant narrative to emerge from the First World War was Anzac's role in nation building, narratives of social justice and democratic equality have been elided.

4.4. Conscription 1917

It was in the aftermath of this embittering industrial dispute that Hughes decided to try again to secure a mandate for conscription. The second campaign saw a replaying of the arguments of the 1916 debate, but the public mood was, if anything, more hysterical and bitter. Public meetings were increasingly violent, with returned soldiers attacking anti-conscriptionists and women attacking women. Hughes himself was pelted with an egg when campaigning in Queensland, an incident which he exploited to create a Commonwealth Police Force, supposedly to intervene to impose federal law when a state failed to enforce it. Infuriated by the opposition of the Melbourne Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix (1864-1963) and the radical Labor premier of Queensland, Thomas Joseph Ryan (1876-1921), Hughes also used the powers of the War Precautions Act

more arbitrarily than ever to suppress dissent. Yet again the vote was lost by a slightly larger margin than in 1916.

Thereafter conscription was excluded as a policy option. Voluntary enlistments continued to decline, lifting only when the German spring offensive in 1918 made it seem that the Allies might lose the war. The gap between enlistments and casualties widened in the latter months of the war, and in June 1918 the labour movement came close to withdrawing its support for voluntary enlistment and demanded an end to the war through a negotiated peace. Had the war not concluded in late 1918, the ALP may have split again. The infantry divisions in France would have had to be cannibalized in 1919.

5. War aims and diplomacy

Australia had entered the war as a result of imperial foreign policy, but it always had a distinctive sense of its own war aims. The primary of these was the maintenance of British power which would guarantee Australia's regional security and the control of its sea lanes of communication. As the war progressed, however, Hughes in particular, identified other foreign policy objectives.

5.1. Imperial relations

Like Robert Borden (1854-1937) of Canada, Jan Smuts (1870-1950) of South Africa and William Massey (1856-1925) of New Zealand, Hughes became determined that the Dominions, who were making such a blood contribution to the imperial war effort, should be rewarded with a new status within the British Empire. While in London in 1916, he managed to secure a place in the British delegation to the Paris Economic Conference, where he argued strongly that Germany should be excluded from post-war trade. He continued to pursue this objective passionately, though with diminishing effect, in the later years of the war. Hughes' inclusion in the imperial delegation was attributable to his having made a very public impact on the British press and society as a dynamic and resolute war leader.

Thanks to his precarious domestic political situation, Hughes could not attend the 1917 Imperial War Conference held in London in March and April. Here the status of the Dominions was redefined in a way that would be formalized in the 1926 Imperial Conference as "autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated, as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations." When the Imperial War Conference again convened in June and July 1918, Hughes was present and joined forces with the other Dominion leaders to push for further change in imperial relationships. The cumbersome arrangement whereby Dominion Prime Ministers could communicate with the British Prime Minister only through their Governor-General and the colonial office, was challenged and amended. The Dominions also insisted on greater consultation in future imperial decision making - only to find that in October the British government agreed to the terms of the armistice with

Germany on the basis of President Woodrow Wilson's (1856-1924) Fourteen Points, without consulting them. For Hughes, who had no tolerance for liberal internationalism, this was a betrayal against which he railed very publicly. His cabinet colleagues at home, though sharing his dismay, were willing to swallow the British decision in the interests of the unity of the British Empire.

5.2. Paris Peace Conference, 1919

Yet, it was symptomatic of the changing relationships within the Empire that the British prime minister David Lloyd George (1863-1945) supported the Dominions in claiming independent representation at the Paris Peace conference of 1919. This was the first time Australia had independent diplomatic standing and Hughes exploited the opportunity fully. In battles with Wilson which were to make him something of a folklore hero in Australian historiography, Hughes demanded that Australia retain control of German New Guinea, which it had occupied in 1914. Since the other Dominions also had no intention of relinquishing the colonies they had conquered, Hughes was ultimately successful. However, he had to accept not annexation but a compromise solution whereby the former German colonies were held as Class C mandates under the new League of Nations. Hughes had also to concede that the Japanese could hold as mandates the islands they had occupied to the north of the equator.

