

Steve Marti. *For Home and Empire: Voluntary Mobilization in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand during the First World War*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019. Pp. 201.

The First World War saw the Dominions of Australia, Canada and New Zealand undertake great feats of mobilisation in the pursuit of victory. Yet this mobilisation was not of the same “totalizing” form undertaken by European nations, which often resulted in social upheavals and the breakdown of governmental systems. Instead, these states mobilised in ways that reflected the bonds and boundaries of their settler societies. They relied upon “voluntary mobilization,” the willing support of communities who competed to illustrate that their town or city could be more patriotic, more loyal and more British than their neighbours. It was a competition orchestrated by community leaders and government figures who actively excluded, omitted or trivialised contributions to the war effort by communities of colour.

In *For Home and Empire*, Steve Marti weaves together multiple strands of historiography to present fresh insights into the wartime societies of Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Specifically, Marti argues that owing to geographical and social factors, “[v]oluntary mobilization in the Dominions remained selective, exclusive, and competitive – ultimately diluting the Dominions’ overall contribution to the imperial war effort” (p. 6). It reveals the paradoxes, double standards, inequalities and ethnocentric perspectives that shaped these states’ contributions to victory, while emphasising the importance of communal bonds and consensus-driven initiatives in sustaining popular enthusiasm for the war effort.

For Home and Empire is situated within a growing body of literature focused on societal reactions to the First World War. While the now-classic texts such as Joan Beaumont’s *Broken Nation*, Steven Loveridge’s *Calls to Arms* and Desmond Morton’s *Fight or Pay* have significantly advanced our understandings in this field, they operate on a local or state-level of analysis and often lack imperial contextualisation.¹ *For Home and Empire* demolishes this analytical

¹ Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2013); Steven Loveridge, *Calls to Arms: New Zealand Society and Commitment to the Great War* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2014); and Desmond Morton, *Fight or Pay: Soldiers’ Families in the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

boundary. By comparing the mobilisation of Australia, Canada and New Zealand, Marti clearly illustrates the many similarities (and some differences) in how these societies supported the war effort.

For Home and Empire's five chapters reveal how the underlying logic of settler colonial society was applied to the war effort. Preoccupations with local autonomy and racial hierarchies shaped each's approach to issues such as the regulation of fundraising community groups and the enlistment of indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities or non-British European immigrants. Chapter One examines the organisation of patriotic funds and the varying approaches of government bodies with respect to their regulation. Australia maintained legislation designed to promote centralisation of funds and coordination of efforts, while New Zealand maintained less (but still some) regulation and Canada very little. The attitudes towards service and patriotic funds by individuals in these Dominions who identified as Scottish, Irish or French Canadian is the subject of the second chapter. Marti examines how the British diaspora used the war effort to bridge their attachments between their Dominion and their ancestral homes, while French-Canadian communal mobilisation was aimed at resisting both the central powers on the Western Front and the cultural repression of Ottawa.

Chapter Three considers the enlistment, or attempted enlistment, of non-white minorities into the Dominion expeditionary forces, such as individuals of Chinese or Japanese descent as well as Black volunteers in Canada. The frustration of these communities, many of whom willingly offered service, is exemplified as they attempted to circumvent racist recruiting policies. This race-based exclusion from service is contrasted with Britain's own use of the Chinese Labour Corps as well as African soldiers in both logistic and frontline roles. In a similar theme, Chapter Four discusses Eastern and Southern European immigrant communities' support for the war effort and later attempts, encouraged by the imperial government, to recruit from these groups to reinforce allied armies such as the Polish Legion or the Serbian Army. Marti rounds out the book by examining the mobilisation of indigenous communities within the Dominions. Here differences in approach are made evident with New Zealand's raising of a Maori battalion compared to the scattering of Aboriginal Australians (when they could enlist) throughout the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) or Canada's First Nations' peoples' attempts

to iterate their sovereignty by raising forces as ‘allies’ of the British Crown and not under the Canadian government.

Marti’s level of detail and meticulously supported arguments offer little room for critique. Yet it is unfortunate that within this work no defence or discourse is present as to why Marti’s analysis does not extend to the other two Dominions of this period: Newfoundland and South Africa. We can of course guess at explanations. Newfoundland’s military contribution to the First World War (the Royal Newfoundland Regiment) was subsumed within the British Army and not an expeditionary force in the same vein as the AIF, the Canadian Expeditionary Force or the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Unique among these other states, South Africa’s ‘British’ population was in the minority, it faced an internal revolt during the war and was the only Dominion threatened by a German colonial army just beyond its border. To have included both Newfoundland and South Africa within this work would have meant a widening of scope and it is arguably to this work’s benefit that Marti declined to do so. For this reviewer, the primary cause for upset at their absence within is not that they represent some gaping hole in the analysis, but that we are left without Marti’s deft historical analysis of voluntary mobilisation within those two polities.

For Home and Empire is a worthwhile addition to both personal and institutional libraries. The monograph is clearly and concisely written, tightly argued and based upon a wide reading of source material and archival research on three continents. The general military history reader will be absorbed by Marti’s analysis of racial hierarchies as an obstacle to First World War service and the personal stories of those who actively sought to circumvent them. Academics will also find much of value. The authoritative reinterpretation and recontextualisation of Dominion mobilisation adds significant nuance to our current local and state-based histories while offering a model for future transnational histories. Excerpts from this work would also be useful in the university classroom; they would serve to remind students that these nations were not necessarily as unique in their mobilisation as popular myths would suggest, all the while providing insight into the social and geographical boundaries that shaped Dominion war efforts.