

<b>Institution:</b> The Open University		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> D28 History		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Enhancing public understanding of the origins and legacy of the First World War		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2000-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Professor Annika Mombauer	Professor of Modern History	Since September 1998
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 1 August 2013 - 31 December 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b>		
<p>During the centenary of the First World War, <b>Mombauer's</b> research provided an important intervention into public debates about the origins of the First World War. She argued against new interpretations that absolved Germany from responsibility for the war. Her work has enhanced public understanding and learning, via a MOOC and international media contributions, and has decisively shaped public debate in Germany and internationally. Her interventions in the German press fed directly into debates in the German Bundestag and changed opinions. Her research has been included in international school curricula and has shaped how the topic is taught in German and British secondary schools.</p>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b>		
<p><b>Mombauer's</b> research publications focus on the diplomatic and military origins of the First World War and argue for Germany's decisive share of responsibility for its outbreak. Based on archival research and comprehensive analysis of the historiography of the First World War, her publications have made significant interventions, making her a recognised expert in this field.</p> <p>She demonstrates the important (but previously overlooked) role of the Chief of the German General Staff in the years prior to the outbreak of war in 1914 in the first and only critical biography of Helmuth von Moltke <b>[O1]</b>. Based on new primary evidence, this research reveals the desire of Germany's military planners to unleash a war and provides new sources to support her interpretation that Germany's government willingly risked a European war. It argues for Moltke's responsibility for starting a war which he claimed Germany would win.</p> <p>In a scholarly edition of over 400 international documents, many of them previously unpublished, <b>Mombauer</b> edited, translated, analysed and extensively annotated crucial primary source evidence for researchers and students studying the causes of the Great War in a comparative perspective <b>[O2]</b>. This is the only such collection since Imanuel Geiss's standard document edition was published in the 1960s. <b>Mombauer's</b> volume adds an international focus and includes many newly discovered documents.</p> <p>The prestigious German publisher Beck Verlag commissioned <b>Mombauer</b> to write a book on the July Crisis (the diplomatic crisis which led to the outbreak of war) aimed at a general audience <b>[O3]</b>. The book takes direct issue with the revisionist interpretation advanced on the eve of the centenary that all major European powers were responsible for the outbreak of war. Instead, <b>Mombauer</b> attributes more initiating responsibility to Germany and Austria-Hungary who, she argues, deliberately created a crisis which would escalate into war.</p> <p>In several commissioned articles <b>Mombauer</b> uses her research to contextualise and critically engage with the developing historiography. In 'Guilt or Responsibility' in <i>Central European History</i> <b>[O4]</b> <b>Mombauer</b> analyses the debate prompted by the anniversary of the Great War and presents her own interpretation. In an article in <i>Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht</i>, she makes further intervention in the debate, locating her own research within a discussion of the wider historiography <b>[O5]</b>.</p>		

### 3. References to the research

These outputs have been peer reviewed and published by academic publishers or journals.

- O1. Mombauer, A.** (2001) *Helmuth von Moltke and the Origins of the First World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316257050>
- O2. Mombauer, A.** (ed.) (2013) *The Origins of the First World War: diplomatic and military documents*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. <http://oro.open.ac.uk/30376>
- O3. Mombauer, A.** (2014) *Die Julikrise. Europas Weg in den Ersten Weltkrieg*. Beck'sche Reihe Wissen. Munich: C.H. Beck Verlag.
- O4. Mombauer, A.** (2015) 'Guilt or Responsibility? The Hundred-Year Debate on the Origins of World War I', *Central European History*, 48/4, 541-564, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008938915001144>
- O5. Mombauer, A.** (2014) 'Der hundertjährige Krieg um die Kriegsschuld', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 65 (5/6), 303–337. <http://oro.open.ac.uk/40369/>

### 4. Details of the impact

**Mombauer's** research has had significant impact on public understanding and learning, primarily in Germany and the UK. Specifically, it has shaped public debates with targeted interventions, informed public understanding via media engagements and through publicly accessible publications, and influenced and informed school curricula and teachers' practice.

#### Impact on public debate

The 2014 centenary saw a revival of the long debate about the causes of the First World War in Germany. In terms of intensity and public engagement, it matched the so-called Fischer controversy of the 1960s when Fritz Fischer's thesis that Germany was more to blame for the outbreak of the war than other nations led to a heated national and international debate. Initiated by Christopher Clark's *The Sleepwalkers*, the centenary saw the revival of a revisionist interpretation which largely absolved Germany from responsibility for the outbreak of the war.

Crucially, this was not just a debate among historians, but of great public interest. In a 2014 poll by the German Forsa Institute, 69% of respondents expressed an interest in the topic, rising to 77% among 14-29-year-old respondents (*Financial Times*, 17 January 2014). The new interpretation proved popular and many Germans, especially on the political right, expressed relief that German 'war guilt' had allegedly been expunged.

In several publications, particularly her 2014 book *Die Julikrise* [O3], **Mombauer** provides a sustained, research-based counter argument to these revisionist interpretations. Her account is one of very few interventions which advances a different point of view. The book was widely discussed in the German press as a credible alternative interpretation to the new revisionist views [C2].

