

# *On the Road to Total War*

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND THE  
GERMAN WARS OF UNIFICATION, 1861–1871

*Edited by*

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## Introduction

STIG FÖRSTER and JÖRG NAGLER

### WARFARE IN NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE, 1861–71

The age of cabinet's war is behind us, – now we only have people's war. ...<sup>1</sup>

Such a people's war, on both sides, has never happened before since the existence of large states. ...<sup>2</sup>

With these words, the conservative Prussian Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke and the left-wing military analyst Friedrich Engels, clearly two very different characters, summed up their impressions of the German Wars of Unification and of the American Civil War, respectively. They were both talking of wars that had taken place in the same decade (1861 to 1871) but on two different continents, for very different reasons, and apparently under very different circumstances. Yet, both men used the same term – people's war – to characterize these military conflicts. We may therefore ask to what extent were there structural similarities between the German Wars of Unification and the American Civil War. Never mind the large differences between these wars; there should have been similarities if such otherwise opposing personalities such as Moltke and Engels looked at them in the same way.

It is certainly true that the war in North America was a civil war caused by the break-up of a nation, whereas the Franco-Prussian War was fought between two more or less clearly distinct nations. To compare these two conflicts is therefore a problematic task. Yet, as some of the chapters on the Civil War indicate, an increasing number of people on both sides of the Mason-

1 Speech by General Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke in the Reichstag, May 14, 1890, quoted after *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Reichstages*, 1890–91, 1:76. All translations were made by the editors.

2 Friedrich Engels to Col. Joseph Weydemeyer (a German immigrant serving in the Union army), Nov. 24, 1864, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx-Engels-Werke*, ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der SED, 39 vols. (Berlin, 1958–68), 31: 424.

Dixon Line looked upon themselves as members of a community different from the one of their enemies. Sectional, social, economic, and even political history separated the North and the South. The war itself definitely enlarged this gap. Defining nationhood in North America was therefore at least as questionable as indeed it was in Germany in 1866, when Prussians, Austrians, Hanoverians, Saxons, and other Germans fought against each other. It should also not be forgotten that the Germans in 1870 did not enter the war against France as citizens of a united nation state. Carl N. Degler makes an important point in this context by emphasizing that the wars in North America and Central Europe between 1861 and 1871 were largely fought to complete the unfinished project of nation building.<sup>3</sup> What on the surface appear to be rather different, on a deeper level and under the circumstances of that fateful decade, were two phenomena (civil war and war between nation states) based on structural similarities that make a comparison not only possible but also fruitful.

Indeed, even a brief investigation of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 in particular and the Civil War demonstrates that they had a lot in common.<sup>4</sup> They both began as rather limited conflicts, fought for limited war aims: the prevention or fulfillment of German unification and the break-up or preservation of the United States. But as the wars lingered on and grew ever more bitter, the war aims, at least those of the stronger sides, became more and more radical: annexations, if not the total subjugation, of France and destruction as well as revolutionizing of the Old South. Both wars started with regular armies: semiprofessionals versus conscript armies in Europe and large-scale militias in North America. But the harder the wars got, conscription became the primary basis for recruiting ever-more troops. In addition, while the regular armies fought it out, civilians turned into guerrillas and took part too. In Germany, France, and North America, public opinion did not only play an important role in getting these wars started in the first place but also had great impact on its conduct. Nationalism, racism, and particularism were among widespread public sentiments that helped to bring the wars about and contributed to keep them going. The populace on the whole participated as citizens in these wars, not only as subjects of authoritarian states. More than perhaps in any previous war, the “home front,” particularly in France and in the Confederacy, became the backbone of warfare, as civilians including women worked to supply the armies and as morale depended

3 See Carl N. Degler's essay in this book (Chapter 3).

4 Probably the best overviews over these two wars still are Michael Howard, *The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870–71* (London, 1961) and James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, 1988).

on public support.<sup>5</sup> The civilian populations in the nations under attack were not only indispensable in keeping the war effort going but became themselves the targets of enemy action, from Sherman's march through Georgia and South Carolina to the shelling of Strasbourg and Paris. A strategy directed against civilians thus began to form an important part of modern warfare.<sup>6</sup>

