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LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

In support of West Point's Academic Year 2025 theme, *"***The Human and the Machine: Leadership on the Emerging Battlefield***,"* this year's issue focuses on how societies and militaries have historically responded or adapted to new technologies. While the theme centers on technological evolution, this edition of *REPORT* also includes papers that explore the influence of tactics, counterintelligence, and women within the armed forces.

The 2025 Report features five works, each selected for its unique perspective and approach to understanding the military. Together, these essays present a multifaceted view of how the armed forces have evolved in response to changing technology, strategy, and social dynamics. At the United States Military Academy, we are committed to developing leaders of character. That development is grounded in learning from both the successes and failures of the past. These five works contribute valuable insights from the past to shape our future.

Sebastian Vidal-Waldron's essay on Suvorovian tactics explores the development of Russian military doctrine. He argues that General Suvorov's methods, while inspired by Revolutionary Frances tactics, stood apart from other Western strategies.

Elizabeth Pfisterer examines how Edwardian culture influenced British espionage in the Middle East during World War I. Her essay highlights the transformation of intelligence practices to better achieve the goals of the British Empire.

Meanwhile, Mason Krogh focuses on the overlooked role of women in French society during World War I. He explores how their contributions

impacted military readiness and logistics, offering a more comprehensive view of war beyond the battlefield.

Kan Jie Ng analyzes France's interwar period, showing how the French military and government attempted to address the challenges posed by emerging technologies. Yet, by 1940, the French General Staff ultimately failed to respond effectively to these changes.

Building on the theme of adaptation and failure, Nick Chrimicles explores the historiography of American precision bombing during World War II. He argues that technological advancements and a strong moral framework are the reason that precision bombing was the dominant strategy for the U.S. military.

Spanning continents, conflicts, and centuries, this edition of the Report offers a broad array of perspectives on how warfare is fought, interpreted, and transformed. We hope this collection challenges your understanding and deepens your appreciation of the many factors that shape military history. **Happy Reading!**

Wisdom Through History!

CDT Charlotte Patterson
USMA Class of 2026
Senior Editor

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The Eagle Against the Tricolor: Exploring the Parallels Between the Development of General Aleksandr Vasil'evich Suvorov's Tactics and Revolutionary France

By Sebastian Vidal-Waldron, University of Toronto

Debates about Russia's relationship with Western European powers have long shaped interpretations of Russian military history. Historically, such debates began as soon as the question of Russian military projection became relevant to the European order. The doctrine of Aleksandr Vasil'evich Suvorov (1730-1800) is of major interest. Suvorov never lost a tactical engagement throughout his many campaigns against diverse enemies. Thus, for many romanticists nineteenth-century Russian military theorists, claiming the figure of Suvorov as the harbinger of a uniquely successful Russian model of war is appealing.[1] Yet, far from an isolated Russian visionary, Suvorov was embedded in the wider shifts in military thinking that marked the end of the 18th century. While not the first comparison of Suvorov's armies with foreign militaries, this paper argues that Revolutionary France should serve as the most appropriate basis for comparison for such analyses. The methods by which France and Russia developed and finalized their revolutionary schools of warfare in the 1790s were distinct but remarkably similar in outcome. Thus, two societies with seemingly opposing socio-political values independently developed similar military doctrines. The planning for and execution of Suvorov's 1799 campaign against Revolutionary France in Italy and Switzerland will serve

[1] Walter Pintner, "Russian Military Thought: The Western Model and the Shadow of Suvorov," In *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton University Press, 1986), 366-367. Among such thinkers, Mikhail Ivanovich Dragomirov (1830-1905) stands out. In 1879 as head of the Russian Imperial General Staff Academy he published a textbook on tactics which shaped the officer corps for the next three decades. Inspired by Suvorov, these tactics sought to extend the preponderance of bayonet charges in Russian warfare through to and even past the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905.

as a final backdrop for the analysis. Among Suvorov's campaigns, the War of the Second Coalition will receive the most attention. This is because it directly pitted the new revolutionary-adherent French and Russian schools of combat against each other.

Much has been written about the origins of the doctrinal revolution that accompanied the political revolution of late 18th-century France. Pre-1762 French tactical thought was heavily inspired by the work of Jacques François de Chastenet, Marquis of Puységur (1656-1743).[2] After his death, Puységur's most famous work, *Art of War, by Principles and Rules*, was published and housed in the Parisian Royal Library.[3] Drawing upon his long experience, Puységur concluded that contemporary suggestions for advanced and flexible instructions that could only be communicated in the quiet and pristine conditions of a drill field were frivolous and useless.[4] Instead, an emphasis had to be placed on tirelessly, and in great detail, going over simple, tried and tested maneuvers. Basic maneuvers were relentlessly drilled so that men knew their purpose once the smoke and rough terrain of battle swept away the chain of command.[5] Even if justified by the need to maintain discipline, such a system was inflexible in battle. Given France's military preponderance in Europe during Puységur's time, we can expect this was the system that much of the continent incorporated into their thought. Consequently, western officers imported into Russia through the Petrine

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[2] Robert Quimby, *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare: The Theory of Military Tactics in Eighteenth-Century France* (Columbia University Press, 1968), 16. Puységur was a distinguished soldier who saw intermittent service with the army for 58 years from the Franco-Dutch to Polish succession wars. Puységur reached France's highest rank of marshal in 1734.

[3] Jacques François de Chastenet marquis de Puységur, *Art de la guerre, par principes et par règles* (Charles-Antoine Jombert, 1748), 1.

[4] Puységur, *Art de la guerre, par principes et par règles*, 236.

[5] Puységur, *Art de la guerre, par principes et par règles*, 235-236.

Reforms would have thought of the burgeoning modern Russian military along that model.

The years after Puységur's work were not kind to France, which suffered numerous defeats during the Seven Years' War. In response, French war minister Étienne François de Choiseul (1719-1785) began a long discussion on tactical reform by arranging a committee in 1762.[6] The birth of French offensive tactics and operations characteristic of the 1790s occurred towards the end of the *Ancien Régime*. Among theorists of the period, Jacques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert (1743-1790) stands out as the foremost inspiration for France's military ordinance of 1791 and later, Napoleon Bonaparte himself.[7] In his *General Essay of Tactics*, Guibert expressed the need for offensive tactics in what he refers to as a new form of war that will surprise enemies.[8] As Guibert wrote, "I say that a general, who relieves himself in that respect, of established prejudices, will embarrass his enemy, will astonish him, will leave him no place to rest, will force him to fight or to retreat continuously before him."[9] Such attacks were to be carried out by infantry columns that would systematically lunge toward select points of the enemy line. These columns would then be able to charge, or form a firing line as needed, faster than the enemy's speed of redeployment.[10] In between the columns, Guibert placed skirmishers to harass and disrupt the enemy's defensive firepower.[11] Thus, for France, Guibert can be described as a link between the early 18th century and later revolutionary warfare.

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[6] Quimby, *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare*, 97.

[7] Quimby, *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare*, 106.

[8] Jacques Antoine Hippolyte de Guibert, *Essai général de tactique* (Plomteux Clément, 1775), 178.

[9] Guibert, *Essai général de tactique*, 179-180.

[10] Guibert, *Essai général de tactique*, 43-44.

[11] Quimby, *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare*, 126.

