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My first reaction to the title of this article was to scratch my head in puzzlement: had not the history of the Second World War always been 'globalized,' a fact illustrated by the very name we gave it? Andrew Buchanan argues that this was not the case, and that only recently have historians truly sought to analyze the war in global terms.

In 2019 Buchanan published a brief history of the war that emphasized this new global perspective on it.¹ In this important article he focuses exclusively on this new perspective so as to be able to analyze the conflict in truly global terms. He begins with and makes use of exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky's fascinating 1940 prediction that the war would result in a "volcanic eruption of American imperialism" as the United States (which was not even a formal belligerent at this time) sought to "'organize" the world" (246). That effort would fail, Trotsky further predicted, as instead revolutions would rock the world. This in turn was the result of the great contradiction between capitalism's drive for a global world market and the existing political structure of competing nation states. Buchanan uses this contradiction as a way to bridge the gap between international and national-centered histories of the war so as to "de-exceptionalize" the United States while simultaneously emphasizing the emergence of US hegemony as the "key unifying element in an otherwise disparate set of events and processes" (248). That is quite a task; but making use of numerous works published in the last two decades, he largely succeeds in doing so.

Chronologically Buchanan calls for a 'reframing' of the war as a "protracted process of conflict whose central paroxysm" from December 1941 to September 1945 both "emerged from and wound back into an extended series of regional wars" running from the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 to 1953, a year marked by such major events as the Korean War armistice. This reframing allows for the incorporation of areas of the world, such as the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, which are often marginalized or entirely omitted from Anglo-American accounts of the war. It also erases artificial "pre-war, war and post-war" categories in favor of what Buchanan labels an "uneven and combined processes of transition" that allow for "narratives of connectivity, transnational mobility, hybridity and environmental consequence" (254). As such he views the war as a series of processes that intersected rather than a single narrative.

In separate sections Buchanan deals with each of these processes and with the numerous recent scholarly works on them. He emphasizes and explores in this regard such issues as the numerous popular insurgencies

¹ Andrew N. Buchanan, *World War II in Global Perspective, 1931-1953: A Short History* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2019). Full disclosure: Buchanan is also my colleague, having taken over my World War Two courses when I retired.

that occurred around the world during these years; the critical importance of neutral states in the conflict; the massive and global movement of populations that occurred; the ‘hybrid armies’ of major belligerents that included large numbers of conquered and colonial peoples as well as women; the importance and impact of control of global sea and air lanes; the simultaneous centrality of massive land wars in China and the Soviet Union; the rise of US power; Washington’s deliberate drive for global hegemony; and the large-scale environmental consequences of the war.

In the process he offers some surprising and often startling examples and connections. All World War II armies, for example, were actually “heterogeneous organizations” of many nationalities—even the supposedly ‘Aryan’ German army in Russia that in fact included pro-Nazi volunteers in national SS units, the forces of Germany’s Hungarian, Italian, Finnish, Rumanian and Spanish allies, and over 800,000 Soviet prisoners of war, resulting in what one German general noted was an “absolute League of Nations army” (264). Furthermore, all of these armies included such large numbers of women that, as Buchanan notes, “avoiding gendered terms like ‘men’ and ‘manpower’ is a question not of political correctness but of simple factual accuracy” (266). And the millions of such soldiers moved around the world by sea lanes as well as land links and new air corridors were themselves “vectors of cultural connectivity” (267).

As valuable as Buchanan’s reframing of the war in this article is, equally worthwhile is the plethora of supporting footnotes (120 in a 36-page article). Most of them cite works published in the last two decades that explore these issues and that scholars and students of the war should read. Rather than presenting a single narrative of the war, Buchanan thus presents multiple narratives that are separate yet related and that often intersect with each other. Recognition of these multiple narratives, as well as the unresolved dialectical conflict between global and national issues, does enable us to reframe and expand our understanding of World War II. As such the approach is valuable and convincing.

I wonder, however, where these multiple narratives and the unresolved dialectical conflict leave us in terms of future histories of the war. Is it possible, in this regard, ever to write a future history of the war that incorporates all of these narratives and issues? I doubt it. Furthermore, if the chronological reframing of World War II resembles, as Buchanan notes, the chronological reframing of World War I that Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela proposed in 2014 so as to cover the years 1911 to 1923,² does it make sense to combine the two world war narratives rather than try to maintain a distinction now chronologically shrunk from twenty to only eight years? The problem of course is that such a combination would make writing a future history of the war even more difficult than it already is—and perhaps impossible.

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² Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, “The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of the World Order, 1911-1923,” *Diplomatic History*, xxxviii, 4 (2014), 787, cited by Buchanan on 249, fn. 9.

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