

Herbert Obinger, Klaus Petersen and Peter Starke, eds., *Warfare and welfare: military conflict and welfare state development in western countries*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xvii+481. ISBN: 978-0-19-877959-9.

This book is primarily concerned with the relationship between war and social policy during the twentieth century. As the editors note, this period witnessed two world wars and unprecedented increases in the scale and scope of state welfare provision. The book therefore aims to examine the extent to which these two developments were connected.

The relationship between war and social policy has been examined by a number of previous authors. The editors pay particular attention to Richard Titmuss's essay on 'War and social policy', which was published in 1958. Titmuss himself drew heavily on Stanislaw Andrzejewski's 'sweeping, untidy but brilliant' account of *Military organisation and society*, published four years earlier. The impact of war also played a central role in Peacock and Wiseman's study of *The growth of public expenditure in the UK* (Princeton University Press, 1961). The latter argued that war played a critical role in the growth of public spending as a result of its inspection, concentration and displacement effects.

The main part of the current volume consists of fourteen carefully-constructed and highly-informative national case studies. Although some authors pay more attention than others to nineteenth-century developments and different authors define the scope of social policy in varying ways, almost all of the essays adopt a common framework, with individual sections devoted to periods of war preparation, mobilisation and reconstruction. Five of the countries – Germany, Austria, Italy, France and Japan – were directly involved in either the First or the Second World Wars (or both) and experienced acts of war on their own soil. Three countries –

Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States – were also involved in the two World Wars as belligerents, but were largely involved in military action beyond their own borders. Five countries – Finland, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and Switzerland – were either occupied during one or both World Wars or remained neutral. The final case-study focuses on Israel. The editors argue that ‘even though the country was only founded after World War II, it is a particularly interesting case insofar as state-building and welfare state formation took place in the context of permanent military threat and a series of smaller wars’ (p. 8).

In addition to providing a lengthy introduction, the editors (together with Carina Schmitt) have also provided a substantial and thought-provoking conclusion. They identify a number of different ways in which ‘war is a relevant factor for understanding the development and cross-sectional variation between advanced welfare states’ (p. 427) and outline an index of ‘war intensity’ based on the duration of war, the number of military and civilian casualties as a proportion of the prewar population, the extent of changes in GDP over the course of hostilities, and the presence of combat activities on each country’s home territory. (The index is based on a recent paper by Obinger and Schmitt in the *European Journal of Political Research*). The book’s key argument is that the extent to which war influenced the development of social policy was directly related to this index. They also assess the impact of the Cold War on social policy and identify avenues for further research by extending the research agenda to cover the impact of civil war on welfare state development, and examining the impact of war on social policy in other countries.

Overall, this is an important and impressive collection. Although some of the editors’ findings may be more familiar than they suggest, the book brings together a vast range of information on the relationship between war and social policy in a diverse range of countries and, in the process, provides a key text for exploring the

comparative history of social policy in a wide range of countries from the late-nineteenth century onwards, with particular reference to the years between 1914 and 1950. The book will make an extremely valuable addition to reading lists on both the history of social policy and comparative social policy more generally.

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