A similar history of staggered reform can be found in the Russian Imperial Army of the late 18th century. In St. Petersburg's case, those western tactics of the early 18th century were directly imported into an increasingly Westernizing state. Pyotr Aleksandrovich Rumyantsev-Zadunaisky (1725-1796) was the architect of many of Russia's campaigns during the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-1796). Mentioning Rumyantsev is crucial as his figure casts a shadow over much of late 18th-century Russian military thought. After receiving praise for being a "hero of all time," Suvorov retorted, "Tell them Suvorov is the pupil of Rumyantsev!"[12] This is because he knew that he could not have developed his insights alone. Rumyantsev traces much of his influence on tactical thought to his training during the "Germanizing" period of Empress Anna (1730-1740), and his experience facing Prussian infantry during the Seven Years War.[13] He also once served with the Prussian army and often spoke well of Frederick the Great, with whom he developed a cordial relationship.[14] Thus, in many ways, the age of Catherine the Great represented a Russian army still clinging to pre-revolutionary Western European influences.

Despite this, through Rumyantsev, we can trace the beginnings of alterations to the old order that Suvorov could have later profited from. In preparing for a campaign against the Ottomans in 1773, Rumyantsev wrote to Catherine II that unprecedented authority should be delegated to frontline officers to form their own initiative.[15] His statements regarding officer independence have at times been described as proto-Clausewitzian.[16] The

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[12] Christopher Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West* (Routledge, 2016), 173.

[13] Eugene Miakinkov, "A Russian Way of War? Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800*"* (PhD diss, University of Waterloo, 2009), 64.

[14] Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 168.

[15] Miakinkov, "Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800,*"* 56-57.

[16] Miakinkov, "Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800,*"* 57; Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 169.

increasingly centralized Russian absolutist court rejected the Rumyantsev proposal due to court officials and bureaucrats fearing a loss of their authority over the army.[17] Rumyantsev expanded the use of the infantry square or *kare* as a viable alternative to a firing line. In this formation, infantry units covered each other's backs, protected by artillery at each vertex of the square.[18] Even while heavily outnumbered, these squares saw major success against the Ottomans, such as at Kagul in 1770.[19] It is worth noting, however, that such an adaptation was born out of his rejection of thin linear European "cordons" in their specific application against Turkish cavalry, showing how the *kare*, rather than being revolutionary, was only made to remedy tactical challenges in conflicts with the Sublime Porte.[20] Despite this, the *kare* and analysis of its applications remained an aspect of later Suvorov's military thinking. The question also arises if Napoleon's more notorious adoption of infantry squares against the cavalry-dominated Mamluk army in Egypt was a direct inspiration from Rumyantsev's Turkish campaigns.

Not content with just the *kare*, Rumyantsev also advocated another novel infantry formation. Rumyantsev borrowed from a growing European fascination with light troops to introduce to Russia arguments in favor of dedicated light infantry battalions.[21] Rumyantsev's will to experiment with

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[17] Miakinkov, "Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800," 57.

[18] Miakinkov, "Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800," 58.

[19] John W Steinberg. *The Military History of the Russian Empire from Peter the Great until Nicholas II* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024), 86. It is worth noting that even among Russians, Rumyantsev was not the first to develop the modern infantry square. For instance, the Russians adopted defensive squares at the 1758 Battle of Zorndorf (see pg. 69 in the same source). What made Rumyantsev unique was that his infantry was drilled to more quickly march in columns and form squares. This meant the Russian squares could operate more offensively than at Zorndorf where they were a passive anti-flanking reserve of the army.

[20] Miakinkov, "Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800," 64.

[21] Miakinkov, "Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800," 51.

new infantry formations set the stage for his protégé to develop further alternative infantry models. Thus, through Rumyantsev, we see two forms of tactical thought. Rumyantsev continued the imported early 18th-century models with a new appreciation for Prussian drill. Yet, he also set the then-nascent seeds for an alternative model, especially regarding infantry formations, that an astute commander like Suvorov grew into a full-fledged doctrine. Thus, when tracing the parallel development of the doctrinal revolutions in Russia and France, Rumyantsev is a link to Suvorov, not unlike Guibert to Napoleon.

The relative peace central Europe experienced between 1763 and 1792, only briefly interrupted in 1778, came to a dramatic end with the French Revolution. Revolutionary France found itself at war with most of the continent, and the theories that Guibert and others had drawn up were put into practice. The successful synthesis of this new offensive form of warfare was in large part thanks to the experience the officer corps gained through the War of the First Coalition. Beginning in 1793, the French war ministry under Dubois Crancé (1757-1814) merged units to improve cohesion between political factions of the army.[22] While the reform took years to complete, it led to increased professionalism among the new and inexperienced ranks of the National Guard. Beginning in 1794, Crancé's aide Lazare Carnot (1753-1823) undertook comprehensive reforms that streamlined French staff work and improved logistics.[23] With both newfound professionalism and the backing of Carnot's revolutionary bureaucracy, officers had the practical tools needed to put the operationally and logistically taxing form of aggression Guibert called for into practice.

Aside from increased professionalism, the revolutionary system incentivized officers to embrace this new offensive doctrine, especially during the Robespierre era. The *levee en masse* drastically increased French

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[22] Frederick C. Schneid, *European Armies of the French Revolution, 1789-1802* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2015), 21-22.

[23] Schneid, *European Armies of the French Revolution, 1789-1802*, 23-24.

manpower at the cost of soldier experience.[24] These recruits were often incorporated into light units, allowing for a substantial increase in the skirmishers that Guibert's tactics called for.[25] Via political repression, the Robespierre regime also fostered a cult of the offensive. In 1793, French general Louis-Charles de Flaurs defeated a numerically superior Spanish army on the Pyrenees front at Perpignan. Despite this, the regime later sentenced him to death as his victory came from standing in line, and it was believed that he should have achieved victory by pursuing a more offensive strategy in pursuit of the enemy.[26] The fallout from this political legacy on the newly developing generation of revolutionary officers is evident in combat. A study on various engagements between French and British forces between 1792 and 1815 found that 78% of a total of 226 French advances on British line infantry culminated in a column assault.[27]

The road to military reform in Russia met with far more political backlash before Suvorov applied it. The reign of Emperor Paul I (1796-1801) saw a major political push for continued adherence to the imported Prussian school of war. Paul I patronized the completion of two manuals for infantry drill and warfare in 1796 and 1798 that borrowed heavily from Prussia, including even the uniforms.[28] Suvorov opposed such influence, but Paul's further Prussianization seemed assured when the Tsar exiled Suvorov to the countryside for not embracing the new drill.[29] With the backing of the absolute authority of the Tsar, more years of Prussianization appeared

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[24] Quimby, *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare*, 321.

[25] Quimby, *The Background of Napoleonic Warfare*, 330.

[26] Paddy Griffith, *French Napoleonic Infantry Tactics 1792-1815* (Osprey Publishing, 2002), 17.

[27] Griffith, *French Napoleonic Infantry Tactics 1792-1815*, 24.

[28] Christopher Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps* (Helion and Company, 1999), 28.

[29] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 17-18.

forthcoming. Thankfully for Suvorov, events in Western Europe would end this retirement and see the general put his revolutionary theories into practice.