Technologically and economically, both wars stood at the beginning of industrialized warfare. More than ever before, technological change and industrial production of weapons, ammunition, and equipment influenced the course of war. Rifled handguns and artillery, the first forms of machine guns, ironclads and armored gun boats, breech-loaders and heavy artillery, and above all the systematic use of railroads, all created a new kind of warfare: the beginning of industrialized mass warfare. Due to the enormous increase in firepower, the character of combat developed new dimensions, as the defense gained tactical advantage over the offensive. Some generals, such as Moltke, realized the import of these changes and found new ways to remain successfully on the offensive.<sup>7</sup> Others, like Ambrose E. Burnside (at Fredericksburg) and Robert E. Lee (at Gettysburg) demonstrated to the detriment of their troops that they had not yet fully grasped the terrible power of modern firearms. Nevertheless, in the end, both wars produced the suitable answer to improved firepower: trench warfare (at Petersburg and at the fortress in France, for example).

Transported by railroads, mass armies with modern weapons had to be supplied by industrial production. More than ever before, therefore, a somewhat industrialized economy became the basis of warfare, especially the longer the war lasted. Cooperation between the state and private industry was indispensable for the war effort. In countries that were relatively underdeveloped such as the Confederacy, or partially under foreign occupation like post-imperial France, the governments had to organize the use of the limited resources themselves. The results were immediate state intervention into the economy, a new phenomenon in the age of developed capitalism.

5 On the American home front, see Jörg Nagler's contribution to this book (Chapter 16).

6 John Charles Frémont, one of the foremost radical political generals during the war exclaimed in Nov. 1862, "For no matter how begun, this is the People's war." *Missouri Democrat*, Nov. 3, 1862, 2, cited in Jörg Nagler, *Frémont contra Lincoln: Die deutsch-amerikanische Opposition in der Republikanischen Partei während des amerikanischen Bürgerkrieges* (Frankfurt/Main, 1984), 102.

7 As early as 1865, Moltke investigated the tactical influence of the new firearms and came to the conclusion that attacks across open field on a well-covered body of infantry had become suicidal. The only way to remain on the strategic offensive therefore was to force the enemy by outmaneuvering him to attack himself. The catastrophic losses he was bound to suffer would allow a successful counterattack and thereby keep the overall offensive going. This was Moltke's famous blend of strategic offensive and tactical defense. See Helmuth von Moltke, "Bemerkungen über den Einfluss der verbesserten Feuerwaffen auf die Taktik" [1865], in Stig Förster, ed., *Moltke: Vom Kabinettskrieg zum Volkskrieg* (Bonn, 1992), 147–64.



The introduction of conscription, the need to influence public opinion by keeping the antiwar opposition under control, and in general the necessity to coerce the more and more disillusioned population into participating in an evermore strenuous war effort in order to rally the human resources of the nation, all led to first steps toward transforming the state into the modern "leviathan."<sup>8</sup>

These similarities—and more could have been mentioned—seem to indicate that in spite of all the differences, in the decade between 1861 and 1871, the problem of war and society had reached a comparable level on both sides of the Atlantic. In France, Germany, and North America, mass societies, in which public opinion and the general participation of the citizens had gained political importance,<sup>9</sup> stood at the threshold of a new phase of industrialization. Under these circumstances, large-scale warfare in the western world took on a new quality: industrialized people's war.

#### PEOPLE'S WAR AND TOTAL WAR

This raises of course the question: What is the term *people's war* all about? After all, as has been seen, contemporaries already used this term when explaining what had happened in North America and Continental Europe. However, it would probably not be too useful to analyze in detail here Moltke's and Engels's understanding of people's war. It certainly makes more sense to look at this phenomenon on the basis of the latest research, for it is in this context that we will have to raise the questions about warfare in the 1860s and early 1870s.

The age of people's war began with the American and French Revolutions of the late eighteenth century. The "Atlantic Revolution"<sup>10</sup> not only brought about the more or less successful quest for participation of the citizens in

8 For the Union, see, e.g., Richard F. Bense, *Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859–1877* (Cambridge, 1990) and Mark E. Neely Jr., *The Fate of Liberty: Abraham Lincoln and Civil Liberties* (New York, 1991).

