Introduction

David A. Bell and Martha Hanna

The first histories of France were histories of war. From Caesar's account of his conquest of Gaul to medieval chronicles of the great deeds of French knights, the spectacle that most inflamed the historical imagination was that of combat. Not until Renaissance jurists began to lay the foundations of modern historical scholarship did laws and customs challenge the place held by the deeds of captains and kings in representations of the French past. And even so, for centuries more, war continued to hold a central place for anyone writing on the subject.

In the twentieth century, however, something strange happened: French historians turned away from war. Out of the convergence of innovative work in social science and geography arose the *Annales* school and its conviction that truly scientific historical judgments demanded research grounded in the *longue durée* (ultimately, of geological time) and based on significant quantities of sequential data (*histoire sérielle*). The school's great masterpiece, Fernand Braudel's *La Méditerranée*, deliberately cast the sea itself as its protagonist and relegated the military exploits of Spain's Philip II, about which Braudel had first thought of writing, to the role of epiphenomena.[1] In the view Braudel subsequently developed, "event history," which encompassed war, diplomacy, and high politics, was like the foam on the surface of the sea. And while Braudel did initially devote serious attention to warfare, in the work of his students and followers it quickly faded into the background—above all as an additional factor disturbing the lives of the peasant masses and adding to their dreadful tax burden. As the

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1 Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1949).

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Annales school gained a dominant place in French historical studies, work on war fell increasingly into eclipse.

A similar eclipse took place across much of the world, in part thanks to the influence of the *Annales* itself. But in France it arguably went further than almost anywhere else. Although most major American and British research universities still have at least a few faculty members who write the history of military operations and grand strategy, in most French universities and research centers, with the exception of specialized institutes such as the Centre d'Etudes sur l'Histoire de la Défense, it has fallen by the wayside. Indeed, over the past generation, the most significant works of operational French military history have arguably come from Anglo-Saxon authors, such as David Chandler on the Napoleonic Wars, John Lynn on the wars of Louis XIV, and Robert Doughty on World War I.[2] Inside France, histories touching on war have tended to focus less on actual military operations than on the military as a social and political institution. One thinks, for instance, of André Corvisier's social history of French soldiers, Jean-Paul Bertaud's analysis of the "Revolution in arms," or Guy Pedroncini's classic study of the mutinies of 1917.[3]

In hindsight, the eclipse of military history in France in the twentieth century appears as a terrible irony. After all, the half century that saw the *Annales* school move from its first stirrings to a triumphant domination of academia began with the hecatomb of World War I. It continued, scarcely twenty years later, with the traumatic defeat of 1940, the Nazi occupation, the ghastly episode of Vichy, and a harrowing, divisive liberation. It concluded with agonizing colonial defeats in Vietnam and Algeria, the second of which entailed withdrawal from a territory long considered French, the forced relocation of a million French citizens, the threat of a military coup, and bloodshed in the streets of Paris. It would be hard to find another fifty-year period in which war touched so much of the French population so directly—not excepting the leading historians of the *Annales*. Lucien Febvre, the cofounder of the journal, faced the moral choice of whether to remove the name of his Jewish cofounder, Marc Bloch, from its masthead during Vichy (he did).[4] Bloch, himself a veteran of World War I, enlisted voluntarily in World War II, fought bravely in the Resistance, and died at the hands

[2] David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (London, 1966); John Lynn, *The Wars of Louis XIV, 1667–1714* (London, 1999); Robert Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

[3] André Corvisier, *L'armée française de la fin du XVIIe siècle au ministère de Choiseul: Le soldat*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1964); Jean-Paul Bertaud, *La révolution armée: Les soldats-citoyens et la Révolution française* (Paris, 1979); Guy Pedroncini, *Les mutineries de 1917* (Paris, 1967).

[4] See Natalie Zemon Davis, "Rabelais among the Censors (1940s, 1540s)," *Representations*, no. 32 (1990): 1–32.

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of the Nazis. Braudel spent most of the war years in a German prisoner-of-war camp, and actually drafted the bulk of *La Méditerranée* there. For those tempted to see the *Annales* enterprise as a giant act of denial, it would be hard to find a better example than this.