In 1798, Austrian preparations for a renewed war with Paris prompted the creation of a second coalition to combat French expansionism. Weary of growing French power in the Mediterranean, Paul I opted to join the coalition.[30] Suvorov and his then-published military treatises, which included methods to fight France, may have made the general seem indispensable to Paul I despite political differences. The Tsar repeatedly attempted to prod Suvorov into taking command in the upcoming war and sent inquiries to the general on how to wage war against France.[31] In February of 1799, a combination of Austrian wishes for the esteemed general to help lead them and a personal desire to see Revolutionary France's political ideology contained, prompted Suvorov to action.[32] Suvorov was sent to aid the Habsburgs in ejecting the French and their satellites from Italy. Suvorov's Italian campaign of 1799 is of special analytical interest as it mirrors Napoleon's success two years earlier in terms of speed and decisiveness. After defeating and driving the French into Liguria, Suvorov undertook his final campaign in Switzerland to aid coalition forces on the Alpine front. While unable to reach allied forces, Suvorov's campaign was brilliant because it blindsided the French command. When faced with French forces and their revolutionary form of warfare, Suvorov responded in kind by outdoing the French at their own game.

The campaign followed Suvorov's reorganization of the Russian army along the lines of his military manual, *Art of Victory* (sometimes translated as *Science of Victory*). Suvorov held three fundamental military principles: *glazomer*, *bystrota*, and *natisk*. These referred to having an eye

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[30] John Kuehn, *Napoleonic Warfare: the operational art of the great campaigns* (Bloomsbury, 2015), 42.

[31] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 18.

[32] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 18.

for a situation, achieving speed, and maintaining momentum.[33] This flexibility easily resembles the tactical advantages Revolutionary France held in the 1790s, namely, tactical freedom delegated down to the battalion level and unfixed supply lines for rapid advances.[34] Facing such a flexible opponent, Suvorov allowed every corporal to detach four marksmen for flexible operations, perhaps to match their opponents' acumen for such tactics.[35] Finally, the rank and file were also not exempt from Suvorov's insistence on flexibility. Suvorov often posed convoluted questions to his soldiers, such as "How many fish are there in the Danube?" He chastised those who failed to attempt a response at least, labelling them *nemonuznaika* or "don't knower."[36] Suvorov's intense hatred for such individuals reveals his thoughts on inaction and methodology. He expected quick reflexes and action, and reserved anger for those who could only follow carefully planned methodology.

Beyond the scope of flexibility, Suvorov's cult of the offensive also resembles its contemporary revolutionary models by improving his army's morale. As outlined in the *Art of Victory,* a basic infantry advance was to be one of continuous forward march. Infantry attacks could take place in line, columns or squares, as needed. Lines and columns marched while firing sparingly by platoon until close enough to form ranks for a bayonet charge.[37] Squares were to forgo firing at range and simply brace for the bayonet charge.[38] Every soldier was to believe retreat was never on the table, with

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[33] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 17.

[34] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 10.

[35] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 29.

[36] Miakinkov, "Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800*"*, 78-79.

[37] Aleksandr Suvorov, *Nauka Pobyezhdat'* (1809), 4-5.

[38] Suvorov, *Nauka Pobyezhdat'*, 5.

only top-level commanders permitted to contemplate it.[39] Even then, Suvorov wrote that commanders should avoid it because he believed it is easier to beat an enemy one can face and see.[40] Suvorov would rather die fighting in repeated offensives than give ground, something demonstrated in his Swiss campaign. While Suvorov by no means held positive views of Revolutionary France as a state, he seemed to emphasize adopting a similar level of *élan* in attacks, with officers tasked to yell "*ura*" with careful timing.[41] Some French noted the stubborn devotion of the Russian soldiers and described how they prayed even in death.[42] Beyond the obvious indication of morale, this highlights one of the main points previously noted. This is because post-Catherine Russia and Revolutionary France, two societies with opposing cultural values, developed the revolutionary model of war by independent means. For Suvorov, who knew well the strengths of the French, finding an independent and uniquely Russian form of achieving this model was useful when adopting techniques that Revolutionary France encouraged was not possible. As a Russian imperial soldier, Suvorov may have abhorred Parisian ideas of revolutionary violence to defend *la patrie*, but, through religious zealotry, he hoped to mimic its morale benefit that enabled bold offensive tactics.

As noted, since the Russian Imperial Army would be precluded from inspiring courage by appealing to revolutionary causes, Suvorov sought to instill such an *élan* by other means. Yet, the general seemed to believe that morale matters not only for the foot soldier but for officers as well. The piety of the Russian soldiers who prayed in death had to be brought to the officer corps as well. At the time, over one-third of the Russian officer corps was of

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[39] Suvorov, *Nauka Pobyezhdat'*, 7.

[40] Suvorov, *Nauka Pobyezhdat'*, 7.

[41] Suvorov, *Nauka Pobyezhdat'*, 2.

[42] Laurence Spring, *Russian Grenadiers and Infantry 1799–1815* (Osprey, 2002), 50.

German origin.[43] These German officers seemed to revel in their positions by shedding what they believed to be their "Teutonic" characteristics for the noble Christian spirit they saw in Russians.[44] If not for Christianity, there were other means of instilling such a defiant spirit. During the reign of Catherine the Great, officers who achieved special or daring actions were granted large agricultural estates and peasants to work with them.[45] From this, it can be theorized that within the late 18th-century Russian army, a culture developed where young and glory-hungry officers had additional incentives for risk-taking and boldness.

The final way Suvorov tended to appeal to officers was through their emotional instincts. When marching into Italy, Suvorov wore an Austrian uniform to instill loyalty among his allied regiments.[46] Later, at the Trebbia, he threatened to commit suicide over suggestions of a premature retreat.[47] Suvorov's most famous and, as viewed by the general staff, most inspiring emotional outburst came in late 1799 when he learned of the difficult situation he faced in the Swiss Alps. First by rumor from retreating priests, then by his spies overhearing the celebrations of the French, Suvorov learned that the Russian army to his North under General Korsakov was crushed by French general Masséna at Zurich.[48] This meant that Suvorov's army was isolated from reinforcements in unforgiving terrain while a well-positioned and vastly superior enemy force threatened its existence. Many contemporary armies may have surrendered in such a position, most famously shown by the Austrian surrender at Ulm in 1805. Yet, Suvorov

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[43] Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 146.

[44] Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 147.

[45] Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 152.

[46] Kuehn, *Napoleonic Warfare*, 53.

[47] Kuehn, *Napoleonic Warfare*, 57.

[48] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 210.

turned the hopeless situation into one where he got his officers to defy expectations while appealing to zealotry and honor. When he learned that Korsakov was routed, he dramatically exclaimed:

What can we do now? To go back is disgraceful; I have never retreated. To advance to Schwyz is impossible - Masséna has over 60,000 men, and our troops scarcely amount to 20,000 men. We are devoid of provisions, ammunition and artillery . . . We can turn to nobody for help. We are on the verge of disaster! All that remains for us is to rely on Almighty God and the bravery and self-sacrifice of my troops! We are Russians! God is with us![49]

Perhaps Suvorov's most famous quip is "The bullet is a fool, the bayonet a fine fellow."[50] Other generals, such as the French Marshal De Saxe, preceded Suvorov when it came to a fascination with bayonets.[51] However, Suvorov sought to utilize the unflinching discipline of Russia's infantry to take bayonet practices to new heights. Suvorov lambasted firing methods that he believed were wasteful. These included firing at a retreating enemy, firing while withdrawing, and firing en masse before an infantryman could see and target an individual enemy.[52] As mentioned previously, Suvorov's love of the bayonet is perhaps one of his defining characteristics, which future romantics would use to cement the general as an architect of a uniquely Russian school of war. However, since Suvorov was a flexible commander, his deviations from strict revolutionary tactics were often inspired by necessity or opportunity. For instance, Russian gunpowder was

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[49] Alexander Mikaberidze, "The Lion of the Russian Army: Life and Military Career of Prince Peter Bagration 1765-1812" (PhD diss, Florida State University, 2003), 153-154.