9 In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is important to note here that the participation of citizens in politics and indeed in warfare is not necessarily equivalent to democracy. The introduction of people's armies, whether as militias or via some form of conscription, for example, has been practiced by such undemocratic régimes as those of the two Napoléons, nineteenth-century Prussia, Wilhelmine Germany, the National Socialists, and the Stalinist Soviet Union. In addition, all these régimes had their parliaments and, in the twentieth century, tended to form state-run mass movements. In other words, whether democratic or not, since the French Revolution of 1789, all modern régimes are in a competitive world dependent for survival on the participation of their citizens. This is of course particularly true under the strains of mass warfare. For a deeper analysis of this problem, see Roland G. Foerster, ed., *Die Wehrpflicht: Entstehung, Erscheinungsformen und politisch-militärische Wirkung* (Munich, 1994), 55–70.

10 Robert R. Palmer, "La 'révolution atlantique'—vingt ans après," in Eberhard Schmitt and Rolf Reichardt, eds., *Die Französische Revolution—zufälliges oder notwendiges Ereignis? Akten des internationalen Symposiums an der Universität Bamberg vom 4.–7. Juni 1979*, 3 vols. (Munich, 1983), 1: 89–104.

the political process within their state. It also led to tremendous wars in which those citizens took immediate part in order to defend their political aspirations. Citizens became soldiers in people's armies or participated on the home front to support the war effort. For the first time in modern history, public opinion asserted an important role in fighting wars. Thus in the War of American Independence and even more so in the French Revolutionary wars, warfare assumed a new quality: Mass armies composed of citizens fought for national war aims to which the people could relate.<sup>11</sup> The age of eighteenth-century-style cabinet's war, fought by relatively small professional armies for the limited war aims of their monarchs, was over. As Carl von Clausewitz put it when referring to France: "Suddenly war again became the business of the people—a people of thirty millions, all of whom considered themselves to be citizens."<sup>12</sup>

People's war, however, composed a threat to the state's monopoly of using force, which had been established in Europe during the eighteenth century. The tendency of people to take up arms on their own account weakened the central government's control over the military effort. Moreover, barely trained mass militia armies lacked of efficiency and were in constant danger of dissolving after a few months of service. On the other hand, tapping the human resources of the nation for large-scale warfare became an irresistible temptation for political and military leaders especially in Europe. People's war therefore had to be channeled and organized by the state in order to make it more efficient and to use it as an extremely powerful tool to force through wide-ranging war aims. Carnot and later on Napoléon I were the first to experiment with conscription as a means of regaining control over the new quality of warfare. During the Wars of Liberation, however, it was Prussia that brought this development to its logical and most radical conclusion: universal conscription.<sup>13</sup> But channeling the forces of people's war into a state-run affair was only one direction in which the new kind of warfare developed. The less tight system of militia armies continued to exist, particularly in the United States. Perhaps even more striking was the most radical form of people's war: guerrilla warfare. Where control by the state in form of a central government collapsed altogether under the weight of an invading enemy, people sometimes took matters entirely in their own hands and

11 See, e.g., Christopher Ward, *The War of the Revolution*, 2 vols. (New York, 1952); Russel F. Weighley, *History of the United States Army*, 2d ed. (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), 29–95; Don Higginbotham, *War and Society in Revolutionary America: The Wider Dimensions of Conflict* (Columbia, S.C., 1988); and Albert Soboul, *Précis de l'histoire de la révolution française* (Paris, 1962).

12 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J., 1976), 592.

13 For an overview of this epoch, see Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe, 1770–1870* (London, 1982), 63–190.

began a campaign of irregular warfare, carried out by armed civilians. Nowhere did the whole meaning of *guerrilla* warfare become more apparent than in the country that invented the word: Spain (after 1808).<sup>14</sup>

The wars following the Atlantic Revolution therefore brought about three military types of people's war:

1. *Guerrilla war*. This was the most radical form of people's war, in which loose bands of armed civilians, virtually under no government control whatsoever, fought an irregular campaign against an invading regular army. The examples were Spain, Calabria, the Tyrol, and to a certain degree Russia in 1812.
2. *War with militia armies*. Here citizens volunteered in more or less large numbers to fight for the interests of "their" state, which they regarded as their own interests. Such armies were under the general control of the state authorities but retained a certain spirit of independence, which hampered their efficiency and made them not always reliable. The examples were the Continental Army in North America and the first French revolutionary armies.
3. *War with conscript armies*. In this system, the central government assumed the role not only of the leader but of the organizer of people's war via measures to coerce citizens into fighting for the state. Under such circumstances, people's war reached its most destructive level of power, and the state tended to gain more control over society on the whole than ever before. It was the birth of the modern military state that was to penetrate domestic civilian life and to wage well-organized people's war abroad. The early examples were France under the Jacobins and Napoléons, as well as Prussia since 1814.

