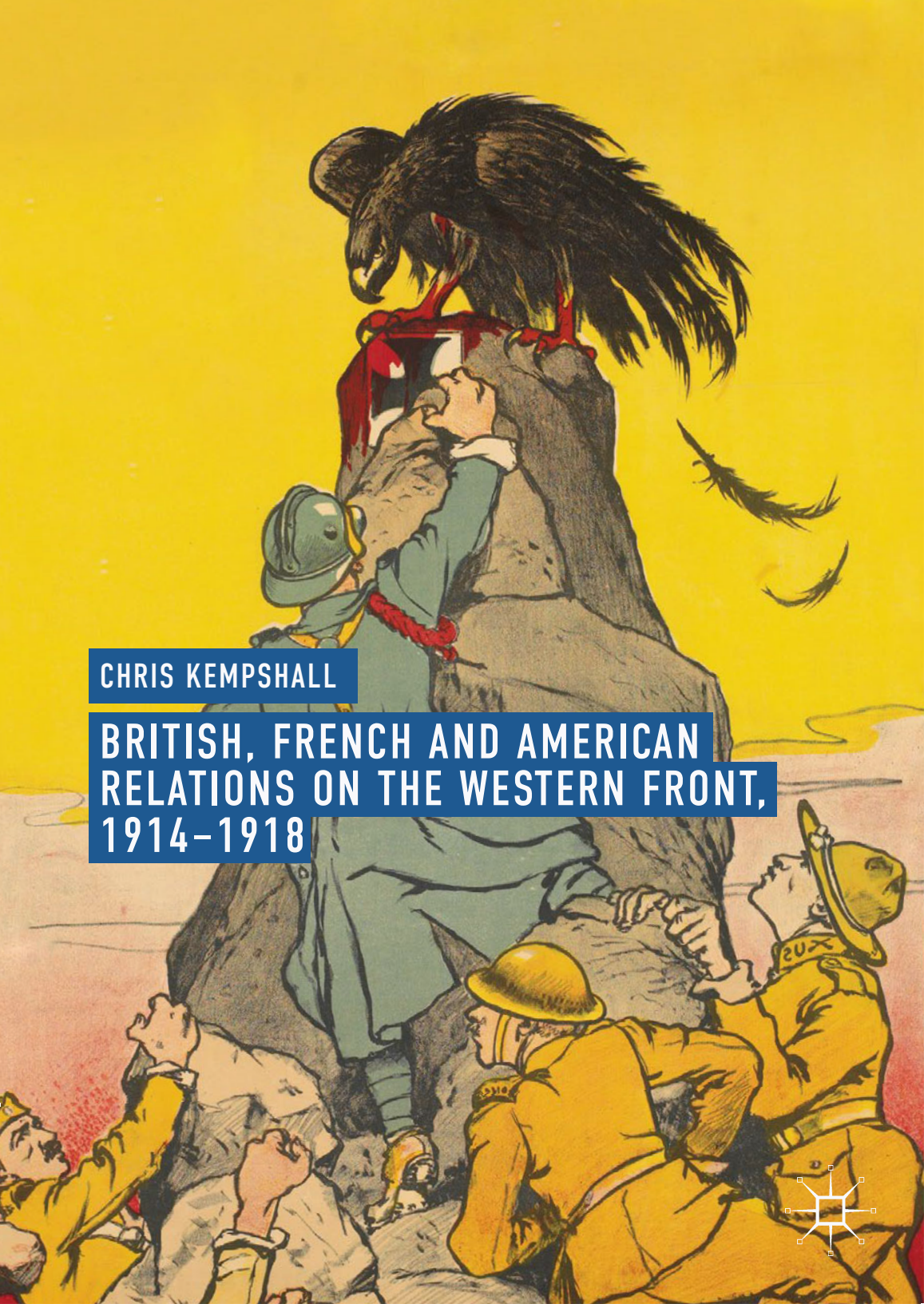
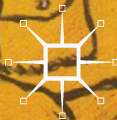


An illustration in a vintage style, likely a book cover. It depicts a scene from World War I. A large, dark eagle with a red ribbon around its neck is perched on a rocky outcrop. Below it, a soldier in a blue uniform and helmet is reaching up towards the eagle. In the foreground, several other soldiers in yellow uniforms and helmets are looking up at the eagle with expressions of awe or devotion. The background is a bright yellow sky. The overall tone is heroic and symbolic.

CHRIS KEMPSHALL

**BRITISH, FRENCH AND AMERICAN
RELATIONS ON THE WESTERN FRONT,
1914-1918**



British, French and American Relations
on the Western Front, 1914–1918

Chris Kempshall

British, French and
American Relations
on the Western Front,
1914–1918

palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-3-319-89464-5 ISBN 978-3-319-89465-2 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-89465-2>

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018940761

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Cover illustration: A French 'poilu', accompanied by American, British, and other Allied soldiers, scales a blood-stained peak, atop which waits a German Imperial eagle. text: EUG. COURBOIN un dernier effort et on l'aura IMP. CORNILLE ET SERRE, PARIS VISA 13.625 [One last effort and we'll have him]. © IWM.

