

Wilson's outlook on international reform had little in common with that of the legalists, Coates argues, as it focused on a league of nations guaranteeing the political and territorial integrity of its members rather than on the codification of international law and the creation of an international court. This view reflected Wilson's moralistic political philosophy, his suspicion that lawyers were tools of corporations, and his conviction that the war showed the need for sanctions to enforce civilized behavior among states. Some legalists, such as Taft, agreed with the latter point. They formed the League to Enforce Peace (LEP), which essentially asserted the pre-war legalist program but added a provision requiring league members to use force against any state going to war without first following a conflict resolution procedure. Many leading legalists did not join the LEP, however, because they thought its program, like Wilson's, infringed upon national sovereignty too much and would never be followed by nation-states in practice. The war, then, shattered the unity of the legalist movement, diminishing its influence over American foreign policy.

Deeply researched and well-written, *Legalist Empire* is an important work. It should be on the reading list of anyone interested in American foreign relations, international law, or imperialism.

## Martial Values and Political Ambition

**Pietrusza, David. *TR's Last War: Theodore Roosevelt, the Great War, and a Journey of Triumph and Tragedy*. Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2018. xvi + 383 pp. \$34.95 (cloth), ISBN 9781493028870.**

Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr

Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA

doi:10.1017/S1537781418000798

*TR's Last War* is a breathless *tour de force* through the final years of Theodore Roosevelt's life. Author David Pietrusza, who has published numerous "popular" histories, has divided this period of Colonel Roosevelt's life into eighteen substantive chapters and an epilogue that examines the twenty-sixth U.S. president's death. Pietrusza begins with the preparedness debates and Roosevelt's extensive criticisms of Woodrow Wilson's military policies in 1915–1916. Considerable space is devoted to the 1916 political conventions and Roosevelt's efforts at rapprochement with Republican Party leaders. Roosevelt's persistent efforts to obtain an officer's commission and an overseas command are closely examined. While the colonel is unsuccessful, his four sons succeed in securing officers' ranks and experience combat overseas. Roosevelt's reaction to the death of his youngest son, Quentin, makes for the most gripping passages in the book. Finally, the "Epilogue" of this book has already generated some controversy. After a brief summary of the upper-class attraction to suicide, Pietrusza writes that Roosevelt had a "significant suicidal streak." The author's best

evidence for Roosevelt's suicidal impulse was his deliberations during the disastrous 1913–1914 Brazilian expedition. At the most critical point, he told his son, Kermit: "I will stop here." But his son refused to go on without him and convincingly argued that a live human was easier to move than a dead corpse. In addition, Pietrusza observes that Roosevelt told a friend that he always carried a bottle of morphine to "have it over with at once" (288).

So what, if anything, brings coherence to this jam-packed account? Underpinning the entire narrative are two themes—political ambition and militarist adventurism—that define this man's complex character but seem oddly disconnected throughout the book. While great chunks of *TR's Last War* can be read as a meditation on war and death, the narrative is driven more by the ebb and flow of politics (the author's specialization). This split personality is most evident in the 1915–1916 chapters: one moment Roosevelt is manipulating both Republicans and "Bull Moose" Progressives, seeking power (mixed with a healthy dose of revenge) within the American political system; the next moment he is lecturing young men on martial values and sending inquiries to the War Department about an officer's commission for himself if the United States declared war on Mexico.