In Paris Hughes was also successful, in his own terms, in blocking the attempt by the Japanese delegation to insert a clause guaranteeing racial equality in the League of Nations charter. For the Japanese this was a much coveted recognition of their growing international status - they were included in the Council of Ten at Paris - but for Hughes, it constituted an intolerable challenge to the White Australia policy. He took the lead in opposing it, whatever the offence he might cause to the Japanese. His cabinet colleagues in Australia feared that his public opposition might inflame militaristic sentiment in Japan, but in this, as in so much of his diplomacy, Hughes thought that he "spoke for Australia." Since Wilson himself was concerned that the Japanese claim would be opposed in US states such as California, which were as hostile as Australia to Asian immigration, Hughes won the day. There was no racial equality clause in the League of Nations charter.

But if he won on this point, Hughes lost his other battle at Paris, to get Germany to pay the full costs of the war to Australia. The reparations clauses of the Treaty of Versailles are now so roundly condemned as unworkable that it is hard to imagine that Hughes thought them too generous. But faced with a huge war debt and spiralling costs in veterans' pensions and medical care, Hughes thought Australia would be crippled economically for generations. Indeed, by 1931 when reparations payments finally ended, Australia had received only £5,571 million against a total claim of £464 million: £364 million being for actual war expenditure, and £100 million for capitalized value of pensions, repatriation and loss to civilian property. Moreover, what Australia had received was largely made up of ships seized in Australian ports and the value of expropriated property in New Guinea.[11] Hence, for Hughes the Treaty of Versailles was "not a good peace" for Australia but it *was* a good one for the United States. "*She* who did not come into the war to make

anything has made thousands of millions out it. *She* gets the best ships. *She* has a good chance of beating us for world mercantile supremacy. *She* prevented us getting the cost of the war."[12]

6. The legacy of war

The gains to Australians of the First World War were certainly not commensurate with the costs. Almost a fifth of those who served overseas were killed and unknown numbers of the wounded would die prematurely over the next two decades. These losses - and those of the "Spanish" influenza pandemic of 1919 which killed at least another 10,000 Australians, many of whom were young males[13] - changed the nation's demographics. The 1933 national census revealed 21,500 fewer men in the age group thirty-five to thirty-nine years, who were sixteen to twenty in 1914, than in the cohort thirty to thirty-four years. The gender balance changed too. Whereas in 1911 there were 109 men for every 100 women between twenty-five and forty-four, in 1933 there were ninety-eight men for every 100 women between thirty-five and thirty-nine.[14]

Added to this was the less quantifiable embittering of public life. Post-war Australia remained divided for years into the camps the conscription debates had spawned. The war had also given free rein to a xenophobia and insularity that infused the post-war years. During the war some 6,890 "enemy aliens," that is, Australians of enemy birth or extraction,[15] had been denied their civil liberties and herded into internment camps. At the war's end they were not reintegrated into Australian society but in the vast majority of cases deported. Others chose to leave because they could not face staying in the country which had turned so viciously against them.[16]

The paranoia about left-wing radicalism which the loyalists had fuelled during the war also persisted. Although the syndicalist movement, in the form of the Industrial Workers of the World, had been crushed in 1916–1917, by means of an Unlawful Associations Act, there remained other "enemies within," in the form of communists, non-British migrants, Irish nationalists, left-wing radicals and trade unionists. The War Precautions Act was repealed in 1920, but much of the surveillance apparatus the Hughes government had established during the war was retained to control the new "threat" to the established order. The loyalist elements of Australian society also remained mobilized, conducting vigilante-style attacks against meetings of the left, attacking Russian-Australians whose loyalty was suspect after the Russian Revolution, and raising private armies to support the civil authorities in the inter-war years.

Yet, for all its negative legacy, the First World War would provide a foundational narrative of Australian nationalism in the form of the Anzac "legend" or "myth" that proved remarkably enduring. Originating in the landing at Gallipoli, this heroic narrative would soon be embedded in the commemorative rituals, literature and public discourse of the inter-war period. "Anzac," to use the popular short-hand, articulated a powerful vision of the Australian soldier as the product of a distinctive society and value system: a society in which the bush shaped the cultural imagination and social mores; in which men learned to be independent in spirit and thus natural and

resourceful fighters; in which the relative lack of class made men willing to challenge rank and authority; and in which the quality of mateship was valued above all.