Printed on acid-free paper

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The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

*For my parents
For Jo
For the Tommies, Poilus, and Doughboys
I've spent the past ten years with*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To truly acknowledge and thank everyone who assisted in the creation of this work would, I fear, require more words than are available to me. This book began as my Ph.D. in 2008 and has evolved beyond that to its current form. With that in mind I would like to initially thank both of my Ph.D. supervisors, Professor Ian Gazeley and Dr. Chris Warne, for giving me the opportunity to do this in the first place. In addition, I would like to thank my examiners, Professor John Horne and Professor Claire Langhamer, for their hugely helpful advice. I would also like to thank all of the staff at Palgrave Macmillan for their support and belief in this project and for answering my increasingly strange questions as we approached the conclusion.

This work would not have been possible without generous financial support from several organisations. I was the fortunate recipient of a Postgraduate Travel Grant from the Society for the Study of French History which ensured I could undertake research at the *Service historique de la défense*. Further to this, a research bursary from Gateways to the First World War enabled me to undertake research at the National WWI Museum in Kansas City, Missouri. I was hugely honoured to receive a Founders Travel Award from the British Association for American Studies to visit the United States Army Heritage and Education Centre in Pennsylvania. Without these financial contributions this study would not have been possible.

Because of the international nature of this study it has taken in archives and libraries in Britain, France, and the USA. As a result,

I would like to thank the staff of the following institutions for their time, advice, assistance, and patience as I trawled through their holdings: The Imperial War Museum in London, the National Archives at Kew, the British Library, The National WW1 Museum in Kansas City, The United States Army Heritage and Education Centre in Pennsylvania, The *Service historique de la défense*, the *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, and the *Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg*. The staff at the National WW1 Museum in particular were so welcoming whilst I visited, and supportive of this project, that they deserve extra acknowledgement and appreciation. My stay in Kansas City was also made possible thanks to the welcoming generosity of Christiana Coffey.

During my time working on this project I have had a variety of teaching roles at different universities, all of which supported me in various ways as I undertook the writing and research. With that in mind I would like to thank the staff and faculty of the University of Sussex, University of Kent, University of Brighton, Goldsmiths College London, and the Baden International Study Centre. The students I have taught at these institutions have often been truly inspirational. Their interactions with history and their desire to learn more about whatever subject was under discussion helped me hold on to the actual joy of research when at times it felt like a never-ending slog. The library and administrative staff at the University of Sussex and the University of Kent in particular have been amazing in securing me books, sources, and usable images.

I would also like to especially thank my current and past colleagues on the East Sussex WW1 project at East Sussex County Council for their unwavering support. Especially Lee, Indea, Beth, and Jane. It is no understatement to say that the flexibility they gave me to pursue my writing and research enabled this book's completion.

In intellectual terms I am indebted to a great many people who are all, invariably, better historians than me and are the type I aspire to become. Professor Mark Connelly has been a huge source of support at various stages of my career. Dr. Sam Edwards's advice on using the US Army Heritage and Education Center (USAHEC) and acting as a reference for various funding applications has been hugely helpful. Dr. Franziska Heimbürger's support in sourcing difficult-to-find items in France and also sharing her amazing work with me has been brilliant. Bryon Thomas Smith was gracious enough to share with me his forthcoming, and excellent thesis on US–French military relations in 1918, and I strongly recommend others seek out his work. Professor Connie

Ruzich repeatedly sent me amazing sources and information during her own work, and I am profoundly grateful for this. The work of Dr. Elizabeth Greenhalgh initially inspired the Ph.D. which became this book and I continue my hunt to read all of her amazing work.

Beyond individuals, the International Society for First World War Studies has been a hugely useful and affirming organisation to be a part of. Its members eagerness to help with queries and offer advice is a wonderful example of the collegiality that exists in this historical sphere.

I have been fortunate enough to present the work of this book in a variety of academic locales and receive feedback from hugely knowledgeable historians. As a result, I would like to thank Legacies of War at Leeds, the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst, the *Institut français du Royaume-Uni* in London, and many other conferences and symposiums around the world.

The maps for this book, which I believe to be truly stunning, were designed by Paul from Battlefield Designs, and I heartily recommend them as a company to others. Other images and material appear courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, *Punch Magazine* and the *Daily Mirror*.

It may take me the rest of my life to thank my assorted friends and colleagues for their direct assistance on this project, and I will endeavour to do exactly that. My cohort of friends from my Ph.D. at the University of Sussex continue to be an inspiration to me. Drs. Sam Shave, Becca Searle, Stella Sims, Ben Jones, Sian Edwards, and Rose Holmes are all wonderful and treasured people. My 'geeky games group' of Steve Newman and Drs. Roger Johnson and Tom Akehurst have provided endless opportunities for fun and nostalgia away from the First World War. The Friday Night Football group at the University of Kent, composed of similarly optimistic/tired historians and academics, has proved to be a perfect source of distraction and social interaction during the last year. The soon-to-be Drs. Peter Keeling, Natasha Silk, Adam Rolewicz, and Kasia Tomasiewicz have all interacted at some level with me and this project, and all of them prove that the field of history is in good hands for the future. The residents of ynwa.tv have shown far more interest in this book than could ever have been expected, whilst also providing useful tips for my research trips in the USA.