*Die Julikrise* was selected as 'personal recommendation' in April 2014 by a panel from the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Norddeutscher Rundfunk*, *Buchjournal*, *Börsenblatt* and *Telepolis*. It sold over 3,000 copies in 2014 alone and 6337 to date. A Danish translation was published in 2014, the rights for a Turkish translation were sold in 2020 [C2]. It was discussed and reviewed in several German national newspapers [C5].

Following its publication, **Mombauer** was interviewed in German newspapers and online portals, including the national daily newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung* [C5] (daily print run c.400,000 in 2014). In 2017, this interview was directly quoted in a Bundestag motion when members of 'Die Linke Partei' in the German Bundestag advocated the government should reject new apologetic views in favour of the interpretation put forward in **Mombauer's** 2014 interview [C3]. Other interviews in Germany included the research blog of the German Gerda Henkel Foundation

(2,798 downloads), and national and regional newspapers including *Die Welt*, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, *Rhein-Ruhr Zeitung* and *Die Tageszeitung*. International interviews included the *Los Angeles Times*, *Folha de S.Paulo* (Brazil) and *Politika* (Serbia) [C5].

### Impact on public understanding

*Die Julikrise* was favourably received by members of the public convinced by **Mombauer's** rejection of the new consensus. Readers commented: "Her account is for me simply convincing" and "An analysis which removes the foundations of the historical revision of 'The Sleepwalkers'" [C2]. In 2019, a reader's letter in the *Frankfurter Rundschau* (written in response to current debates about the Hohenzollern family's links to the Nazis) referred back to **Mombauer's** research and thanked her "for interpreting [...] sources from an external point of view and thus allowing us a different point of view on the unleashing of both world wars" [C5].

Following the publication of *Die Julikrise*, **Mombauer** was commissioned by the editor of the *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung* (Federal Agency for Civic Education) to contribute an article for a special issue on the First World War of the journal *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*. This free bi-monthly publication is distributed to schools, libraries and subscribers throughout Germany and is intended to provide political education for the German public [C1].

In this article **Mombauer** evaluates the debate on the origins of the war and advances her own interpretation. The print run was 76,000 hard copies; additional PDF and e-book versions are freely available on the *Bundeszentrale* website, bpb.de. In the first two months after publication alone, the ebook was downloaded more than 1,000 times. A further ebook edition was published in conjunction with the national public radio station *Deutschlandfunk*. Titled *100 Jahre Beginn des Ersten Weltkriegs*, it was downloaded more than 8,400 times in July/August 2014 alone. The editor describes the issue as one of his "favourites" and explains that the *Bundeszentrale* bought the rights to republish *Die Julikrise* because it was "without doubt useful" for "political education". 3,000 additional copies were printed, of which only 98 remained unsold in March 2019 [C1].

**Mombauer's** research has influenced public understanding, learning and participation through its reach. She has written courses and articles based on her research for OpenLearn, the OU's unique platform for free online learning. These have attracted 277,774 unique page views in 176 countries.

In Britain, she was the academic advisor for the Open University/BBC1's co-produced television series 'Britain's Great War' (2014) presented by Jeremy Paxman (16.4 million views); she was expert interviewee for BBC2 'WWI: The Final Hours' (2018) (audience 1.05 million, plus iPlayer viewings). She was interviewed in Max Hastings' BBC programme 'The Necessary War' (2014) and took part in the Radio 5 Live debate that accompanied Niall Ferguson's TV programme 'The Pity of War' (June 2014).

She was an expert panel member and discussant on the BBC World Service radio programme 'The War that Changed the World', recorded in front of a live audience in Dresden, Germany (June 2014). She was the consultant and historical expert interviewed for the BBC World Service 'History Hour' to mark the centenary of the end of the war in November 2018. Both programmes reached global audiences of millions. To mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the outbreak of war, she was interviewed on BBC2's *Newsnight* (July 2014). On all these occasions, she advanced her own interpretation of the origins of the First World War.

In Germany, her views were sought in radio interviews including *Deutschlandfunk Kultur* in a three-hour live broadcast to commemorate the outbreak of the war [C8] and a live interview with Radio Bremen (July 2014). Her research garnered significant international media attention, e.g. in the US, Brazil and Serbia. In Turkey she was an expert interviewee on a special First World War edition of 'The Newsmaker', a series on the official Turkish government online channel TRT World (90,600 subscribers) [C8].

**Impact on education**

**Mombauer** has made research accessible to schoolteachers in her commissioned article for *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, an academic journal which communicates the latest historical research to secondary school teachers [O5]. This research-based article bridges the gap between university research and school teaching, enabling teachers to deliver up-to-date curriculum in the classroom. At her suggestion it includes an appendix of primary sources from her 2013 document edition [O2] to supplement classroom teaching and learning.