Until 1815, however, the military revolution of people's war took place under largely preindustrial circumstances. This limited the scope of the changes in modern warfare. The third type of people's war, conscription warfare, in particular, remained on a rather low level, as armies equipped with eighteenth-century-style weapons had little need of industrially produced supplies and as poor communications hampered the state's effort to gain control over society. But the foundations of momentous change had been laid.

Yet for decades after Waterloo, the implications of the military revolution stayed somewhat dormant. The United States, which stuck to the second type of people's war, fought only one major war during that period: the war against Mexico. In Europe, the conservative regimes even attempted to turn the clock back by reintroducing professional armies (with the notable exception of Prussia) and by avoiding war altogether. The wars that finally took place in the 1850s, on the Crimea and in Northern Italy, were therefore in many respects reminiscent of cabinet's wars. Peoples were not directly

<sup>14</sup> See David Gates, *The Spanish Ulcer: A History of the Peninsular War* (London, 1986) and Rainer Wohlfeil, "Der Volkskrieg im Zeitalter Napoléons," in Heinz-Otto Sieburg, ed., *Napoléon und Europa* (Cologne, 1971), 318–32.

involved. On the other hand, these wars demonstrated the first impacts of industrialization.<sup>15</sup>

The big turning point came in the 1860s. The American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, as has been shown, carried all the elements of people's war in them. This time, however, in contrast to the wars before 1815, people's war was conducted in an age of beginning industrialization. The parameters of modern warfare had been widened to such an extent that the conflict between state and society, inherent in all three types of people's war, assumed a new quality. Large-scale mass warfare required better organization, and modern means of communication provided new opportunities for tighter government control. As militias and semiprofessional armies proved insufficient, conscription became the order of the day: in North America in 1862–63, in Prussia from the outset, and in France toward the end of 1870. Along with this kind of warfare, which carried the third type of people's war to a new high, went coercive measures by the governments in domestic politics, economy, and society in order to rally the nation's resources.

To alert contemporaries, such as Moltke and Engels, it was obvious that in the decade between 1861 and 1871, warfare had reached a new quality. They were able to describe the changes that had taken place, but they refrained from categorizing the new developments in an academic fashion. Instead they used the label of *people's war* in a vague fashion. It remained to historians of later generations to come to terms with the exact meaning of what had happened in that fateful decade. This task was complicated and also made more interesting by the fact that many developments in the 1860s and early 1870s were reminiscent of large-scale warfare in the first half of the twentieth century. Was there a structural connection between *people's war* and *total war*? Did the year 1861 mark the beginning of *modern warfare* or perhaps even the *age of total war*, which was to last until 1945? It was certainly no accident that some American historians shortly after the end of World War II began to regard the Civil War as the first in a series of total wars. In 1948, John B. Walters published an influential article, "General William T. Sherman and Total War."<sup>16</sup> Four years later, T. Harry Williams wrote: "The Civil War was the first of the modern total wars, and the American democracy was almost totally unready to fight it."<sup>17</sup>

The validity of such notions are of course to a large extent a question of definition. It is at this point that the greatest difficulties and misunderstandings

15 See Best, *War and Society*, 191–308.

16 John B. Walters, "General William T. Sherman and Total War," *Journal of Southern History* 14 (1948): 447–80.

17 T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals* (New York, 1952), 3.

have arisen. Historians, who tried to come to terms with the modern aspects of the Civil War and the German Wars of Unification, used labels like *people's war*, *industrialized people's war*, *citizen's war*, *total war*, or simply *modern war*. The chapters of this book are full of such contradictory, sometimes overlapping, but in any case confusing terminology. It proved impossible to find common ground amongst the contributors, to agree on definitions, or even to determine conclusively the degree of modernity that these wars reached. For the most part, the reader will have to fend for him- or herself when trying to find answers. In fact, in the absence of agreement amongst historians, the only aim that could be achieved here was to demonstrate the current state of the debate by inviting the most prominent specialists in the field to state their opinions. The outcome of this controversy, it is to be hoped, may form a basis for future research that will aid our understanding of the changing nature of warfare since the second half of the nineteenth century.