Dr. Sylvie Lomer remains one of my best friends and an amazing academic who is going to continue to make huge waves in her own field even if it doesn't involve the First World War.

Jo Baines has quite literally shared her life with this book for the past four-and-a-bit years. She has been supportive and loving, and barely complained about the fact I have reproduced trench systems using piles of books in our lounge. I love her very much. I'm looking forward to being able to properly interact with our friends Ruth, James, Lorraine, Bethany, Matt, and Jessica again.

My family, particularly my mum and step-dad, have been as supportive and as interested in this work as anybody can be when the topic is not actually that interesting to non-obsessed people. They have proofread and listened to my ponderings and complaints about this process. I will never be able to repay them.

I have spent the last ten years with this project in a variety of forms. A decade with long-dead soldiers from Britain, France, and America is a very long time. I could continue working on this exact book for another ten years. Decisions over what to include, what to cut out, and what leads to pursue or abandon have been supremely difficult. Trying to squeeze the wartime experiences of three nations into one book has been a challenge. As a result, this book could easily never be finished. However, in its final form I believe it provides the information I wanted it to. It is the book I always wanted to write.

I recently asked some of my students what gave me the right as a historian to read the diaries, letters, and more of men who had lived a hundred years ago. It is a difficult question to answer. I have read almost everything ever written during the war of the men who are quoted or who appear in this book. For some I have read the letters their parents received informing them that their sons were dead. The study of history is critical in the modern world but that should not allow us to forget that even at a historical distance it is an intrusion into writing that was never meant for us.

Whilst researching at the USAHEC I came across the Veteran Survey Questionnaire of Lt. McKoy who declared: 'This is an evidence of "futility." Many hours, money, and time was wasted in preparing this questionnaire. My time was wasted in filling in the answers. No one will ever read or be influenced by it.' Historians cannot undertake research without access to the documents of the past. I wish I could inform Lt. McKoy of how wrong his belief was and reassure him that these would be read and they would have an influence.

So, my final acknowledgement is to the men who appear in this book. I both thank and apologise to them. I hope I have done them justice.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAT	<i>Archives de l'Armée de Terre</i>
AEF	American Expeditionary Forces
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
BC	<i>Brigade de cuirassier</i>
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CC	<i>Corps de cavalerie</i>
CEP	Portuguese Expeditionary Corps
DIT	<i>Division d'infanterie territoriale</i>
GHQ	General Headquarters
GQG	Grand Quartier Général (French headquarters)
KOYLI	Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry
IWM	Imperial War Museum
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
OHL	Oberste Heeresleitung (German high command)
POW	Prisoner of war
RC	<i>Régiment de cuirassier</i>
REF	Russian Expeditionary Force
RFA	Royal Field Artillery
RH	<i>Régiment de hussards</i>
RHA	Royal Horse Artillery
RI	<i>Régiment d'infanterie</i>
SHD	<i>Service historique de la défense</i>
SSA	<i>Section Sanitaire Anglaise</i>
SWC	Supreme War Council
TF	Territorial Force

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PROLOGUE: 21ST MARCH 1918

Flashing lights in the fog at 04:40 on 21 March 1918 signalled both a beginning and an end. British and French soldiers, who were shocked from their beds, hurried forward into trenches to watch with fear and trepidation. Behind them, Americans were stepping off ships and rushing east towards the Front. The men of these three nations were a varied mix: the skilled and the fortunate, the veterans and the newrecruits, the survivors and the yet to be tested. However, as the lights resolved themselves into the largest artillery bombardment the war had seen, the situation they existed within changed irrevocably.

Those men who had lived through the war's opening battles of 1914 and the large-scale battles of 1916 would perhaps now look back on those moments to try and draw strength and solace from the relationships that had emerged from them and the lessons they had learned. The relationships between British, French, and American soldiers and the evolutions they had undergone (the confused early meetings, the joys, the despairs, the triumphs and the disasters) were about to be placed under pressure and strain that was even more cloying and suffocating than the mustard gas falling at Flesquières.

The men of the British Expeditionary Force who arrived at Le Havre in 1914 scarcely had time to meet French soldiers before the weight of the German Army was brought to bear against them at Mons and Le Cateau. The days that followed were marked by fear, paranoia, and death. Around the Somme in 1916, British soldiers had written of how accomplished and accommodating the French had been towards their

British allies; how they hoped to be able to match the apparent skill and ferocity of the French fighting soldier, and how they were acutely aware of their own shortcomings when held in comparison with them. By 1917, a British soldier would write about the great debt he believed was owed to France. The French would temper their frustrations about the lack of skill and training of the British armies in 1916 by paying tribute to the bravery and indefatigability of the British Tommy. They would reach out to the men of Kitchener's New Armies out of a desire to be good hosts and also in the hope that they would learn quickly the skills needed to aid in the liberation of *la Patrie*.

The Americans, though not involved at the outset of the war, were beginning to arrive in greater numbers. They had been wooed by the French, particularly Marshal Joseph Joffre, and the shared republican spirit of the two countries created an immediate bond between the men of the two armies. British soldiers, on the other hand, looked on these new arrivals with suspicion and discontent. The freedom and democracy that the Americans celebrated seemed, to the British mind, to make them a military liability.