Little of this was empirically verifiable but it told a story that many Australians wanted to hear. By the Second World War Anzac was so embedded in the national memory that it provided the imaginative framework wherein soldiers of that conflict were immediately positioned. Two decades later, when the Vietnam War, and the controversial use of conscription for service overseas, divided Australian society again, the "legend" would come under serious challenge, including from feminists who attacked its inherent misogyny. However, the memory "boom" of the late twentieth century brought an extraordinary revival of "Anzac." Why and how this happened is a subject still to be fully explained and which generates deeply politicized debate within Australia.[17] Yet, if the vast funds and energies being invested in the centenary of Gallipoli are any indication, it appears that at least some Australians still want to hear, albeit in a modified form, a valorizing narrative of the Australian experience of the First World War.

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Notes

1. ↑ Australian War Memorial, Deaths as a result of service with Australian units, http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/war_casualties/?query=deaths+first+world+war (retrieved, 13 May 2014); Australian War Memorial, First World War Embarkation Rolls Introduction, http://www.awm.gov.au/research/people/nominal_rolls/first_world_war_embarkation/introductio n/?query=men+serving+overseas+service+first+world+war (retrieved 13 May 2014).

2. ↑ Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire During the Great War of 1914–1920, London [1920] 1992, p. 756.

3. ↑ Beaumont, Joan: Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War, Crow's Nest 2013.

4. ↑ Bean, C.E.W.: Anzac to Amiens: A Shorter History of the Australian Fighting Services in the First World War, Canberra 1946, p. 264.

5. ↑ Bean, C.E.W.: Sidelights of the War on the Australian Character. In: Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, 8/4 (1927), p. 211.

6. ↑ Pugsley, Christopher: The Anzac Experience: New Zealand, Australia and the Empire in the First World War, Auckland 2004, chapter 8.

7. ↑ Crew, Jennifer: Women's Wages in Britain and Australia during the First World War. In: Labour History, 57 (1989), p. 31.

8. ↑ For enlistments by month see Scott, Ernest: The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918, volume XI, Australia during the War, Sydney 1936, pp. 871-872. Online version at http://www.awm.gov.au/histories/first_world_war/AWMOHWW1/AIF/Vol11/ (retrieved May 2014)

9. ↑ Scott, Official History, XI 1936, p. 659.

10. ↑ Turner, Ian: Industrial Labour and Politics: The Labour Movement in Eastern Australia 1900–1921, Canberra 1965, pp. 139-61; Bollard, Robert: 'The Active Chorus': The Great Strike of 1917 in Victoria. In: Labour History, 90 (2006), pp. 77-94.

11. ↑ Scott, Official History 1936, p. 880; Fitzhardinge, L.F.: William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography, volume II, The Little Digger, 1914–1953, London 1979, p. 387.

12. ↑ Quoted in Meaney, Neville: Australia and World Crisis 1914-1923, volume 2, A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy 1901-23, Sydney 2009, p. 397.

13. ↑ Australian Government: Department of Health, History of Pandemics, http://www.flupandemic.gov.au/internet/panflu/publishing.nsf/content/history-1 (retrieved 17 May 2014).

14. ↑ Australian Bureau of Statistics: Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012-2013, http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features952012-2013 (retrieved 26 May 2014).

15. ↑ Fischer, Gerhard: Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Homefront Experience in Australia, 1914-1920, Brisbane 1989, p. 77.

16. ↑ See Fischer, Enemy Aliens 1989, chapter 15.

17. ↑ For discussion of the revival of Anzac see Holbrook, Carolyn: Anzac: The Unauthorised Biography, Sydney 2014; Beaumont, Joan: Remembering the Heroes of Australia's Wars: From Heroic to Post-Heroic Memory. In: Scheipers, Sibylle (ed.): Heroism and the Changing Character of War. Basingstoke et al. 2014, pp. 334-48; Thomson, Alistair: Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend, Melbourne 2013; Twomey, Christina: 'Trauma and the Reinvigoration of Anzac: An Argument. In: History Australia 10/3 (December 2013), pp. 85-105; Lake, Marilyn / Reynolds, Henry: What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History, Sydney 2010. The leading attack on 'Anzac revisionism' has been, and continues to be, led by the conservative Quadrant Online https://quadrant.org.au/.

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