[50] Suvorov, *Nauka Pobyezhdat'*, 8.

[51] Miakinkov, "A Russian Way of War? Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800," 90.

[52] Suvorov, *Nauka Pobyezhdat'*, 6-7.

of poor quality and the muskets were inferior to French models.[53] We may also assume that the complications of a Russian army operating halfway across Europe and being reliant on allied supplies raised logistical insecurities and promoted the bayonet. For instance, by the time Suvorov's army neared the end of the Swiss campaign, encirclement and constant campaigning had virtually drained Russian ammunition stocks. To parry a potentially fatal French attempt to block his army, Suvorov sent his advanced guard under Prince Bagration through the village of Sool to strike the French flank at Schwanden.[54] Bagratian launched four costly bayonet charges to pin the French advance before slowly fighting his way back to the main army[55] The army's experience with bayonets served the Russians well as they briefly claimed the operational initiative against a superior advancing force that was forced to react defensively rather than pursue the shattered remnants of Suvorov's main force.

Despite Rumyantsev's appeals, skirmishing tactics within the army were still in their infancy.[56] The first Russian manual on skirmishing of the type Guibert had already furnished to France, only appeared after the Napoleonic Wars in 1818.[57] By contrast, French skirmishers were feared professionals with an elite level of initiative demonstrated by the fact that, despite being light infantry, they could still close into melee at a moment's notice, if required.[58] Thus, for Suvorov, getting into a melee would serve to dilute the disadvantages Russian troops may face in a firefight. It also robs the French of the ability to charge first, effectively hijacking the

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[53] Spring, *Russian Grenadiers and Infantry 1799–1815*, 51.

[54] Mikaberidze, "Life and Military Career of Prince Peter Bagration 1765-1812," 167-168.

[55] Mikaberidze, "Life and Military Career of Prince Peter Bagration 1765-1812," 168-170.

[56] Kuehn, *Napoleonic Warfare*, 44.

[57] Spring, *Russian Grenadiers and Infantry 1799–1815*, 47.

[58] Griffith, *French Napoleonic Infantry Tactics 1792-1815*, 20.

revolutionary model's dependence on always being the attacker to force the enemy to react.

Undoubtedly, one of the most unique aspects of the Russian Army during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars was its large corps of irregular Cossack cavalry. In Italy and Switzerland, Suvorov commanded a rather exceptional army whose cavalry consisted entirely of Cossacks.[59] Thus, if attempting to link Suvorov to the revolutionary school of war, one has to explain how he adapted a cavalry force so seemingly foreign to fit such a model. Firstly, it must be established that far from the image of an exotic savage looter, Cossacks could conduct many of the same actions as western cavalry. As shown later in the Napoleonic Wars at Eylau and Borodino, Cossacks were perfectly capable of executing charges on French heavy cavalry.[60] They could also conduct daring and direct rearguard actions, such as in Suvorov's Swiss campaign, where, during the final retreat into the Panix Pass, they protected Bagration's rear from French foragers.[61] Thus, the irregularity of the Cossacks should not be seen as a major impediment that Suvorov had to overcome to match revolutionary tactics. Instead, it may be more prudent to consider the opportunities they presented to a skillful general seeking such a model.

As discussed earlier, the principles of *blazomer*, *bystrota*, and *natisk* were Suvorov's version of the revolutionary model, and the Cossacks represented it. Cossack horsemen rode small and swift horses compared to their counterparts.[62] One obvious benefit of having faster horsemen is the additional potential in reconnaissance. Suvorov divided his Cossacks in Italy into an organized system of four to five scouting detachments under Adrian

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[59] Laurence Spring, *The Cossacks 1799–1815* (Osprey, 2003), 42.

[60] Spring, *The Cossacks 1799–1815*, 45.

[61] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 249.

[62] Spring, *The Cossacks 1799–1815*, 42.

Denisov.[63] Suvorov famously said that these Cossacks were the "eyes and ears of my army."[64] In regards to other non-combat roles, Cossacks were extremely reputable dispatch carriers who could transmit friendly dispatches and capture enemy messengers with speed and devotion.[65] Both of these traits were undoubtedly aided by the speed of their light horses. While reconnaissance and communication are vital for any army, it becomes more so if following the relentlessly aggressive and flexible tactics of revolutionary and Suvorovian warfare. This is because an army that always aims to be on the march will need to find ways to receive intelligence more rapidly, so it knows what to achieve. By contrast, an army that takes more operational pauses would not face such a challenge.

Finally, the combat roles the Cossacks excelled at can be viewed in the context of the initiative Suvorovian warfare sought. Cossack cavalrymen were trained to ride in a curving and then swerving motion, unlike their more linearly riding western counterparts.[66] Already, that implies a degree of unpredictability compared to their horse-mounted foes. If caught unprepared, enemies may have to pause and adjust to the Cossack movements, thus passing the initiative to the Russians. This unpredictability may have also aided in one of their most infamous skills, the ability to threaten enemy command structures. The speed and unpredictability of Cossack horsemen made high-ranking officers vulnerable to capture, a fate which Napoleon himself twice narrowly avoided.[67] In this, one only has to be reminded of the many times when a loss of senior leadership has doomed the cohesion and impetus of an army in history. While we cannot be certain of its potency, fear of capture could have incentivized the enemy command

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[63] Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 217.

[64] Spring, *The Cossacks 1799–1815*, 41.

[65] Spring, *The Cossacks 1799–1815*, 41.

[66] Spring, *The Cossacks 1799–1815*, 29.

[67] Spring, *The Cossacks 1799–1815*, 50.

staff to withdraw to safer locations. In that case, the enemy's command structure would suffer, allowing the Russian command to operate more efficiently, and hijacking the revolutionary model's reliance on offensive flexibility. Finally, Cossacks, through their traditional lifestyle, also trained for dismounted warfare, as shown when they fended off the French assaults on Suvorov's rear at the Muetenttal in Switzerland.[68] The ability to operate both mounted and dismounted ensured that Suvorov's offensives remained effective in any terrain. Switzerland offers a perfect example, as the Cossacks could operate in Alpine terrain normally hostile to cavalry by engaging in dismounted warfare for which they were equally trained.

While Suvorov had his views on how to fight the French, the War of the Second Coalition was a geopolitical struggle where Suvorov was but one element. This meant Suvorov's vision had to compete with other visions, most notably the Habsburg bureaucracy. Suvorov's relations with those institutions reveal a rift in his perception of European armies during a period that favors his belonging to the revolutionary school. Prior to his campaign in Italy, Suvorov wrote to Emperor Paul that a campaign in the region should emphasize flexibility and avoid prolonged siege warfare if possible.[69] Aside from following his belief in sustaining operational momentum, it's possible this letter was inspired by Napoleon's previous campaign, which was briefly stalled by the fortress city of Mantua. However, Suvorov's allies seemed to take the opposite lesson from Napoleon's Italian campaign of 1796-1797.