At the commencement of Germany's 1918 Spring Offensive, these were the men who made up the bulk of the alliance. Thousands of German soldiers had been redeployed from the Eastern Front to the West. Their aim was to split these allied armies apart. As shells began to drop amongst them, the men of the Entente nations had nobody left to reach out to or trust but each other. Other allies such as the Russians had come and gone. The Belgians had been ever-present, but their army and resources were dwarfed by those arrayed around them. If the war was to be won it would be through the efforts of Britain, France, and the USA.

In the early morning of 21 March 1918, the men who manned the defences knew this and to an extent they trusted in those around them to do their job, to hold the line, and to rely on the relationships produced by years of cooperative allied warfare. In the weeks and months that followed, victory and defeat would go hand in hand. Within days of the German attack, the Entente allies would be forced onto the retreat. Within weeks, relations began to break down into suspicion, displeasure and, eventually, furious recrimination. At the same time, men would stand fast alongside those of other countries. The fluid nature of the fighting meant that soldiers would fall under the control of allied generals in a bid to turn the tide. Some relations would hold as others were

ruptured. Following 11 November 1918, some allied soldiers joined arms to sing in triumph whilst others would brawl in the streets.

Victory was symbolised by the singing of each other's national anthems; defeat by anger, betrayal, and violence.

How had it come to this?



Introduction: ‘Liberty and Union ...’

For many years we have had a long-standing friendship with France [An HON. MEMBER: “And with Germany!”]. I remember well the feeling in the House and my own feeling – for I spoke on the subject, I think, when the late Government made their agreement with France – the warm and cordial feeling resulting from the fact that these two nations, who had had perpetual differences in the past, had cleared these differences away; I remember saying, I think, that it seemed to me that some benign influence had been at work to produce the cordial atmosphere that had made that possible.

(Sir Edward Grey addressing Parliament, 3 August 1914¹)

Perhaps more than with any other countries, the relationships between Britain, France, and the USA came to represent and define Western civilisation and power in the twentieth century. Enduring through two world wars, the division of Europe, and the remaking of the world after the Cold War this is a relationship which appears sturdy and more successful than most others in modern times. However, this does not tell the full story. Breakdowns in agreement in London, Paris, and Washington have been equally common at times. Old rivalries, disagreements over policy, and in the development and direction of Europe have introduced cold anger into one of the world’s most powerful but

¹‘Statement by Sir Edward Grey (Hansard, 3 August 1914)’, accessed 12 November 2017, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1914/aug/03/statement-by-sir-edward-grey#column_1814.

also most unwieldy alliances. The origins of this alliance lie in both the lead-up to and the midst of one of Europe's and the world's most traumatic events.

Much scholarship and indeed public interest both in the lead-up to and during the First World War centenary have been focused justifiably on answering questions about why war began in 1914 and what motivated the empires of Europe to wage war upon each other. An offshoot of this is the additional question of why the USA was eventually moved to join the conflict in 1917 on the side of France and Britain. The steps, decisions, and military plans that brought Britain, France, and the USA into an alliance were complex and at times contradictory. Understanding them will be an important part of this study. Further to this, it will also primarily concern itself not with the 'why?' of this alliance but the 'how?': How did the nations of Britain, France, and the USA fight together as allies?

Before the outbreak of the First World War, Britain, France, and the USA did not appear to be a natural triumvirate of allies. Britain and France had no history of mutual cooperation, with their joint efforts in the Crimean War little more than a confused blip set against an historic backdrop of distrust, rivalry, and conflict. Franco-US relations had been warmer over the preceding hundred years but even then, their most notable attempts at military cooperation had been aimed at thwarting the British. The Americans still remained resolutely neutral and largely disinterested in European affairs in 1914, so had no position in the original Entente Cordiale. It was an alliance that did not require Britain to actually do anything it did not wish to do, and included the Russians far to the East, the country which had been the opposition for Franco-British efforts in the Crimean War. However, by 1918 the Americans had been drawn into the conflict, effectively replacing Russia, which had sued for peace whilst collapsing into revolution and civil war. And yet despite this, the alliance and military power of Britain, France, and the USA proved victorious over Germany and the Central Powers. How did three countries with plenty of history of suspicion and enmity create a victorious alliance? Who ran it? How did it function in practice?

The direction and the course of the First World War were governed, given the numbers of men involved in the fighting, by a very few people. Leading politicians and heads of the respective militaries decided on the overall strategy and focus of the war effort. However, whilst each of the allies shared the same overall goal of victory, they were also concerned

with their own spheres of responsibility and their own national interests. In many ways the men who decided the strategy became the embodiments of these interests and were charged with protecting them. This had certainly been the case regarding the orders presented to Field Marshal Sir John French at the deployment of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in 1914, and it did not evolve very far in the years that followed.²

The interactions between the commanding generals and their aides therefore often took on a very particular dynamic. Discussions about imminent strategy and the movement of armies were undeniably important matters, but these discussions could often become bogged down and entrenched over a myriad of issues ranging from who had operational command in certain sectors and scenarios, the responsibility for resupplying, and which nation would bear the weight of an assault. In this sense the discussions highlighted the inherent weakness of a large-scale coalition; the final goal may well have been the same, but each country had its chosen path to reaching it and a price they thought reasonable in achieving it. Further to this, none of the primary combatants wished to achieve a victory that greatly benefited everyone else but left their efforts unrewarded, nor did they want to risk one of their coalition partners 'going it alone' and making a separate peace.³