This introduction is not meant to go beyond the essays in the book. It would be unwise and unfair to judge the merits of each individual approach and thereby try to find a solution to the controversial issues. This task must be left to reviewers and readers. However, it might help if we clarified some of the labels that have been used to analyze the nature of warfare in North America and Europe between 1861 and 1871. Thus, the concept of this book will become easier to understand. As has been shown, the phenomenon of people's war reaches way back to the revolutionary wars of the eighteenth century. At its core, it meant simply that the phenomenon of increasing participation of ever-larger parts of the population in the political process found its equivalent in warfare. The people took up arms and, whether mobilizing themselves or being organized from above, waged war – with all the consequences involved. This form of warfare contrasted sharply with the cabinet's wars of the eighteenth century, which were largely fought by mercenary armies. There is no doubt that the American Civil War and the German Wars of Unification were people's wars in that sense. All three different forms of people's war, guerrilla warfare, warfare with militias, and warfare with conscript armies were present in these military conflicts. Indeed, the wars under consideration firmly established the concept of people's war against all attempts of the first half of the nineteenth century to turn the clock of history back. From now on it was certain that any major war in the Western world would be a people's war. Influenced by Moltke, the German officer and military writer Colmar von der Goltz emphasized well after 1871 that in the "age of people's war" no alternative was possible.<sup>18</sup> In 1905, Moltke's

18 Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz, *Das Volk in Waffen*, 2d ed. (Berlin, 1883), 138–47.

nephew, Helmuth von Moltke the Younger, who was to become chief of the General Staff until after the start of World War I, told Kaiser Wilhelm II that another war against France could be nothing but a huge people's war.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, it may be said that both world wars in the twentieth century were people's wars in the aforementioned sense. If people's war meant the mobilization of the population in and for war, total war was nothing but an extreme form of that phenomenon, driving its principles to the most radical end.

The term *people's war*, which seems to be more or less equivalent to the occasionally used term *citizen's war*,<sup>20</sup> appears to be rather useful when analyzing the development of warfare since the late eighteenth century, especially when it is contrasted to cabinet's war. Still, this concept has its limitations. It is far too broad to help us grasp all the changes that took place in warfare until 1945. In particular, the new quality of warfare that was introduced between 1861 and 1871 cannot be entirely explained by relying on that term. After all, the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War were not fought on the same level as the wars of revolutionary France around 1800. As people's wars, they were all alike, but Grant, Moltke, and Gambetta had different and more powerful means at their disposal than Napoléon. Technological change played a surprisingly little role in the "*French Wars*" between 1792 and 1815. But after 1861, the acceleration in industrialization made itself felt on the battlefield as well as in transport and supply. This made war more complicated, swifter, and even more destructive. Improved communication meant that the home front became more implicated. It makes sense therefore to use the term *industrialized people's war* when talking about warfare in the Western world between 1861 and 1871.<sup>21</sup> Again, however, this term is not fully satisfying. Its main purpose is to distinguish warfare in the 1850s from people's war around 1800. It does little to help us determine whether the decade between 1861 and 1871 marked a turning point that started off the development toward the murderous wars of the twentieth century.

Some historians tried to find a way out by reverting to the term *modern war*.<sup>22</sup> This seems to provide a compellingly simple solution, as it indicates that there was a connection between warfare in the 1860s and the twentieth century without going into too many details and without offering a too narrow framework. But it may be asked: Is *modern war* too imprecise a term? After all,

19 Moltke the Younger reporting about a meeting with Wilhelm II in a letter to his wife on Jan. 29, 1905. See Eliza von Moltke, ed., *Generaloberst Helmuth von Moltke: Erinnerungen, Briefe, Dokumente, 1877-1916* (Stuttgart, 1922), 308.