The Austrian army of 1799, which Suvorov was tasked to fight with, did not delegate operations to any command headquarters but, instead, made

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[68] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 227. Andrey Rosenberg (1739-1813) who commanded the Russian rear dismounted his Cossacks and had them operate as light infantry. On the first day of the Battle of the Muetental, the Cossacks were deployed in a multi-layered screen ahead of his main force. As the French pursuers fought their way through this improvised defense in depth, Rosenberg's reserves charged their exhausted enemy. As this counterattack pinned the French, the Cossacks circled the rough slopes of the valley to harass the enemy flank. The subsequent enemy retreat ended all French pursuit efforts on that day.

[69] Duffy, *Russia's Military Way to the West*, 216.

such decisions through a central bureaucracy in Vienna known as the *Hofkriegsrat*. After defeating Marshal Macdonald at the Trebbia River, Vienna issued orders against Suvorov's planned vigorous pursuit of the French. The *Hofkriegsrat* instead wished to besiege local fortresses to reassert Austrian power in Northern Italy. In response, Suvorov wrote to Austria's Emperor Francis I and complained about being unable to maintain the initiative by striking the French at Genoa, for which the emperor reprimanded him.[70] Thus, allied operational planning in the Second Coalition War revealed a clash between Suvorov's impulsive revolutionary doctrine and a more traditional and meticulous *Hofkriegsrat*. It also demonstrates that not all military institutions in Europe had yet become adherents of this new model.

While unashamedly critical of those who opposed his theories, even to the point of upsetting Europe's predominant monarchs, Suvorov could not help but to notice the advances made by the French in the art of war. Among France's enemies in the 1790s, only Suvorov attempted to bring a level of soldierly morale that could match the revolutionary model.[71] Even before 1799, Suvorov noted that if faced against the French infantry columns, "we ought to beat them as columns."[72] Even as early as 1796, when Napoleon's career as a general was in its infancy, Suvorov noted the scale of his talent. Suvorov delighted in how Bonaparte "carried the council of war in his head" while "his enemies will continue in their old routine subject to the scribblers in the cabinet."[73] He even remarked that Napoleon "has stolen my secret, the speed of my marches!"[74] The last quote is particularly prescient because it does more than show that Suvorov favored the revolutionary model. In it,

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[70] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 113-114.

[71] Miakinkov, "Westernization of Russian Military Thought, 1757-1800," 97.

[72] Suvorov, *Art of Victory*, 10.

[73] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 269.

[74] Duffy, *Eagles over the Alps*, 269.

Suvorov claims the mantle of the creator concerning revolutionary forced marches, a mantle that, according to Suvorov, Napoleon was wearing now, only to match his skill. In other words, Suvorov is not a Westernizer here, in the sense of being impressed by the revolutionary model but rather, he was impressed with the level to which the French had adhered to his theorems, whether deliberately or not. To Suvorov, if anything, the French were Suvorovians, which was more reason to regard them as superior to their contemporaries.

Despite their achievements, Suvorovian tactics were not wholly born out of a vacuum of one man's unrivalled mind. Whether by inspiration or by reaching similar conclusions about warfare, Suvorov's tactics tended to resemble the emerging schools of thought present in Revolutionary France. Just as with the French, Suvorovian warfare was focused on speed and a constant state of offensive. By seizing both operational and tactical momentum, Suvorov sought to gain the initiative over his enemies and thus exploit circumstances to gain rapid victories. Such a comparison also explains Suvorov's general success as traditional 18th-century dynastic armies struggled against the French throughout the 1790s. Suvorov was able to identify the shortcomings of traditional military models in his sharp critiques of Paul I's Prussianization reforms and the Austrians' *Hofkriegsrat* establishment. This may demonstrate why Suvorov's campaign in Italy and Switzerland was one of the most successful anti-French campaigns in the years between 1792 and 1812, otherwise marked by frequent coalition defeats. Regarding the notion of later romantics that Suvorov represented a uniquely Russian school of war, it must be acknowledged that the general did indeed possess certain unique eccentricities, such as his love of the bayonet and his hatred of any who he thought a *nemonuznaika* or "don't knower." Despite this, the unique characteristics of both Suvorov and the Russian army cannot be viewed as wholly separate. Instead, these unique characteristics were molded to more effectively resemble the revolutionary school of warfare when direct adaptation was impossible. Revolutionary France and Imperial Russia were such different states, with distinct social and economic structures, as well as military traditions. Given this, it is reasonable that a skilled general would make these alterations. These

differences, rather than being remarkable for their variety, should be seen as remarkable for their similar result. Lastly, it must be assessed how, beyond France's borders, grand all-encompassing conditions for such doctrinal changes existed to create multiple innovators.

Empire, Espionage, and the Edwardian Era: How Culture Shaped British Intelligence Gathering in the Middle East through WWI

By Elizabeth Pfisterer, The United States Military Academy

Culture is both a human construct and a learned behavior; it is a form of communication, creation, and conflict. As defined by Priya Satia, culture is a *mentalité* that conditions individuals to think and act in certain ways.[1] It is manifested both internally and externally via beliefs, attitudes, social systems, and economic patterns. The cultural forms that swept through Britain during the Edwardian era, from the turn of the twentieth century to the end of World War I (WWI), influenced the way Britons viewed the world. Intimately connected to imperial power, Edwardian culture heralded spiritual, economic, and social change, particularly for the aristocratic class. Seeking spiritual enlightenment and escape from their rigid cultural duties, Edwardian elites traveled to exotic peripheries of the empire, particularly the Middle East. There, they conducted both military and personal—state and individually motivated—intelligence operations during WWI. Edwardian culture thus shaped British espionage efforts in the Middle East through new perceptions of Orientalism, rigid social structures, and shifting economic consumption patterns which particularly concerned oil.

The existing historiography of the covert empire in the Middle East has largely fixated on the contributions of T. E. Lawrence. Broader scholarship concerning the British empire in the Middle East often analyzes the interwar period and Britain's final attempts for power amidst a declining empire.[2] Recent scholarship concentrates primarily on the British imperial connection to the raging Palestinian Israeli conflict. Priya Satia's research

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[1] Priya Satia, *Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 12.

[2] Calder Walton, *Empire of Secrets: British Intelligence, the Cold War and the Twilight of Empire* (William Collins, 2014), 1.

furthered the subject of British espionage and covert empire extensively. She argued that Edwardian cultural perceptions and stigmas, especially Orientalist outlooks as defined by Edward Said, most directly influenced the behavior of British spies in the Middle East. This project will look at culture holistically to explain British spy activities in the Middle East. Expounding upon Satia's cultural perceptions, this project will also examine Edwardian social status, gender roles, and economic shifts as influential factors of British espionage in the Middle East.