Exploring the relationships between politicians and generals of these three nations is crucial in understanding the political and military decisions that defined and directed the alliance. Steering the actions of three nations that, whilst allied, each had its own desires and objectives was no small undertaking. However, the role of those at the highest levels of power does not represent the totality of experience within the alliance itself. Below this world of high strategy, national bargaining, and realpolitik, however, lay another world of national interaction. If the activities of the leading generals and politicians represented the First World War being governed by a small group of men under maximum focus and direction, then the opposite clearly lay in the huge numbers of soldiers who encountered each other with no interference or guidance. From examining the records that these men kept of their meetings with the

²Lord Herbert Kitchener, 'Instructions for the General Officer Commanding the Expeditionary Force Proceeding to France', 1914, War Office Records; WO 32/5590, National Archives, Kew.

³Elizabeth Greenhalgh, *Victory Through Coalition: Britain and France During the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 2.

strangers from foreign lands, who had become their principal allies, it quickly becomes apparent that the political disputes and considerations of generals and wartime leaders did not filter down into the trenches. The concerns of those in power did not begin to play any particular role in forming opinions until word of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points began to spread amongst the French soldiers in 1918.⁴

At the highest levels, the business of attempting to coordinate a coalition war was often combative in itself. Whilst the relationships between soldiers of different nations could be equally fraught, the reasons for it differed greatly. That is not to suggest that those in positions of command and authority did not have their own views on their allies' men and national traits; they absolutely did. However, these images and understandings did not translate into anything that those in the trenches could immediately recognise or become interested in. This strongly suggests that whilst directing the alliance both politically and militarily, the assorted generals and politicians gathered in capital cities and at the front were not the ones facilitating interactions further down the ladder. Therefore, to fully understand how this alliance actually functioned as a social, cultural, and military organism, we must also understand the soldiers who comprised it.

An examination of relations between regular soldiers within the armies of Britain, France, and the USA produces a variety of initial questions. How well did these men from different nations interact? What were the key factors in producing positive or negative encounters? To what extent did existing cultural and social awareness of different countries play a role in these interactions? However, whilst important, all of these questions relate to a single more encompassing one; What impact did relations between allied soldiers have on the overall war effort? Whilst any discussion of relations between those of different countries is going to have strong social and cultural importance, it is also important to consider these interactions within the context in which they occurred. The events of the First World War would have a direct impact on how well different soldiers reacted to one another, with the events leading up to the Battle of the Marne in 1914, and the German Spring Offensives of 1918 in particular, providing clear examples of this. However, by the

⁴Even in this case, it can be argued that the soldiers and generals each dismissed the notion on similar grounds rather than the opinion of those in command filtering down to those in the trenches.

same token, this particular door does not swing in just one direction. It must also be understood that the ability, or lack thereof, for allied soldiers to build lasting and workable relations with one another would have a significant impact on their ability to wage war together and, by extension, to win battles. The British soldiers stationed along the southern flank of the Somme alongside the French before the offensive in 1916 had a very different experience of the opening day than those further north, and some of this must be considered an outcome of cohesive allied behaviour. Similarly, the attack by the Germans in March 1918 which forced the allies into a new retreat, and which French soldiers in particular viewed as almost a betrayal by their British allies, should not just be viewed with regard to how it changed the strategic nature of the Western Front but also considering how it changed the way the alliances worked on the ground.

Understanding both the motivations behind soldiers' behaviour and the evolution in their relationships with others must also be understood within the framework of existing studies on soldiers' experiences and the place they already have within historiography. The experiences of First World War soldiers have become increasingly popular, and writings from the trenches (be they letters, diaries, or poetry) have found a particular resonance within both French and British culture. However, the historiography has traditionally been focused on the experiences of each country's particular soldiers. This eventually reaches the point where other national experiences have been pushed out of focus almost entirely. The founders and members of the International Society for First World War Studies have helped pioneer the shift to more transnational examinations of the war and those who experienced it, which has brought back a more panoramic approach to the conflict.

That British and French soldiers were often in such close proximity but never given a full examination is one of many peculiarities about the approach to soldiers' histories of the war. In this regard, the interactions between British and French soldiers is of great social and cultural interest. The opportunities for these groups to meet in such numbers would never have existed in civilian life. That they managed to form their own understandings and workable relationships speaks a great deal about the common humanity and adaptability of these men. Additionally, these interactions have very clear military implications. A symptom of the focus on the military and political actors of the war is the overlooking of what soldiers were capable of achieving.

The allied setbacks of 1914 were not just defeats of strategy; they were defeats of cooperation. The BEF's commander, Field Marshal Sir John French, was undergoing something akin to a nervous breakdown and had lost all trust in the French armies around him. Beneath him the men of the BEF spoke practically no French and had no way of properly reaching out to, and organising themselves with, the French soldiers who moved around them. The BEF became utterly isolated as a result. This was a potential disaster founded upon dual circumstances; the collapse in confidence of Field Marshal French and the fact that British soldiers were not in possession of either the skills or the time to form any sort of relationship with their allies. Had either of these circumstances been improved upon, the situation might not have developed so disastrously and the allies might not have come so close to defeat.

