

# Combatants

**Author-s:**

[Isabelle DAVION](#) [1]

**Abstract**

The study of combatants should be approached in its diversity. It firstly involves the large mass of men who, under various statuses, directly participate in war. One becomes a combatant in a number of ways: mobilization is a key moment, although conscription, voluntary service, and forced enrolment should also be explored. Combatants are not necessarily uniformed members of the military, as civilians—men, women and adolescents—can also take up arms. Even animals can be “mobilized”. Death, wounds, and imprisonment marked the daily life of these combatants, even if the evolution of conflicts and weaponry profoundly changed the nature of physical confrontation. Reflecting upon combatants also entails exploring the question of authority, respect, and obedience (mutiny, insubordination, deserters, even moments of fraternization with the “enemy”). Their lives cannot ultimately be reduced solely to combat, as their morale, leisure, and health also come into consideration.

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