The Edwardian era, which spanned from around 1901 to the end of WWI, represented a period of marked contrasts. Strict social classes stratified Edwardian society, clearly dividing the aristocracy from the burgeoning middle class and the poor working class. Rigid gender roles emphasized public life, leadership, and imperial duty for men, but they largely confined women to the domestic sphere. At the same time, the suffragette movement gained global renown, and more women entered the workforce. Empire was at the center of Edwardian culture—the vast British empire fueled nationalistic pride, which permeated education, clubs, and media.[3] Newly-signed protective alliances, along with the emergence of pro-empire organizations, reinvigorated imperial sentiment. Yet, this pride masked anxieties about Britain's fading role as an imperial superpower. Amid rising movements for self-determination, Britons increasingly feared the decline of the empire. The shadow of WWI amplified these tensions, as the war revealed the fragility of the imperial structure and prompted questions about equal status for colonial soldiers. Economically, the drive for modernization wrought by the war enabled more people to access wealth, education, and leisure. Yet, the war created a heavy reliance upon natural resources and exposed the vulnerability of traditional industries. Despite the opulence and traditions of the Edwardian era, such social, economic, and political shifts began to unsettle the very foundation of British society.

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[3] Sarah Mills, "Scouting for Girls? Gender and the Scout Movement in Britain," *Gender, Place & Culture* 18, no. 4 (July 29, 2011): 538, accessed November 2024, https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369x.2011.583342.

It was precisely at this cultural moment that Edwardian spies conducted intricate intelligence operations in the Middle East. Since the mid-1800s, British imperial interests necessitated an understanding of the region they called "Arabia." Spanning a "vaguely defined desert domain of Bedouin," Arabia was an Ottoman possession that largely consisted of modern-day Jordan, Syria, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq. [4] British intelligence operations served to undermine Ottoman influence, understand desert topography and tribal customs, establish railroad and overland trade routes to India, and extract plentiful natural resources. Unlike espionage conducted in Europe, where secret intelligence agencies coordinated operations, espionage in the Middle East was controlled by the Foreign Office and the agents themselves.[5] As such, Edwardian agents—hailing from wealthy military, diplomatic, and scholarly backgrounds—exerted tremendous control on their operations.

The most legendary intelligence agents of the era were T. E. Lawrence and Gertrude Bell. T. E. Lawrence was a British elite who earned the nickname "Lawrence of Arabia" for his many expeditions. Lawrence gained worldwide renowned for his participation in the Arab Revolt, where he leveraged his deep knowledge of Arabic language and culture to conduct guerrilla warfare against the Ottoman empire and provide critical intelligence to British forces.[6] Considered the "Desert Queen," Gertrude Bell was another British aristocrat who traveled extensively through Arabia to map uncharted territories, document archaeological sites, and forge connections with local tribes.[7] Lawrence and Bell, like other Edwardian agents in Arabia, sought knowledge, escape, and spiritual redemption through intelligence operations. Wider cultural shifts motivated Edwardian

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[4] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 13.

[5] Walton, *Empire of Secrets*, 1.

[6] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*,149.

[7] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 190.

agents towards these goals while also influencing how agents conduct their operations.

Steeped in ideas of empire, Edwardian culture reinforced a racialized hierarchy that held British citizens as superior to colonized people, including Arabs. Newfound interest in the Middle East gave rise to the Edwardian cultural phenomenon of Orientalism—the perception that Arabia was a mystical land holding universal secrets and whose mysteriously simple inhabitants were exploitable.[8] The Edwardian attitude of Orientalism motivated British agents to collect intelligence in the Middle East. It also provided racial justification for deceitful intelligence gathering methods and future systems of British governance. Edwardian agents applied Orientalism in two lenses: towards the Arabian landscape and towards the Arabian people.

As applied to the landscape, Orientalism inspired Edwardian agents to collect intelligence in Arabia as a means of accessing spiritual knowledge. Known as the "land of Holy Writ," Arabia was the cradle of Abrahamic religions, encompassing sacred cities such as Jerusalem, Mecca, and Nazareth. For Edwardian agents, ancient religious connections transformed the region into a "living museum" of the Bible, where narratives of religious history seemed to come alive in the physical and cultural landscape.[9] This Orientalist association between the land and divine knowledge motivated agents to approach their intelligence work with an almost sacred reverence. To them, Arabia was not just a geopolitical space but a realm of divine mystery that needed to be understood. T. E. Lawrence, for instance, titled his first book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* as a reference to the Book of Proverbs. Lawrence saw a Biblical parallel for the profound "pillars" of spiritual wisdom he perceived— and hoped to unearth through intelligence operations— in Arabia's landscape.

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[8] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Penguin, 1978), 7.

[9] Cherie J. Lenzen, "The Desert and the Sown: An Introduction to the Archaeological and Historiographic Challenge," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 16 (2003): 6, accessed November 2024, https://doi.org/10.2307/24668021.

Moreover, the empty desert, which was almost entirely devoid of life and color, represented a humble landscape to Edwardian agents— a "somber background" that severely juxtaposed the hustle and vibrancy of Britain.[10] Unlike the prideful, materialistic landscape of Britain, the Arabian desert did not favor wealth; it favored only survival, epitomizing a sense of God-ordained simplicity. Through this Orientalist view, the desert enabled a deeper connection to divine truths: "All the little accessories with which we have learnt to shield ourselves fall away, and you are just there [closer to God]."[11] Arabia thus became a "manifestation of divine cosmic order" for Edwardian agents.[12] To them, Arabia held deep secrets of religion and civilization that needed to be uncovered.

Orientalist perceptions of the land caused Edwardian agents to view Arabia as mystical and detached from empirical reasoning. The desert's vast, empty spaces seemed to defy the logical frameworks of measurement, classification, and material progress that dominated Western thought at the time. Instead, agents viewed Arabia as a realm where the intangible held sway—a space beyond the reach of modernity, where universal truths could be accessed through spiritual insight rather than empirical analysis: "occultism and the desert . . . stemmed from the emergent awareness of a hidden reality beyond ordinary sensory perception."[13] Such thinking influenced Edwardian agents to collect intelligence for spiritual fulfillment rather than empirical analysis.

The austere beauty and Biblical associations of the desert, combined with its vast emptiness, motivated agents to fully immerse themselves in its

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[10] Gertrude Bell, *Persian Pictures: From the Mountains to the Sea* (Anthem Press, 1894), 1.

[11] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 92.

[12] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 93.

[13] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 134.

mysteries.[14] They soon began to dress in local garb and spend long periods of time in the desert, hoping to gain an ancient sense of spiritual fulfillment.[15] They also engaged with local tribes, documented Bedouin customs, and mapped local terrain as pathways to uncovering divine truths believed to be inscribed in the landscape.[16] Edwardian agents believed that understanding the natural rhythms of the desert—its hidden water sources, winding trade routes, and nomadic tribes—offered a deeper connection to God and universal enlightenment. Orientalist perceptions infused their work with a sense of purpose, blending the pragmatic aims of intelligence gathering with an almost sacred quest to decode the spiritual essence of Arabia.

These agents also viewed Arab people through an Orientalist lens, causing them to employ unscrupulous intelligence gathering techniques. Viewing the local way of life as simple and uncultivated, agents dismissed Arabs as unfit to manage their own affairs without external guidance. Lawrence observed with condescension that the Arabs were "unhelped and untaught," claiming that they exerted control with "paper tools."[17] To these agents, Arabs were primitive and lacking civilized tools of governance; they were inherently exploitable. The British, on the other hand, were powerful and advanced, making them perfect exemplars of democratic government. Agents coined a new dichotomy to explain the paternalistic relationship between Britain and Arabia: the desert and the sown. The "desert" symbolized the nomadic, undeveloped life of the Arabs, while the "sown" represented the cultivated, orderly existence of European city-dwellers.[18] This distinction underscored the Orientalist view that Arabs were primitive

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[14] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 84.