Several German schoolbook publishers have included excerpts of **Mombauer's** book *Die Julikrise* in textbooks for secondary schools, including *Horizonte - Geschichte Qualifikationsphase* (Westermann 2015); *Buchners Geschichte* (Buchner 2015) and *Geschichte Entdecken* (Buchner 2021). [Text removed for publication] an expert in the didactics of history at Ruhr-Universität Bochum, explains why: *"The 'war guilt question' is still a standard subject in history lessons, so that newer and older accounts [...] are popular for use in history lessons"* [C4]. [Text removed for publication] comments that **Mombauer's** text *"is used in upper secondary schools to demonstrate the different positions on the war guilt debate and thus to sensitise for controversy and to introduce how to argue historically"* [C4].

Two articles in *Geschichte Lernen* (a didactic journal aimed at history teachers) use **Mombauer's** research to develop case studies on how to teach pupils about interpretations and controversies in history. 'When Historians Argue' (2018) was written by Mierwald and Mainzer and uses **Mombauer's** work as a case study for teaching text analysis [C4]. A web portal designed for German *Abiturienten* (A-Level students) and their teachers also includes excerpts of **Mombauer's** work. The relevant page received c.2,300 visitors from October 2019-October 2020 [C4] and the website creator recorded an interview with **Mombauer** for the site.

Excerpts of **Mombauer's** English publications also appear in standard history textbooks in the UK, including revision texts for AQA, Edexcel, OCR & WJEC Level [C9]. To extend this reach, **Mombauer** wrote a teaching unit based on her research for a new Continuous Professional Development (CPD) course for UK teachers produced by the OU. The course was delayed by Covid-19, but a pilot involving 50 teachers was conducted in November 2020. Teachers were asked for feedback and were able to have input into the teaching materials. A teacher commented: *"I spent quite a lot of time thinking about the Origins of the First World War section - [...]. I think it's the more challenging part of a course of this nature in terms of complexity and how to teach it in schools. I thought it is brilliant how rival interpretations of causation were showcased and scrutinised. The exercises in evaluating the primary source material are so helpful"* (O.M., secondary school teacher, feedback 22/12/20) [C7].

**Mombauer** has made her research freely available to large numbers of adult learners in FutureLearn MOOCs. 'WW1: Trauma and Memory' was presented three times in 2014/2015 and attracted 8,225 active learners. It has been one of the OU's most successful MOOCs to date in terms of user engagement, generating over 34,000 individual discussion posts between 2014 and 2015. She later turned this into a free course on the OU's open access learning platform OpenLearn. The course had attracted 9356 unique visitors from 97 countries by end of 2019 [C6].

In 2020, she expanded the MOOC with an additional week's material based on her research into the origins of the war. The new course, 'WW1: Trauma, Memory, Controversy', was first presented in July 2020 and has had over 26,000 people enrolled to date [C6]. Feedback included, for example: *"Apart from its very high academic value this course is an eye opener and should be on the list to do for our political leaders"* (10/08/20); *"I have always been confused about the reasons for the start of the war. This course has made it all much clearer"* (1/9/20); *"This has been a very thought-provoking course causing one to dig deep into aspects of WWI that encourage further reading and research"* (4/9/20); *"I have learnt so much"* (1/9/20); *"Thank you for an eye-opening course"* (3/08/20) [C6].

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

Several sources are in German, some in Spanish and Serbian.

- C1.** Email from the editor of *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (April 2020).
- C2.** Screenshots showing *Die Julikrise* selected as 'personal recommendation of the month' (April 2014); Amazon.de and other reviews (2014). Email from Beck Verlag publisher confirming sales figures to date (November 2020).
- C3.** German Bundestag stenographic reports: Motion by Die Linke Partei referring to **Mombauer's** 2014 interview in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (November 2017).
- C4.** Emails from [text removed for publication] (December 2020). Article by Mierwald and Mainzer. PDF of German school textbooks. Screenshots of articles in *Geschichte Lernen* (Friedrich Verlag). Screenshot of A-Level resource website.
- C5.** Newspaper articles written by Annika **Mombauer**: 'Die Tragik des Moments', *Die Tageszeitung*, 1/07/2014; 'Als Berlins Colt rauchte', *Die Welt*, 26/07/2014. Interviews with **Mombauer**: *Süddeutsche Zeitung*; 21/6/2014; *Niederrhein Zeitung*, 16.07.2014; *Der Tagesspiegel*, 16/07/2014. Screenshot of interview with **Mombauer** on research portal of the Gerda Henkel Foundation, Germany (April 2014). Newspaper articles which discuss **Mombauer's** contribution to the debate: *Berliner Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Die Welt*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Folha de S.Paulo (Brazil)* and *Politika (Serbia)*.
- C6.** Screenshots of learner feedback of 2020 MOOC: *World War 1: Trauma, Memory, Controversy* learner feedback; user statistics from four presentations (2014-2020), confirmation of OpenLearn downloads.
- C7.** Email feedback from teacher O.M. who studied the CPD pilot (December 2020).
- C8.** Screenshots of media programmes featuring interviews with **Mombauer**, including Deutschlandfunk Kultur, BBC World Service, TRT (2014-2018).
- C9.** German and UK school textbooks which include excerpts of **Mombauer's** research (2014-2020).