By contrast, in 1916, British and French soldiers were able to come to their own form of understanding and pass on their experiences and lay the foundations for more adaptable relationships by 1918. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, relations between British and French military commands could still be fraught and tumultuous during this same period, but upon assuming command of the BEF in 1915, General (and later Field Marshal) Douglas Haig never appeared likely to replicate the collapse and isolation of Field Marshal French. Both of these situations served to provide this alliance with stronger foundations for the battles to come. The evolution and nature of the relationships built between British and French soldiers need to be understood as an additional factor in explaining how and why the allies eventually proved successful in defeating Germany in 1918. The addition of the Americans to this dynamic in 1917 and 1918 was both a blessing and an obstacle to the long-standing Entente allies, with the French being very pleased with their new allies and the British far less so. The reasons behind this are as complicated as those which drove Anglo–French relations at the soldierly level.

An examination of these grass-roots allied relations during the First World War is not a simple undertaking, but it is one that several historians have previously called for.⁵ The very nature of transnational

⁵Alexandre Lafon in particular outlined the requirement for a specific study on this aspect of the alliance, and Elizabeth Greenhalgh, in the article which originally inspired this study, commented on the under-examined nature of allied relations at this level. Alexandre Lafon, *La camaraderie au front: 1914–1918* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014), p. 180; Elizabeth Greenhalgh, “‘Parade Ground Soldiers’: French Army Assessments of the British on the Somme in 1916”, *Journal of Military History* 63, no. 2 (April 1999): 283–84.

examinations history, particularly of warfare, is about understanding the limits of both restrictive 'national' experiences and also of ideas about universality. Wartime experiences do not stop at the boundaries of armies; they are shared across nationalities, and the differences and similarities between them are not limited by nation or language. At the same time, there are clearly national motivations and ideologies that are unique to the various combatants and need to be understood in context. Furthermore, the very notion of each nation's army being a homogeneous group is itself a fallacy. Each army was composed of men from various demographics, be they rural or urban, young or old, working, middle or upper-class, northern or southern. Britain, France, and the USA each claimed a unity of purpose and mind at the outbreak of their wars, but each was also riven by internal feuds which festered below the surface. Many of those in power within Britain had expected military action in Ireland rather than Europe before August 1914. France was still emerging from the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War and political scandals, such as the Dreyfus Affair had laid bare the political factions within the Third Republic. Meanwhile, the USA had only become the United States once again after the end of the Civil War in 1865. Whilst the Confederacy may have been defeated, the racial and economic tensions that had brought it into being had not. Further to these issues, both Britain and France would also have to administer and call upon the men of their empires to support the military effort. Before the signing of the armistice in 1918, all of these issues would re-emerge in one form or another to cause turmoil within the members of the Entente alliance.

What becomes particularly apparent when examining the experiences of British, French, and American soldiers is how often certain situations replicate themselves across the war. This is particularly true of British and American experiences upon arriving in France. When British soldiers arrived in France during 1914 and 1915 they found themselves confused by the nature of the French in general and their colonial troops in particular. They would write at length about the supposed barbarity and fearsomeness of these men fighting under the French flag, based upon existing notions of race. Later, when advancing through recently liberated territory, they would grow to fear that the French civilians around them were potential spies and treat them with suspicion as a result. These experiences were then replicated in 1917 and 1918 by arriving Americans. Furthermore, both the British and the Americans would express their surprise at the tendency of French soldiers to form unofficial truces with the Germans in quiet sections of the line. For their part,

the same French soldiers would have their own concerns that the arriving allied soldiers would not understand the nature and necessity of these truces and stir up trouble. The circular nature of these wartime experiences gives an indication as to the cultural and experiential similarities of men from the USA and Britain upon arriving in a country that they did not understand.

What is also noticeable is how the relations between the men of these three countries evolved around notions of military education and cultural learning. The men of the BEF in 1914 did not believe they had much to learn from the French who, for their part, did not have the time to teach them. This dynamic changes in 1916 with inexperienced British soldiers looking to their French counterparts in order to understand the war. These French soldiers, partially out of an interest to appear as good hosts, began to give the British a learning experience based upon exposure rather than direct instruction. Many British soldiers write about being invited to French trenches where they were then presented with an up-close view of how the French orchestrated their defences, went about their daily lives, and dealt with artillery bombardments. This exposure then transmitted itself back through the battalions and regiments of the British army alongside the French. In 1917 and 1918, the British and French gave direct training to US soldiers. But, particularly in the case of French units, many of the beneficial lessons for the Americans again came when given prolonged exposure to French methods of warfare whilst US units were embedded alongside the French army.

Relationships between the soldiers of the Entente allies would evolve and change over time, but they largely fit into three defined periods of time and of success. These periods are mirrored in this book's structure. The first part, 'Confusion', contains chapters which examine the relationship between Britain and France from the period after the defeat of Napoleon up until mid-1915. The first of these chapters focuses on the pre-war period, focusing in particular on relations between Britain and France, the portrayals of each nation within national presses and consciousness, and also the make-up of their armed forces. Of particular focus in this chapter will be the movement towards a structured alliance from the original signing of the Entente Cordiale through the 'military conversations' between the two nations after 1906. The second chapter examines the early months of the war up until mid to late-1915, and covers the opening months of the war to the middle of 1915, when British and French soldiers attempted to understand each other whilst the events

of the war made such attempts extremely difficult. As discussed above, circumstances conspired to prevent a good working relationship between the British and French armies at the outset of the war, but it must also be acknowledged that there were clear deficits in the planning and preparation for the BEF to fight alongside French forces in Europe.