In recent years, though, something of a turn back toward military subjects has taken place among French historians. It has not involved a strong return to operational military history in the Anglo-American sense, but it has amounted to more than simply an application of social or cultural historical methods to the world of the military. It sees war not simply as event-filled Braudelian "foam" but as a complex activity grounded in deeply rooted social and cultural practices, possessing its own internal dynamism, influenced by large-scale patterns of social, cultural, economic, and political change and influencing them in turn. As such, it forms part of a larger turn back to the history of war exemplified in such classics as John W. Dower's *War without Mercy*, on the U.S.-Japanese conflict during World War II, or in recent studies such as Karen Hagemann's innovative account of war and gender in Napoleonic Germany.[5]

In France, perhaps not surprisingly, this new work has been driven above all by French historians' attempts to come to terms precisely with the horrors of the half century that began with the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 and ended with the independence of Algeria. This historical work has involved the demolition of many cherished myths and has entailed close and fruitful attention to questions of memory. Most pointedly, it has centered on the reevaluation of Vichy France that began with the publication in 1972 of Robert Paxton's *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* and continued through the war-crimes trials of Klaus Barbie in 1987 and Maurice Papon a decade later. But it has also stimulated a reevaluation of World War I, beginning in 1977 with Jean-Jacques Becker's *1914: Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre*.[6] Both Paxton's and Becker's monographs proved crucial in leading French historians to treat war as something other, and more multifaceted, than the study of military operations alone. Although the French experiences of the two world wars would seem, at first glance, to be radically different, scholarship of the two wars has since the 1970s been shaped by a common, overarching interest in the impact of war on civilian populations and in questions of memory and commemoration.

By turning our attention away from the much-pondered ques-

[5] John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986); Karen Hagemann, *"Mannlicher Muth und Teutsche Ehre": Nation, Militär und Geschlecht zur Zeit der Antinapoleonischen Kriege Preussens* (Paderborn, 2002).

[6] Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order* (New York, 1972); Jean-Jacques Becker, *1914: Comment les Français sont entrés dans la guerre* (Paris, 1977).

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tion of why France succumbed to military defeat in 1940 (a question that had been and would continue to be examined, in part at least, by concentrating on questions of military planning, operations, and their deficiencies), Paxton's *Vichy France* compelled French and Anglo-American scholars to focus instead on the consequences, as opposed to the causes, of defeat. And by exposing the indigenous character of Vichy's anti-Semitism, raising unsettling questions about the pervasiveness of resistance, and stripping Marshal Pétain's regime of any redeeming virtue, Paxton opened the way to a generation of scholarship that has analyzed the complicity and moral culpability of Vichy in the Holocaust, prompted a close examination of daily life in Vichy France, and inspired scholars on both sides of the Atlantic to examine how Vichy has been remembered and culturally constructed in the years since the Liberation.

Becker's scholarship has proved equally important.[7] It has revived in France and beyond an interest in the history of the Great War that, following his lead, has concentrated on how civilian society experienced the hardships of war, constructed cultural justifications for it, and created a "culture of war" that sustained combatants and noncombatants alike. Becker set the research agenda for the next thirty years by asking a question that continues to intrigue: given the demographic catastrophe, economic dislocation, and unprecedented misery that marked the Great War in France, what explains the French people's capacity to endure through to victory? He sought (and found) his answer not in the determination of troops and the efficacy of military discipline but (perhaps surprisingly) in the stoic resolve of French civilians, and therefore shifted the history of World War I toward the home front.

If the civilian, as much as the soldier, becomes the rightful subject of scholarly analysis, does this render irrelevant the soldier's experience of war? Surely a war such as World War I, which claimed 1.4 million French lives and deprived France of one-tenth of its active labor force, must be studied from the vantage point of the battlefront as much as, if not more than, from that of the home front. As Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Leonard V. Smith have subsequently demonstrated, the *poilu* certainly continues to merit close study, but in a way that has only reinforced Becker's principal argument.[8] Just as civilians believed that

[7] Following the publication of *1914*, Becker published *Les Français dans la grande guerre* (Paris, 1980), trans. by Arnold Pomerans as *The Great War and the French People* (New York, 1985).

[8] Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *14–18, Les combattants des tranchées: A travers leurs journaux* (Paris, 1986), trans. by Helen McPhail as *Men at War, 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War* (Providence, RI, 1992); Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division during World War I* (Princeton, NJ, 1994).

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the French cause was worthy and their nation an innocent victim of enemy aggression, so, too, did the men who waged war in defense of France. However grim their circumstances, however sorely tested their capacity to endure, however resentful their attitude toward pampered and protected civilians, they continued to believe in the justice of their nation's cause. Consent, rather than coercion, explained the French soldiers' willingness to fight.

