

Home Fronts of the Great War

Dr Michael Molkentin

Shellharbour Anglican College &
The University of New South Wales Canberra

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Outline

1. The concept of total war
2. Britain vs Germany: a comparison of two societies at war
3. Course content: what you need to know
4. Exam advice
5. Further reading

During one night we released Gas along our line and much was sent over from our sector, it was jolly interesting work but the nose clips in the mask made our noses sore for hours after...

My trench costume is well worth describing. Over my closely cropped head I wear a steel helmet, am armed with a ferocious-looking Webley Revolver and always carried a hand-grenade, my feet and legs were encased in rubber boots or trench waders thigh high and a short rubber cape, all this trench issue...

These trenches are only partly dug and the rest is breastworks made from sandbags, there is water and mud everywhere, but in most places traffic is carried on "Duck Walks" usually well above the mud but in some places two or three tiers of those are buried under and all are out of sight in the mud.

What?

Total war is the commitment of a nation's entire human and material resources to the attainment of victory in an armed conflict.

A total war effort requires the **integration** of the home and battlefronts in support of the war effort and the **redirection** of human and economic resources from peace-time to war-time priorities.

How?

- Legislation to restrict individual liberties
- Nationalisation of industry, finances
- Censorship
- Propaganda
- Conscription – labour and military

The British Empire

World's largest empire

World's largest navy

Small professional Army

Stagnating industrial growth

Close ties with USA

Liberal democratic traditions

Germany

Fledgling empire

World's second largest navy

Large conscript Army

Massive industrial growth

Competitor with USA

Authoritarian

2 The home fronts in Britain and Germany

- total war and its **social and economic impact** on civilians in Britain and Germany
- **recruitment, conscription, censorship and propaganda** in Britain and Germany
- the variety of **attitudes to the war** and how they changed over time in Britain and Germany
- the impact of the war on **women's lives and experiences** in Britain

1. Total war and its social and economic impact on civilians in Britain and Germany

Britain

DORA (1914)

Munitions Act (1915)

Air raids and U-Boat warfare

Rationing (1918)

Germany

KRA (1914)

Hindenburg Program(1916)

Aux. Service Law(1916)

Trade blockade

‘Turnip winter’, starvation

2. Recruitment, conscription, censorship and propaganda in Britain and Germany

| | Recruitment and Conscription | Propaganda |
|----------------|---|--|
| Britain | Volunteerism Military Service Bills (1916) | War Propaganda Bureau (1914-17) Ministry of Information (1918) |
| Germany | Universal military service (1871) Collapses in 1918 | German General Staff (Army) Krieaspressamt and the Bild-und Filmamt (BUFA) |

2. Recruitment, conscription, censorship and propaganda in Britain and Germany

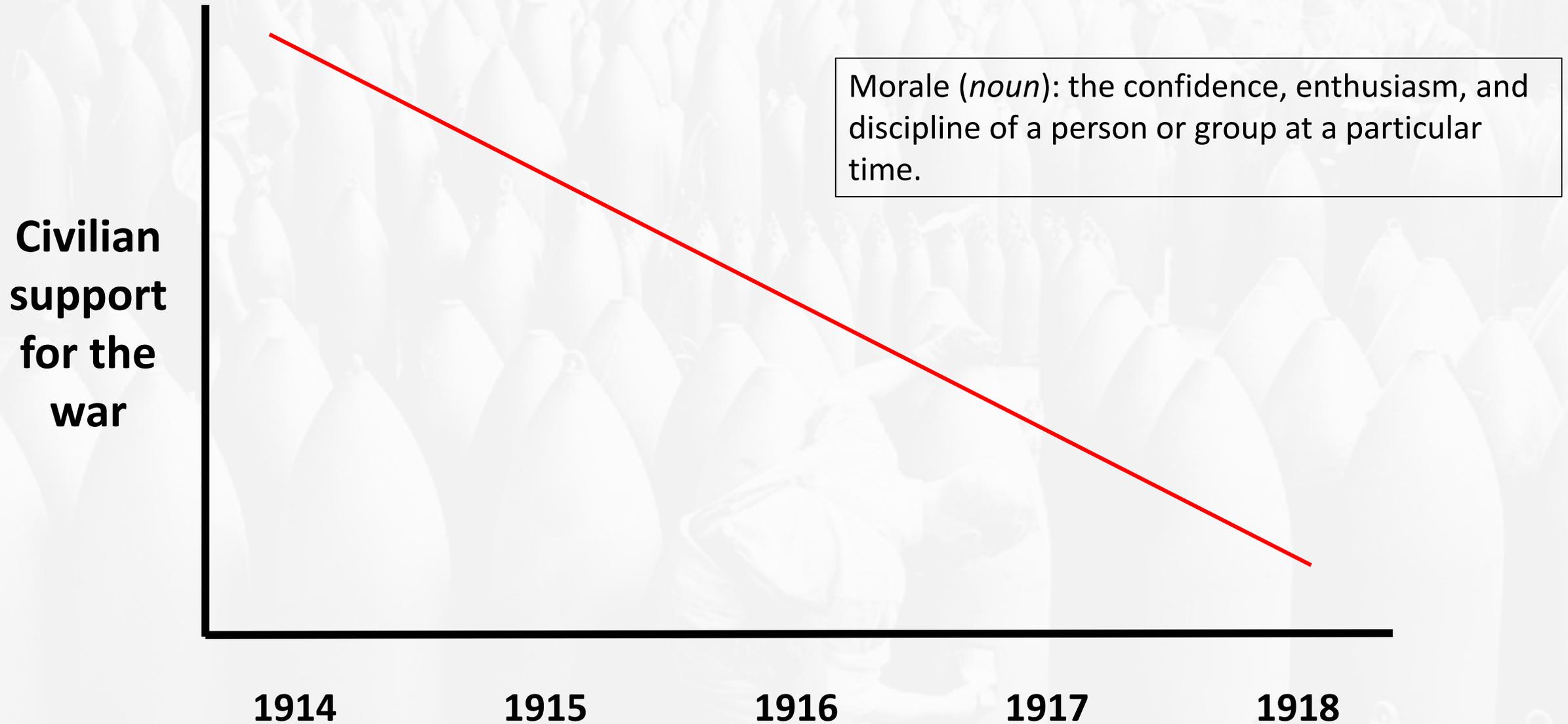
| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Purposeful | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information control, 'manufacturing consent' for the war effort• Mobilising volunteers• Counter enemy propaganda• Influence perceptions of allies and neutral nations |
| Prolific | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• WPB published 1160 pamphlets 1914-1918• MI published 60 million copies of 643 leaflets in 1918 |
| Pervasive | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extended to all forms of published material (incl. entertainment)• Imposed on information from battle to home front (eg: only two photographers initially permitted on WF) |
| Persuasive | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employed a range of emotional appeals: guilt, fear, hatred, patriotism• Shaped perceptions of war aims, war effort and the enemy; influenced behaviour |