[15] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 113.

[16] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 116.

[17] As quoted in Lenzen, "The Desert and the Sown," 6.

[18] Lenzen, "The Desert and the Sown," 5.

and disconnected from modern civilization, making them ideal targets for manipulation and intelligence collection.

To exploit perceived Arabian inferiority, Edwardian agents immersed themselves in Arab culture, adopting local customs to gain trust and conduct their operations. They dressed in traditional clothing, learned Arabic, and ate local food, believing that immersion would build public trust and give them the "knowledge of the Arabs" necessary for their missions.[19] Such mimicry amounted to "local cunning," as agents unscrupulously used the social structures of Arabian society to collect information and further British imperial objectives.[20] For example, fully-immersed agents often befriended and grew close to high-ranking tribal chiefs, allowing them to infiltrate important Arab offices and access sensitive information. Edwardian agents also created hysteria by spreading rumors, cryptograms, and prophecies. Lawrence and his fellow agent Stewart Francis Newcombes were particularly involved in these intricate deception operations.[21] To capture Aqaba from the Ottoman Turks in 1917, for instance, British agents weaponized the radio waves to spread false information: "Signalers would make hay with their wireless sets."[22] False information spread quickly through central information channels, distracting the public from the activities of Edwardian agents and enabling British officials to take control of chaotic Arabian towns.

The "dishonorable behavior" of Edwardian agents was justified by the belief that Arabs, being an uncultivated people, were incapable of self-rule and therefore required British intervention.[23] By framing the Arab people as inferior and exploitable, Edwardian agents felt entitled to use

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[19] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 5.

[20] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 139.

[21] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 147.

[22] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 147.

[23] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 140.

deceptive and unethical techniques—particularly in spreading mass hysteria with false information and rumors—in their intelligence operations. This Orientalist mindset not only determined the methods that agents employed but also reinforced the broader imperial narrative of Arab subjugation.

Guided by Orientalist assumptions, Edwardian intelligence operations eventually mapped onto new systems of governance in Arabia. As British espionage continued, Arabia became a devoted spy-space which provided Edwardian agents with "any amount of unscrupulous covert activity."[24] Eventually, covert operations provided Britain with plentiful information and allowed them to obtain local control. "Intelligence, through its pursuit of knowledge, begets power."[25] Britain could now impose structures of governance that aligned with its imperial ambitions. Orientalist hierarchies framed such forms of government in Arabia. The British viewed Arabs as uncultivated and racially inferior. However, Arabian monotheism, fair skin, and historical connection to trade made Arabs "better-class inhabitants" and placed them above Africans in the racial order.[26] This perception influenced British classifications of oversight in the region, as Arabian territories became Class A mandates through the League of Nations. Class A mandates—including Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine—were closer to self-rule and required less direct supervision than African B or C mandates, which were deemed in need of extensive "tutelage."[27] Racial

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[24] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 140.

[25] Michael S. Goodman, "Review of Spies in Arabia: The Great War and the Cultural Foundations of Britain's Covert Empire in the Middle East, by Priya Satia," *Middle East Journal* 63, no. 1 (2009): 156, accessed November 2024, https://doi.org/10.2307/25482619.

[26] Walter Townley, "Persia (Iran): Correspondence; Affairs of Persia and Central Asia, Parts 4-6; 1914-1916," 1914, accessed November 2024, https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C16532308.

[27] League of Nations, "The Covenant of the League of Nations" (United Nations, 1919), https://www.ungeneva.org/en/about/league-of-nations/covenant.

categorizations justified Britain's lighter imperial touch in Arabia while maintaining ultimate control over the region.

Despite the apparent elevation of Arabs, British actions often reinforced Arab subjugation. Agreements like the Sykes-Picot Agreement and the Balfour Declaration highlight the duplicity of British diplomacy. While British officials promised postwar sovereignty to Arab leaders like Emir Faisal, they simultaneously established a Jewish state to "secure pro-British settlement near Suez."[28] The British partitioned the region not for Arab independence but rather as a tool to secure alliances and postwar dominance. Routine British betrayals merely suited imperial interests and revealed the superficiality of British commitments. The British chose to elevate or dismiss Arabs as a matter of strategy, reflecting Britain's blend of Orientalism and covert operations to exploit the region.

The strict social structures of the Edwardian era also shaped intelligence operations in Arabia. Expensive travel costs, combined with the political connections required to be an agent, ensured that intelligence agents were almost exclusively wealthy aristocrats. Because movement between different social classes was severely limited during the Edwardian period, the British aristocracy became extremely well-connected. Such vast interconnectedness ensured that agents shared and worked through channels of like-minded mutual colleagues, allowing them to build on each other's work while keeping public awareness of their activities diffuse.[29] Many agents were not only spies but also prolific writers, archaeologists, and scholars. Some even shared familial connections. Their professional and personal relationships often overlapped, creating a tight-knit, elite community united by class and espionage. To further consolidate aristocratic influence in Arabian intelligence operations, Edwardian agents—including Lawrence and Bell, as well as the influential David Hogarth, Gerard

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[28] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 201.

[29] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 49.

Leachman, and William Henry Irvine Shakespear—became prominent members of the Royal Geographical Society.[30]

The shared aristocratic bonds created a close community of intelligence collectors and ensured that secret operations were known only by a handful of connected people. They also fostered trust and facilitated the seamless exchange of information from agent to agent. In this way, stratified Edwardian social structures determined who could collect intelligence in Arabia. This networked collaboration extended into the field, as agents often traveled together, passed on intelligence, and advised one another on strategic projects. For instance, the experienced agent Charles Doughty advised Lawrence on his first travels.[31] Likewise, Bell attended the 1902 Delhi Durbar and learned invaluable Arabian secrets from such agents as John Lorimer and Valentine Chirol.[32] Collaboration was vital in operations that required localized knowledge and coordination, enabling agents to infiltrate tribal networks, spread propaganda, and gather intelligence with remarkable efficiency.

At the same time, Edwardian agents' ties to academic and political circles back in Britain helped obscure the true nature of their work. The aristocracy ran the country; rarely could Britons of the lower class attain positions of power in the government. British agents permeated the intellectual and governmental elite, mixing "with the worlds of letters and politics at home."[33] High connections allowed Edwardian agents to obscure their true activities, as powerful politicians and cultural influencers controlled the narrative on Arabia. Intelligence activities thus remained diffuse and poorly understood by the broader public, allowing agents to continue their work without public awareness. Furthermore, the high

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[30] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 37.

[31] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 37.

[32] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 37.

[33] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 5.

standing of Edwardian agents granted them access to foreign diplomats, tribal leaders, and officials without raising suspicion, giving their intelligence operations an air of legitimacy. Familial and scholarly networks not only enhanced the agents' operational effectiveness but also reinforced their shared sense of purpose. The interconnectedness of the rigid Edwardian aristocracy allowed agents to more easily exchange ideas and coordinate strategies, ensuring that their work advanced British imperial objectives while remaining secret.