Part II covers the period of 'Cooperation'. The first chapter here is primarily concerned with the change in relations between British and French soldiers, particularly around the Somme, following the arrival of Kitchener's New Armies. During this time, men from both armies began building grass-roots working relationships with each other. By fighting side by side at the Somme, British and French soldiers were able to begin a process of cultural and military knowledge exchange which greatly benefited the forming of a workable relationship. The second chapter then expands upon this to examine the allied attempts to draw the USA into the alliance, and reaction of both the British and French armies to the American arrival in 1917. In many ways, this period is the crucial moment in relations between these allied soldiers. The relationships built up between French and British soldiers around the Somme in 1916, and then the warm feelings between French and American soldiers in 1917, produced an environment where military experience could be easily shared and, most importantly, trust could be built up between the men of the three nations. Perhaps crucially, they also lifted the level of relationship between the three armies up to a point where they could survive a catastrophic rupture.

The final year of the war also provides both the final stage in this evolution and the aforementioned moment of rupture: 'Collapse'. The first chapter in this part examines the events of 1918 where the German Spring Offensive and the subsequent allied retreat placed huge strain on the links between Britain and France, whilst the suspicion that President Woodrow Wilson was going to cheat France of its victory swiftly soured relations with US soldiers. In many places, the relationships which had been nurtured since 1916 descended completely into angry bitter recrimination that was only beginning to heal by the time of the Armistice. The final chapter examines the state of allied relations from the Armistice up to the Treaty of Versailles negotiations and beyond into the inter-war years.

Whilst this study of the oscillating nature of these alliances draws upon records and evidence from each of them, it is important to understand that there is often not an equal power dynamic at play during these

events. Often the experiences and actions of a single nation will have a profound effect on the experiences of the other two. It is not as simple as dividing up the focus evenly between all three, for often it is a process of action and then reaction that drives the evolution. For example, to fully understand the nature of the alliance in chapter two, covering 1914 into 1915, it is the British soldiers who are the main focus. As a small army thrust into an expanding war, the experiences of the BEF in France and Belgium are crucial in understanding how they came to understand the French and how the French then reacted to their replacements in 1916. Similarly, the collapse of allied relations in 1918 can be principally understood through the eyes of the French. It is they who became filled with recriminations for the British after the latter retreated in March, and then similarly rebelled at the notion of a US president stealing their moment of victory through diplomacy. Meanwhile, to fully grasp the difficult relationships between British and US soldiers it is necessary to examine those on both sides to see where the animosity came from and which snubs and insults appear to have been intentional and which were accidental.

Whilst the French army held the largest portion of the Western Front and supplied by far the most men, it is also the more difficult army about which to find substantial information relating to inter-allied contact. This is principally because, whilst French soldiers were numerous, the geography of the Western Front meant that many had only limited contact at times with their British and US allies. It was far more common for British and US soldiers, in a much smaller army and surrounded by Frenchmen, to come into contact with allied nations.⁶ Therefore, whilst records for British and US soldiers have often been drawn directly from personal accounts such as diaries and letters, much of the French content for this study has been drawn from the collections of the *Commissions de contrôle postal* for the French army during the war.⁷ Whilst a familiar

⁶This is something also noted by: Franziska Heimburger, 'Mésentente cordiale? Langues et coalition alliée sur le front de l'ouest de la Grande Guerre' (EHESS, 2014), p. 238.

⁷The *Commissions de contrôle postal* would be instituted only in 1916 by the French, but, disappointingly, were not replicated in other armies. For a full history and background of the Commissions, see: Jean-Noël Jeanneney, 'Les Archives Des Commissions de Contrôle Postal Aux Armées (1916–1918). Une Source Précieuse Pour l'histoire Contemporaine de l'opinion et Des Mentalités', *Revue d'histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* (1954–) 15, no. 1 (1968): 209–33; and Greenhalgh, "'Parade Ground Soldiers': French Army Assessments of the British on the Somme in 1916", pp. 287–90.

source for other studies of the French army, it is perhaps under-utilised as a method of surveying popular opinion within the French armies during the war.⁸ Entire sections of the censor reports are given over to discussions of interactions with the allies, and they provide a crucial insight into how the *Poilus* viewed their comrades.

The war, the alliance itself, and victory all meant very different things to the soldiers who made up the armies of Britain, France, and the USA. The issues of 1914 and the collapse of 1918 prove this. However, the cooperation of 1916 and 1917 allowed the alliance to survive these collapses and made it possible for the men who made up these armies to secure the victories necessary to bring the war to an end. This was not easily achieved and nor was it a guarantee. Britain, France, and the USA each had very different attitudes towards Europe and each other in the years leading up to 1914. These views were a mix of institutionalised memory and selected historical prejudices. For all the eventual success they would find in defeating Germany in 1918, at the start of 1914, the trio did not appear to be a successful alliance-in-waiting.