Although France derived strength from a culture of war that emphasized the justice of the French war effort and thus bound civilians and soldiers in common cause, close attention to the home front has revealed that the nation failed to transcend the cultural, political, and social divisions that had marked (and marred) the early decades of the Third Republic. Republicanism and royalism, Catholicism and secularism, class and gender continued to divide the French throughout the war years, adherence to the *union sacrée* notwithstanding. Three decades after Becker focused his attention on the French home front, the scholarship of World War I, like that of Vichy, remains as interested in the cultural repercussions of war as in its military character.[9]

This "return to war," albeit in a new key, in France itself has spurred a similar movement among historians of France in North America. In the fall of 2006 the University of Minnesota conference "Spaces of War: France and the Francophone World," partly organized by Patricia M. E. Lorcin, brought together no fewer than seventy-two historians, mostly from North America, to present research and discuss new directions in the field. In keeping with the trends observed in France itself, 69 percent of the papers addressed the period 1914–62. Only 18 percent discussed anything prior to 1800.

This special issue of *French Historical Studies* is very much a part of the historiographical story just sketched out. As a North American journal that predominantly publishes Anglophone authors, in recent years *French Historical Studies* has catered very little to operational military historians of France, who tend to prefer such venues as the *Journal of Military History*. By contrast, it has close ties to the French branch of the profession and, despite favoring some distinctly North American lines of inquiry (especially those that fall under "the new cultural history"), is methodologically close to its French counterparts. So it is perhaps no surprise that the submissions to this issue did not include any essays that paid significant attention to strategy, tactics, or logis-

[9] See esp. Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago, 1994); Jean-Yves LeNaour, *Le soldat inconnu vivant* (Paris, 2002), trans. by Penny Allen as *The Living Unknown Soldier: A Story of Grief and the Great War* (New York, 2004).

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tics, despite explicit language welcoming such essays in our call for submissions. Rather, it was issues of commemoration, political culture, and daily life on the home front that predominated. When we asked a prominent military historian for an evaluation of one submission, he gave us a cogent, helpful critique, but also included these words: "This is the kind of discussion about war that mainline academic historians like; it says very little about the fighting and a great deal concerning how people felt about it. As someone who believes that the fundamental act of war is combat rather than commemoration, this bothers me." So the gap between operational military history and the social and cultural history of war has not been bridged in these pages.

Not surprisingly, 60 percent of the submissions concerned just the half century from 1914 to 1962. Although the eighteenth century was relatively popular, with some 18 percent of the submissions, we received just two essays that addressed anything before 1700. So this special issue also follows closely from the rediscovery of war through the contemplation of twentieth-century examples that are only now just fading below the horizon of living memory. Indeed, the pattern of submissions suggests that for "mainline" historians of medieval and early modern France, the subject of war still remains very much in eclipse. In this connection, it is notable that one eighteenth-century essay published here—"The Experience and Culture of War in the Eighteenth Century: The British Raids on the Breton Coast, 1758," by David Hopkin, Yann Lagadec, and Stéphane Perréon—represents an explicit attempt to apply approaches developed by historians of World War I to an earlier period of French history. Oddly, we received few submissions on colonial warfare, despite the burgeoning interest in the subject demonstrated at the University of Minnesota conference and the example of important new work on colonial warfare in general by such scholars as Isabel V. Hull.[10]

In selecting the essays to appear in this issue, we opted to move away somewhat from an early-twentieth-century focus. In particular, we felt that a renewed interest in war by historians of the eighteenth century represents one of the most welcome and important new trends in the field. The issue therefore opens with the essay by Hopkin, Lagadec, and Perréon on the British raids on the Breton coast during the Seven Years' War (1756–63). The authors use the notion of a culture of war, drawn from twentieth-century scholarship, to examine the impact of these raids, the way they were defended against, and their place in

[10] Isabel V. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY, 2005).

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local and national memory and history. We then move on to Dan Edelstein's consideration of the concept of "enemies of the human race" in his article "War and Terror: The Law of Nations from Grotius to the French Revolution." In particular, Edelstein concerns himself with the uses of the concept during the French Revolution and its importance both for the Revolutionary Wars and for the Terror. Following Edelstein, we jump ahead nearly a century, to the late nineteenth century and Margaret H. Darrow's article "In the Land of Joan of Arc: The Civic Education of Girls and the Prospect of War in France, 1871–1914."

Those readers particularly concerned with the period 1914–62, however, will still find much to interest them in this issue. For one thing, Darrow's essay also looks forward to World War I, suggesting a new perspective on the role of gender in that conflict. The issue continues with Tyler Stovall's examination of social tensions on the urban home front in "The Consumers' War: Paris, 1914–1918," which also engages deeply with issues of gender and takes a fresh look at the divisions and conflicts that lay behind the *union sacrée.* Finally, we move on to the era of World War II and the original perspective Shannon L. Fogg offers on Vichy France through her essay "'They Are Undesirables': Local and National Responses to Gypsies during World War II."

