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FOREWORD

JOSÉ-LEONARDO RUIZ SÁNCHEZ,
CAROLINA GARCÍA SANZ AND
INMACULADA CORDERO OLIVERO

The Department of Contemporary History at the University of Seville did not want to remain on the sidelines of the commemoration of the centenary of the Great War. As public institution, always at the service of the society in general and the scientific community in particular, and being faithful to its extensive background research, it hosted the international meeting 'Undefended Neutrality: The Culture of Peace in Europe during the Great War' in November 2014. Its main purpose was, on the one hand, to encourage a historiographic debate about one of the aspects that has traditionally received little attention by specialists on the conflict and, on the other hand, to gather together a representative sample of the current state of the art, from research which, taking different national experiences as a starting point, and with original theoretical and methodological approaches, exposed the wide field of study that neutrality still offers to transnational history. This collective volume is, to a large extent but not exclusively, the result of that intense and fruitful conference in Seville, which was attended by experts from twelve countries of America, Oceania and Europe (therefore with very dissimilar perspectives and backgrounds). During the development of the symposium it was clear the work that there is still to do concerning the difficult definition of neutrality as object of historical study in general and, in particular, as reality of a transformative conflict like the First World War. But also, there was evidence of the breakthroughs made in the last decades thanks to the enrichment of the perspectives in the analysis of this topic.

It seems obvious that the diversity of neutral societies and ‘neutralities’ during the Great War can only be properly contextualized through their comparison, but also by placing them in direct connection with the all-encompassing experiences of the war. In this way, the boundaries between neutrality and belligerency –as shown by most of the compiled works– faded away, providing great versatility in the understanding of the war as a global and transversal phenomenon. Neutrality between 1914 and 1918 was a multiform and transformative reality as the conflict itself, acquiring top political importance from its origins. In fact, it pervaded the social representations of the conflict to the extent of becoming a referential element of culture in wartime. It is precisely the dynamic and mutable nature of neutrality, also in permanent evolution throughout the conflict, which the chosen title for this compilation of essays makes reference to: *Shaping Neutrality throughout the First World War*.

But, the reader must note that this volume is not exactly the proceedings of the international meeting held in November 2014 (although here, with these words, we would like to publicly express our gratitude to those institutions that made it possible, in particular the Faculty of Geography and History and the Vice-chancellorships for Research and International Relations of the University of Seville). The volume *Shaping Neutrality throughout the First World War* is due to a new and different design. It is the result of some reflections and questions which were not expected at the beginning of the conference proposal and which arose in several debates later on. Therefore, the original design has been concluded and enriched *a posteriori* with different types of contributions tending towards strengthening the argument of the centrality of neutrality as experience in the First World War. Actually, experts on the subject who did not join us at the forum held at the University of Seville were invited to contribute to this volume.

To begin with, the reader will find an excellent introductory chapter by Maartje Abbenhuis about the focal meaning of the neutral position in the international scene before the conflict. A meaning that has not always been properly valued and understood. As Abbenhuis underlines, when the centre of attention is confined to the neutral issue, this normally appears delimited in an preclusive way either as a legal matter, as a certain foreign policy, or as the result of cultural representations. However, the analyses hardly ever attend to these three sides, integrating them in the same one. This book greatly aims at responding to that aspiration, suggestive as well as extremely complex.

We have dedicated the first part of the book specifically to the Spanish case. We have done so because the Spanish historiography created for a long time a version of neutrality essentially national, in the context of the irreconcilable division of two