Whilst the soldiers of the British, French, and US armies did bring their own views and experiences to relations with each other, and these differences have to be understood, there are common trends that appear across time periods and nationalities. The primary criteria that influenced and produced good relations between soldiers of different nationalities has been previously established by Elizabeth Greenhalgh as 'proximity' and 'success'. In essence, this model outlines how the proximity between soldiers of different nations and their ability to distinguish and appreciate their comrades' successes allowed these soldiers the opportunity for both first-hand contact and activity that could be verified and appreciated by their own eyes rather than through rumour or second-hand accounts. As chapters three and five in particular will show, close proximity between British and French soldiers around the Somme and then US soldiers embedded alongside the French and the British (particularly the former)

⁸As noted by Greenhalgh, the Commissions have been useful to some specific studies in the past but none tackling the entire war in detail: Jean Nicot, 'Perceptions Des Allies Par Les Combattants En 1918 d'après Les Archives Du Contrôle Postal', *Revue Historique Des Armées*, no. 3 (1988): 45–53; Annick Cochet, 'L'opinion et le moral des soldats en 1916 d'après les archives du contrôle postal' (Paris X Nanterre, 1986); and as cited by Greenhalgh, "Parade Ground Soldiers": French Army Assessments of the British on the Somme in 1916', p. 284.

in 1918 would assist in breaking down barriers that would not have been as easily navigated had that proximity not been there. Distances between soldiers of different nationalities could cause a form of detached friction which was further exacerbated by a system of rumours, myths, and paranoia on both sides. Rumours and stories would often spread between the armies of the Western Front and rapidly metamorphose into a particular form of truth. This is especially in evidence amongst French soldiers within armies that were furthest from the Somme. These men were often the most scathing of the British efforts based upon second-hand stories about their deficiencies which had spread across the front.⁹

Proximity by itself was not enough to secure good relations. Being close enough to a foreign army to watch it repeatedly fail in battle was not a recipe for success. British evaluations of their Portuguese allies prove this point. Winning the war was, after all, the primary objective for the various soldiers, and living next door to an army that wasn't capable of bringing about that victory would cause negative encounters not positive ones. Understanding the nature of their allies' successes and failures was important for each nation in evaluating their military worth and potential. The French in particular proved highly adept at not just recognising successes and improved performance in their allies but also in rationalising whether a failure was due to errors by their fellow soldiers or by the command and direction of the battle itself. This is clearly evident both in 1916 with the British army on the Somme and in their time alongside the Americans in 1918.

However, focusing simply on proximity between soldiers of different nations and their observable military performance does not account for all of the relations and evaluations that occurred. These men brought their own beliefs, stereotypes, and predispositions to war with them. Sometimes what these soldiers saw and what they believed would become conflicted. At times they would base their understandings on beliefs that were in no way verifiable and actually ran counter to the realities of the war. Once the Russians dropped out, the French turned very strongly against their former ally. However, before this, when the Russians were still involved but contact with them was minimal, the French seemed to base their opinions of them upon more popular

⁹Greenhalgh, "Parade Ground Soldiers": French Army Assessments of the British on the Somme in 1916'.

notions and stereotypes of 'the Russian hordes' that 'would sweep into Germany from the east' rather than any realistic notion of what the Russians were capable of.¹⁰ This sort of occurrence was not simply confined to the French either; the British would indulge in it, too, suggesting that there is an extra level for defining relations that goes beyond both 'proximity' and 'success' and which incorporates an acceptable national narrative or stereotype to fill in information that is lacking to the individual because of an absence of the two existing criteria. This third element is perhaps best understood as 'perceived ability or expertise'. The average French soldier would have no idea about the abilities and make-up of the Russian army, but the preexisting notion of the Russians being ferocious fighters and their army being huge meant that the lack of proximity and inability to witness any successes did not lead to opinion turning against the third member of the Entente alliance until their collapse and exit from the war in 1917. This ongoing belief in the power of the Russian army continued even after some French soldiers came into direct contact with the Russian Expeditionary Force on the Western Front. These Russian soldiers were, as Jamie Cockfield's excellent work *With Snow on their Boots* outlined, 'sold for shells' by the Russians to the French in exchange for ongoing supplies of ammunition.¹¹ This was clearly not a country or a military that was on the brink of steam-rolling its enemies. Similarly, soldiers from Britain and the USA often had strongly formed beliefs about the nature of their enemies and allies which could only be rooted in existing cultural understandings.

What is most apparent from analysing the various periods of contact and relations is that this was an alliance that in many ways had serious flaws. Lack of consideration for how disparate groups of soldiers were supposed to work together undermined the military effort, certainly in 1914, and at other points as well. However, this same lack of oversight also provided one of the alliance's greatest strengths. Because there was no direction from above, soldiers formed their own relationships with each other built upon common causes, interests, and desires. These organic relationships proved surprisingly durable during combat but could be disrupted by heavy-handed interference from above. During periods in 1916 and in 1918, when the leadership of various armies tried

¹⁰Jamie H. Cockfield, *With Snow on Their Boots* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 7.

¹¹Cockfield, *With Snow on Their Boots*.