20 See the essay by Robert Tombs in this book (Chapter 25).

21 See Stig Förster's essay in this book (Chapter 6).

22 See, e.g., Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare* (Bloomington, Ind., 1988). Several contributors to this book also used this term.

where does modernity begin, and what does it mean? Perhaps it would make sense to equate modernity in our context with the age of industrialized mass societies. If so, the decade between 1861 and 1871 would stand at the very beginning of modernity. Clearly, the problems addressed in this book are closely interconnected with the issue of modernization. But does the concept of modernization applied to warfare help us to understand the catastrophe of the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century? Did modernity in warfare necessarily imply mass slaughter?

Still, the use of the label *modern war* has its uses, if only as to hint that the 1860s did indeed mark a watershed. But what were the consequences? As has already been indicated, several historians have used the more definite term *total war* when talking about the interconnections between the American Civil War and the world wars of the twentieth century. Indeed, World War I and certainly World War II have often been described as total wars. But there is no such thing as a widely accepted definition of the term *total war*. Since the term first appeared in France during World War I, it has been used by politicians, soldiers, journalists, and of course by historians. But the term was given many different meanings.

General Erich Ludendorff was perhaps among the first to attempt something like a systematic definition. To him, total war meant total mobilization of all human and material resources for the purpose of fighting a war for life or death of a nation. But it also included complete control by a (military) government over every aspect of social, political, and economical life. Such a radical system was to prepare the nation single-mindedly for the ultimate war well before its outbreak.<sup>23</sup> Ludendorff's militaristic dream (or nightmare) became the core of all further attempts to define total war. Complete mobilization, organized by a gigantic military and bureaucratic machine, which was firmly in the hands of the national leadership, was the key. But the experience of World War II added further dimensions. Unlimited war aims such as unconditional surrender, the total destruction of the enemy state, and the idea of *Lebensraum* gave the total means of complete mobilization a total objective. The physical annihilation of the enemy's soldiers and civilians alike added a gruesome dimension to the field of the conduct of war itself. Above all, the state, which in the dawning of the age of people's war was meant to become a tool to foster the general interests of its citizens, now turned into a murderous fighting machine that used its citizens as "human material" (*Menschenmaterial*).

It may be said that the phenomenon of total warfare in this sense existed in earlier epochs of history as well. The Roman wars against Carthage,

23 Erich Ludendorff, *Der Totale Krieg* (Munich, 1935).

Genghis Kahn's war against China, and certainly Tamerlan's style of warfare carried many elements of total warfare in them. It could even be claimed that the societies then involved were rather highly organized and controlled by relatively powerful states. But they were certainly not industrialized mass societies. Warfare approaching total mobilization for total ends was only possible under such modern conditions. The term *total war* should therefore be limited to modernity. Any definition of total war has to take all of these elements into account.<sup>24</sup>

A formal and satisfactory definition of *total war* is still missing. It will therefore come as no surprise that the contributors to this book use conflicting ideas about the meaning of total war. Many of the controversies between the authors have to be seen in that light.

And yet it appears to the editors that the arguments by Walters and Williams, according to which the American Civil War marked the beginning of the fateful road to total warfare in the twentieth century, deserve further investigation. If total war, at least theoretically, consists of total mobilization of all the nation's resources by a highly organized and centralized state for a military conflict with unlimited war aims (such as complete conquest and subjugation of the enemy) and unrestricted use of force (against the enemy's armies and civil population alike, going as far as complete destruction of the home front, extermination, and genocide), then at least some of these elements can be found, albeit on a much lower level, in the third type of people's war. As the American Civil War and later on the Franco-Prussian War clearly drifted toward conscription warfare, and at the same time were the first industrialized people's wars, it may well be asked: Did they form something like a link in the otherwise certainly not teleological development from nineteenth-century people's war to twentieth-century total war? Asking such a question is not the same as claiming that the wars under consideration have already been fully developed total wars. We intend to pursue a more cautious line by looking for the seeds of total warfare way back in the decade between 1861 and 1871. To try to find some answers to these questions is the *raison d'être* of this book.

#### THE UNITED STATES AND GERMANY IN THE AGE OF TOTAL WAR

The best way of coming to something like a watertight definition involves empirical historical research into the development of total warfare until 1945.

24 For further details on the discussion surrounding the term *total war*, see Mark E. Neely Jr.'s essay in this book (Chapter 2).