"There lay within him a sheer bloodlust," writes Pietrusza of Roosevelt's 1890s imperialism (61). When assessing Roosevelt's stance during the *Lusitania* crisis, Pietrusza recounts the colonel's numerous public and private appeals to friends and countrymen to resolve foreign policy crises by force—in the 1889 Samoa Islands dispute, in the 1895 Venezuelan border controversy, and in the 1897 lead-up to the Spanish-American War. Summoning the authority of a classic study of the warrior-reformer, the author quotes *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* by George E. Mowry: "The bald fact was that Roosevelt liked war."<sup>1</sup> Pietrusza attributes much of this warlike impulse to the elder Roosevelt's failure to serve in the Civil War. However significant this episode was in the young Roosevelt's formation, it fails to explain his rich, complex appreciation of the role of modern warfare. In contrast, John Milton Cooper, considering the colonel's 1917–1918 militarism, wrote: "Neither his views of human conflict nor his own desire to fight reflected shallow, juvenile romanticism. As in 1898, Roosevelt appreciated and welcomed war's grim and brutal aspects. Only by passing through those, he believed, could men live to the utmost and attain full humanity."<sup>2</sup>

For Pietrusza, America's great Progressive Era rivals were very much alike; Wilson and Roosevelt were both conservatives forced leftward by the great social forces shaping the nation. Nineteenth-century attitudes about race and empire persisted in both men, "more racial in the southern Wilson's case, more imperial in Roosevelt's." Most importantly, however, "both desired power—very, very great power" (27). To that end, Pietrusza effectively demonstrates that the power-seeking Roosevelt undermined what remained of the Progressive Party, leading the party faithful to believe he would accept the top spot on the ticket in the 1916 election cycle. "Yes, a bad colonel does make a bad regiment," Pietrusza concludes, and Roosevelt "was the very worst colonel of all" (144). The author later quotes "Bull Moose" reformer Amos Pinchot's assertions that Roosevelt linked an anti-hyphenated "Americanism" to his military "Preparedness" campaign primarily as a mechanism to reestablish his preeminent standing in the Republican Party (169). Power, not ideology, was the driving force dictating Roosevelt's moves in this era. To this reviewer's way of thinking, the author missed a great opportunity to weave these two lines of analysis together; how were political power and martial values necessary components, for Roosevelt, of imperial America's claims to great-power status?

Where does this book fit in the massive body of Roosevelt historiography? It is impossible to tell from reading *TR's Last War*. Like most popular histories, it aims to tell a “story”—a story chock-full of content—presented in narrative form. It eschews any treatment of historiographical framework or methodological approach. Another ingredient absent in this popular history is a rigorous analysis of the so-called big ideas. The author never offers a comprehensive presentation of Roosevelt’s view of America’s role in the world, never examines in any systematic fashion what the colonel meant by “preparedness” (the U.S. Navy is barely mentioned; there is no index entry for “1916 National Defense Act”). But as narrative history, *TR's Last War* is a fascinating read, generously mixing manly doses of war, death, politics, and personal ambition.

## NOTES

1 George E. Mowry, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Movement* (Madison University of Wisconsin Press, 1946), 313, quoted in Pietrusza, 165.

2 John Milton Cooper, Jr., *The Warrior and the Priest: Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 327.

## Americans’ Personal Motivations and the Great War

Huebner, Andrew J. *Love and Death in the Great War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. ix + 408 pp. \$35.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0190853921.

Michele Curran Cornell

Robert Morris University, Moon, Pennsylvania, USA

doi:10.1017/S1537781418000804

Andrew Huebner’s *Love and Death in the Great War* explores how ordinary Americans constructed war service as a citizenship obligation tightly linked to family responsibility. Specifically, Huebner argues the meaning of the war and “talk of ‘civilization,’ ‘democracy,’ or ‘nation’ often translated to the protection of women, family, and the rhythms of daily life” (1). Huebner elaborately traces this theme, using personal records such as letters and diaries and cultural sources such as propaganda, speeches, newspapers, books, and films. Huebner captures the intersections of personal emotions, individual war experiences, public discourse, national culture, and wartime policies and events at the national and local levels to reveal how behavioral expectations created a politically advantageous “white male monopoly” on chivalry and “martial honor,” which women and African Americans challenged during their wartime service (2).

The literature on the Great War tends to compartmentalize the study of World War I into categories like soldiers and the military, diplomats and politics, women and the home front, African Americans and race relations, or immigrants and ethnic identity.