'Spains' (in their respective Germanophile and Alliedophile versions). Until very recently, the approach to the conflict from Spain involved an outlook of the crisis of the Restoration political system, lacking a general understanding of the meaning of war for neutral societies. Hence the necessity to offer other points of view since new Spanish pieces of research have provided neutrality with weight as such, placing it in direct connection with the experiences of other neutral countries but also with warring countries. This part of the book precisely opens with a state of the art of the Spanish historiography on the First World War (Carolina García Sanz and Maximiliano Fuentes Codera). Despite the undeniable work that there is still to do, the current Spanish outlook has been notably enriched thanks to research that delves into the elaboration of social and intellectual discourses. The reader will be able to approach here the ways in which the Spanish *intelligentsia* in Madrid and Barcelona, respectively, understood the cultural meaning/s of neutrality, adapting them to contexts in continuous duality (Maximiliano Fuentes Codera). The reader can also get a little closer to the way in which social organizations, in the edges or directly outside the system, understood which should be the position of neutrality in the face of internal and external conditionings. This is the case of the *outsiders* integrated in main trends in Spanish Anarchism (James Michael Yeoman). Along this same line, we can find the reverberations of neutrality as vehicle of identity construction in the discourse of Spanish Freemasonry, with its clear international connections (José-Leonardo Ruiz Sánchez) as well as in the Spanish feminism movement (Inmaculada Cordero). The environment of changes and the distress caused by the Great War were not the origin but contributed to the Spanish feminist unionism development. From 1915 onwards, the feminist activism in Spain was split in three different trends: the conservative; the socialist and the suffragist. All three groups had a singular role in the promotion and socialization of the suffrage in Spain during the 20s. Likewise, several interpretations have awoken some interest, mainly those that highlight the extent to which neutrality ideas forged official and conservative discourses and mobilised catholics to take action, with a clear impact on the design of the foreign propaganda in Spain (Ilaria Biagioli; Alfonso Botti). It comes as no surprise that all these positions were affected by imported intellectual models, above all, from France. In general, neutral societies wanted to look themselves in other neutral mirrors, as the Spanish case has proven. Even in the search of legal answers to actual problems, as happened with the *sui generis* Spanish legislation, policy makers rather precariously and in a way significantly late looked for exogenous models (Marcella Aglietti).

The second part of the volume mainly deals with the experiences of other neutral countries offering different reference contexts in Europe and America. The essays included in this section allow the reader, for example, to draw some comparisons

between the way to understand neutrality in Southern and Northern Europe, as well as its different manifestations on a political level given the unequal relations created between belligerent countries, either Great Britain or Germany, and medium or small powers like Portugal with its consequential African dimensions (Ana Paula Pires), Spain and Italy from one side (Carolina García Sanz), or Sweden, Norway and Denmark from the other (Michael Jonas). Another aspect which gains relevance here is neutrality as a great power stance like that of the United States. It sneaked into the presidential campaign in 1916, affecting collaterally the partisan discourse on national security (Michael Neiberg). Generally, the non-fulfilled expectations regarding the leadership of the United States in the defence of neutrality would have serious consequences for other neutral countries, especially for Spain, whose governments always pledged a third party to alleviate the pressure of Great Britain and France on domestic matters (José Antonio Montero).

In this second section, we will also draw attention to the intellectual and cultural history of neutrality. The war led to a deep crisis among intellectuals in relation to how they looked upon the world and the future. In particular, we refer to Scandinavian views and their lack of consensus on the idea of war as a European suicide, both fascinating and repulsive topic in their contemporary testimonies (Bjarne Bendtsen). At the same time views on the future in Europe, grounded on international jurisprudence, on the basic principle of neutrality inherent to law enforcement, were also discussed in pacifist discourses in a particularly hostile environment. The French *Ligue des Droits de l'Homme* managed to attract individuals of very different ideological bents and socio-professional standing to fight for the construction of a new world order from 1916 onwards (Custodio Velasco Mesa). It should also be highlighted the originality of works that connect the construction of national narratives with the war, in some cases, such as in the example of Norway, displacing the value of neutrality as an identity base in favour of the heroism displayed by its citizens integrated in fighting armies (Eirik Brazier); in other cases, however, it is explored the formation of a neutral memory of the war on a national basis and the way this was occasionally affected by what happened in the second world conflict. The case of Holland offers some field to explore in this sense (Samuël Kruizinga). All in all, the reader will find in the following pages a wide range of ways in which neutrality, far from being a concept of abstract meaning, acquired very specific meanings, which help us to understand the political, economic, social and cultural legacies of the First World War in Europe, but also in America. As the works by Stefan Rinke and María Inés Tato show, despite the fact that the narratives of neutrality and belligerency were essentially national accounts, and the constructions of political identity clearly hinged on them in Latin America, those narratives were the result of shared social and economic dynamics created by the war as a great transnational phenomenon in the Western Hemisphere.

It is precisely in that path of work of historiographic integration that this volume looks forward to, surpassing traditional theses on neutrality as a marginal and/or peripheral phenomenon in wartimes. We do hope that *Shaping Neutrality throughout the First World War* will be considered a landmark in that field. At least this is the wish of those of us who, assembled in a meeting in our Department at the University of Seville on a January morning in 2014, embarked on this stimulating project that now comes to an end.

Rome and Seville, May 2015