In selecting these essays, we did not deliberately search for common themes, preferring to select the best and most broad-ranging of the submissions. However, certain obvious common themes do emerge. Some reflect long-standing trends in the historical examination of war, society, and culture in France. Others suggest new ways in which the field is moving.

The single most common theme, and the one that readers may find most familiar, is the one of the effect of war on civilians. The essay by Hopkin, Lagadec, and Perréon concentrates on the Breton civilian populations affected by the British raids and organized to fight against them. Edelstein argues that as the French revolutionaries increasingly adopted a natural-right jurisprudence, they ended up placing civilian criminals and political dissidents in the same category as foreign soldiers—that is, they began viewing them as existential enemies, beyond the social contract, who could legally be killed without trial. Darrow focuses on that most civilian of venues—the classroom—in examining how French schoolgirls learned about war. Stovall focuses directly on how wartime exigencies affected civilian life in Paris, while Fogg examines the changing situation of one particular, ambiguous category of civilian—Gypsies—at the time of the Nazi campaign of extermination against them.

The well-established themes of memory and commemoration also

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make appearances in most of the articles here, although with some new twists. Hopkin, Lagadec, and Perréon tell the fascinating story of how the eighteenth-century British raids, originally seen as part of a British-French conflict, were later remembered in Brittany itself as an Anglo-Breton one. Darrow traces the way in which French schoolgirls learned not only about canonical French female heroes such as Joan of Arc but also about more recent ones from the Franco-Prussian War. Fogg for her part deals with the way French attitudes toward Gypsies during the Occupation and Vichy were shaped by the long and contentious memory of interactions between French and Gypsies in the prewar period.

In something more of a new direction, the essays also address the key question of motivation, among soldiers and civilians alike, setting it in a broad cultural context. In the article by Hopkin, Lagadec, and Perréon, a key issue is how Breton coastal residents were mobilized and motivated to repel the British raiders. As the authors conclude, by far the most important factor seems simply to have been the sheer physical proximity of and threat posed by the enemy, with such factors as national and regional patriotism far more difficult to measure. Edelstein, meanwhile, poses the question of how revolutionary politicians legitimized the notion of an exterminatory war, and motivated the French to fight in it. As he argues, by defining domestic and foreign adversaries alike as "enemies of the human race," the revolutionary natural-right theorists equated the Revolution's adversaries with nonhuman monsters and made their destruction a moral necessity. Darrow poses a question of motivation that few previous historians have bothered to examine: the motivation of girls to take an active role in national defense. As she shows through her analysis of school texts and notebooks, education under the Third Republic did not simply prepare girls for domestic roles but also led them to dream of emulating a Joan of Arc or an Antoinette Lix, helping save the *patrie* in moments of national peril. Stovall approaches the question of motivation from a different direction, showing how conflicts among different Parisian social groups competing for the same limited supply of consumer goods during World War I placed effective limits on the social cohesion for war demanded in the name of the *union sacrée.*

Finally, although only Edelstein's essay deals even tangentially with *civil* war, his and several others provide valuable new ways of understanding the complex relationship between external war and different sorts of Franco-French strife. For Hopkin, Lagadec, and Perréon, the key element is Breton regionalism, which barely existed at the time of the Seven Years' War but came to dominate the memory and historical interpretation of the British raids on the Breton coast. Edelstein

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illuminates a moment in which not only the boundary between soldier and civilian but also that between internal and external enemy became hopelessly blurred, with French citizens placed in the same conceptual category as pirates on the high seas or hirelings of perfidious Albion. Stovall shows pointedly that despite the myths promulgated at the time, in some ways World War I exacerbated French social and gender tensions. And Fogg demonstrates the ways in which war and occupation led French officials and ordinary citizens—even without direct orders from the Nazis—to push for the removal and internment of Gypsies, who had previously been able to negotiate a place for themselves at the margins of French society.

Despite these common themes, the five essays here also differ substantially from each other. In source material, they range from the grand natural-right treatises surveyed by Edelstein to the girls' notebooks and town records examined by Darrow and Hopkin, Lagadec, and Perréon. In method, while all five could loosely fall under the heading of "cultural history," they range from the relatively straightforward approaches of Darrow and Fogg to Hopkin, Lagadec, and Perréon's careful definition of a culture of war and Edelstein's reading, informed by literary theory and political philosophy, of laws and speeches. Still, in our judgment, they give a good picture of a swiftly growing and swiftly evolving picture. Anyone wishing to return to the oldest traditions of French historiography and to ponder the relationship between the French nation and military conflict will be challenged and stimulated by all five.

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