

Call for Papers:
The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871: A European Turning-Point?



University of Strathclyde, Glasgow, 16 April 2021

The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 is widely acknowledged to have been a cause of intense political, social and cultural conflict, a shaping element in modern French and German nationalism, and a significant factor in international tensions prior to 1914. The 150th anniversary in 2020-21 therefore provides an opportunity to re-evaluate the impact of the Franco-Prussian War as a turning-point for Europe.

This conference aims to explore how the Franco-Prussian War triggered a range of upheavals, encompassing the international arena, the military and civilian experiences of the war, and the mobilisation of national sentiments. These turning-points will be analysed not as moments of sudden rupture, but as a series of short, medium and long-term national and transnational shifts.

Political and Diplomatic Turning-Points

The conference will explore how the Franco-Prussian War fundamentally reshaped Europe. The continental realignment involved all the key European players and was one of the major factors leading to the outbreak of the First World War. The German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine was a central cause of the ongoing tension with France, while unified Germany represented a powerful and dominant new force at the centre of the continent.

Turning-Points in Experiences of War

Historians have long debated whether the Franco-Prussian War heralded a new kind of warfare. This conference will therefore engage with Stig Förster and Jörg Nagler's argument that the Franco-Prussian War was a transitional stage between a 'people's' war, fought for nationalist reasons and with modern qualities, and the 'total' war of the First World War. The conference will also seek to explore the shifting attitudes towards the conduct of war and the treatment of soldiers and civilians.

Cultural Turning-Points

The conference will also examine how three connected consequences of the Franco-Prussian War mobilised cultural actors. The first was the unprecedented commemoration of fallen soldiers. The second was the impact on thinking about nations and national identity. The third was the perceptions of colonial forces and the impact of the conflict on ideas of empire. Artists, writers and composers were at the forefront of efforts to shape interpretations of the war and its impact on Europe.

Possible topics might include:

- Diplomatic and political consequences
- Changes in the conduct and nature of war
- Nationalism and national identity
- Role and perceptions of colonial forces
- Representations in art, literature and music
- Memory and commemoration

Please send proposals for 20-minute papers comprising a title, abstract of 250-300 words and one-page CV to Karine.Varley@strath.ac.uk by **30 September 2020**.