Propaganda and censored sources: unreliable but nonetheless useful

Documents can show us a 'truth' beyond 'what actually happened': they can demonstrate how people think, the images and language and associations they can draw upon from their culture.

John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 93.

3. The variety of attitudes to the war and how they changed over time in Britain and Germany



3. The variety of attitudes to the war and how they changed over time in Britain and Germany

- Support for the war: nationalism, 'short war' prediction, defensive war mentality
- Opposition to the war (eg: German SDP and British UDC)
- Political responses to war weariness
 - Conciliation and coercion

Example: British Government's Response to Pacifism and the Labour Movement

Conciliation

Examples:

- August 1918 Metro. Police strike; PM Lloyd George negotiated with strike representatives and awarded pay rise
- Number of Labour MPs in Britain's wartime coalition government increased when David Lloyd George elected PM in December 1916

Coercion

- UDC members arrested for breaching censorship regulations
- UDC pamphlets blocked from the Western Front
- Strike ring leaders imprisoned under the DORA. 22 shop stewards imprisoned following May 1917 strikes.

4. The impact of the war on women's lives and experiences in Britain

SIMPLE:

- a. Start = no involvement
- b. 1915 - 16 Desperate industry government allows women into the workforce
- c. Women liberated by the Great War (vote post-war)

SOPHISTICATED:

- a. Start = involvement in domestic industry
- b. 1915 - 16 complex absorption of women (eg opposition from trade union, dilution)
- c. Some new opportunities? Return to status quo

Examination Advice

Three types of questions (in 2016)

1. Short answer/ multiple-choice (8-marks)
2. 7-mark question; eg: 'Use Sources C and D **and your own knowledge** to outline how attitudes to the war changed in Germany from 1914-1918'.
3. 10-mark question; eg:
'How **useful** would Sources C and D be to a historian studying the impact of the war on British women. In your response refer to the **perspective** and **reliability** of both sources.'

Examination Advice

- Expect sources and questions pertaining to the home front
 - 2006-2016 all but three papers have included HF content
- Be familiar with source *types* - and how they fit into a total war context
 - Posters
 - Cartoons
 - Photographs
 - Newspaper reports
 - Memoirs
 - Secondary sources (histories)

Examination Advice

- Have enough factual knowledge to
 - *contextualise* the sources
 - When was it published? What was happening? Who was the author? What was their perspective?
 - Contribute your own knowledge to the short answer question
- Acknowledge that any *published* primary source is likely to be subject to censorship and will, hence, reflect an official perspective.

What constitutions 'your own knowledge' for the 7-mark question?

Example:



Female munitionettes, 1916

- 1915 Shell Crisis - Ministry of Munitions - government mandated factories to employ female labour.
- Women made up half the workers in British munitions factories by 1918
- Hardships
 - long hours for less pay than male workers
 - Explosive accidents killed workers in several instances (eg: 130 workers died at Chilwell in 1918)
 - Exposure to TNT poisonous; 'canaries'.

The 10-mark question: perspective, reliability and usefulness



British munitionettes, 1916

Perspective:

- British government, most likely for propaganda purposes.
- Early days of female involvement in munitions factories.
- Portrays munitions work as safe, clean, independent while retaining their femininity.

Reliability

- A photograph – so a literal depiction of reality
- BUT likely to be composed to present women's work in a manner helpful to the British war effort.

Usefulness

- It provides historians evidence of
 - the type of work done by munitionettes: production line, diluted, low skill
 - The scale of munitions production by the middle of the war
 - Attempts by the British government to compel women into this kind of work (were they having difficulty)
- But it is limited in its perspective to a single moment and reflects an official perspective on the subject

Extension Reading

1914-1918 Online International Encyclopaedia of the First World War
[<http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/>]

David Stevenson, *With our backs to the wall: victory and defeat in 1918*, Allen Lane, London, 2011.

- Chapter 6 War Economies
- Chapter 7 The Home Fronts

Hew Strachan, *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War*, OUP, Oxford, 2014 (Second Edition).

- Chapter 11: The Role of Women in War, Susan Grayzel
- Chapter 16: Propaganda and the Mobilization of Consent, J. M. Winter

A large crowd of people, many wearing white shirts, gathered for a protest or rally. The image is faded and serves as a background for the text.

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