Strict Edwardian and Arabian gender roles allowed women spies to navigate intelligence networks inaccessible to their male counterparts. At a time when societal norms relegated women to domestic roles, few expected women to contribute to strategic efforts in the Middle East. British officials often celebrated the lack of women in Arabian operations: "There was nothing female in the Arab movement (Arab Revolt), but the camels!"[34] Women spies eventually took advantage of this underestimation, operating under the radar and gaining access to information unavailable to men.

Gertrude Bell, one of the few female spies of her time, leveraged both Edwardian and Arabian perceptions of fragility and unawareness to gain access to sensitive information. Bell's extensive diary entries reveal how her gender granted her access to spaces and conversations inaccessible to male agents. For instance, while traveling with Iraqis, she noted that men were often excluded from communal meals, yet her presence was accepted.[35] During these meals, Bell learned critical information about local trade and transportation networks, as well as German efforts to infiltrate and control these systems. This intelligence, gathered between 1913 and 1914, proved valuable as tensions escalated toward WWI; it revealed potential threats to British-controlled supply routes and transportation networks, both of which are crucial for waging war in a highly anticipated theater of conflict. Bell's

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[34] T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (Castle Hill Press, 1926), 304.

[35] Gertrude Bell to Charles Doughty-Wylie, "Diary Entry for April 14," April 14, 1914, accessed November 2024, https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/d/gb-2-13-2-4-14.

diary also highlights her interactions with male Arab leaders. One entry recounts her stay with an Arab sheikh who received her with "a kindness almost fatherly," allowing her to engage in candid discussions about Iraq, Turkey's future, and British interests in Baghdad.[36] The relaxed setting and her perceived fragility lowered the sheikh's defenses, granting Bell access to sensitive information that would have been difficult for male agents to acquire.

Bell skillfully used displays of femininity to lower local defenses and gain trust. In another diary entry, she mentions how Arab men pitched her tent and admired her for her delicate demeanor. She described herself as having the "feminine fault" of drinking little water and avoiding camel riding, behaviors that made her appear non-threatening.[37] With these deliberate portrayals, local hosts believed Bell to possess pure intentions and welcomed her into high-ranking discussions. Bell was also fluent in Arabic and interpreted for herself, further integrating into local communities. Bell's behavior encouraged her hosts to open, making them comfortable enough to share important information.

Bell's intelligence work was wide-ranging; she photographed towns, infrastructure, and trade routes and created detailed maps for military and political activities. These records often included specifics about distances, roads, and logistical challenges, providing a detailed picture of the region's strategic potential.[38] In combining her linguistic skills, cultural knowledge, and ability to navigate social spaces restricted to men, Bell proved indispensable to British intelligence efforts. Her success demonstrates how

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[36] Gertrude Bell to Charles Doughty-Wylie, "Diary Entry for April 22," April 22, 1914, accessed November 2024, https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/d/gb-2-15-4-9.

[37] Gertrude Bell to Charles Doughty-Wylie, "Diary Entry for April 20," April 20, 1914, accessed November 2024, https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/d/gb-2-15-4-8.

[38] Gertrude Bell to Charles Doughty-Wylie, "Diary Entry for April 24," April 24, 1914, accessed November 2024, https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/d/gb-2-15-4-10.

rigid Edwardian and Arabian gender roles, paradoxically, created opportunities for women to collect intelligence.

Larger Edwardian economic patterns similarly shaped intelligence operations in Arabia. The outbreak of war during the Edwardian era necessitated a new reliance on oil. Edwardian agents provided detailed descriptions of geography, transportation networks, and foreign interests in Arabia, securing natural resources for British imperial and wartime needs. Oil fed the British war machine, marking a critical transition in British military power. The Royal Navy modernized from coal to oil, and new military vehicles— tanks, trucks, and airplanes— also demanded a steady supply.[39] Moreover, oil was a necessary ingredient for emerging systems of public transportation, machinery, chemical production, and lubricants. It fueled Britain. In fact, oil created a new intersection of energy, mobility, and food systems that is still visible today, becoming a necessary strategic commodity.[40]

Britain, however, was not the only power to increasingly use oil; all of Europe, parts of Asia, and the U.S. began to follow suit. Oil now became a scarce and highly contested resource among imperial powers. Edwardian intelligence agents in Arabia actively monitored foreign competition, particularly from Germany and Austria to secure British control over this vital asset. Gertrude Bell's diary entries offer firsthand insight into the oil war. In one entry, she observed German and Austrian agents trading commodities for oil in Turkey. Bell lamented the lack of English trade in the region. She detailed how the Germans infiltrated Arabia and extracted oil because the English "could not bother" with the commodity trade in

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[39] Erik J. Dahl, "Naval Innovation: From Coal to Oil" (Defense Technical Information Center, 2000), accessed November 2024, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235048025_Naval_Innovation_From_Coal_to_Oil.

[40] Phil Johnstone and Caitriona McLeish, "World Wars and the Age of Oil: Exploring Directionality in Deep Energy Transitions," *Energy Research & Social Science* 69 (November 2020): 1, accessed November 2024, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2020.101732.

Turkey.[41] Additionally, Bell emphasized the strategic importance of Persian oil fields and railways, suggesting that the Foreign Office distribute colonial soldiers to protect these valuable assets.[42] The Foreign Office indeed acted upon Bell's intelligence and sent troops, often from India, to defend key oil installations, pipelines, and transportation routes in Arabia.

Bell continued to document Germany's attempts to dominate Arabian trade routes for oil. In another entry, she noted that the Germans were making a "determined attempt to conquer the trade on the Karun [River]" for an advantage in oil.[43] Such observations reveal the resource competition between imperial powers. To support British control, Edwardian agents meticulously mapped potential overland transportation routes, including railroads, which would facilitate the extraction and transportation of oil. In their diaries, maps, and photographs, agents documented construction sites and assessed the feasibility of these routes, providing intelligence on "commerce, geography, and politics" to meet British imperial needs.[44] Through detailed documentation and analysis, Edwardian agents played a crucial role in securing oil for the British empire. Their intelligence operations were designed to ensure that Britain could meet the growing energy demands of modern warfare and maintain its dominance in the region. Britain's increasing dependence on oil during the Edwardian era thus shaped the focus and methods of British intelligence in Arabia.

The culture of the Edwardian era determined the motivations—both personal and imperial—and methods of British espionage in Arabia. Through new perceptions of Orientalism, rigid social structures, and

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[41] Gertrude Bell to Charles Doughty-Wylie, "Diary Entry for April 2," April 2, 1914, accessed November 2024, https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/d/gb-2-13-2-4-2.

[42] Gertrude Bell to Charles Doughty-Wylie, "Diary Entry for April 2," April 2, 1914, accessed November 2024, https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/d/gb-2-13-2-4-2.

[43] Gertrude Bell to Charles Doughty-Wylie, "Diary Entry for April 14," April 14, 1914, accessed November 2024, https://gertrudebell.ncl.ac.uk/d/gb-2-13-2-4-14.

[44] Satia, *Spies in Arabia*, 25.

changing consumption patterns, Edwardian culture manifested itself in British intelligence activities in Arabia. The Edwardian attitude of Orientalism, with its mystique and racial hierarchy, justified and inspired British intelligence collection in the region. It also enabled agents to approach intelligence gathering not as an empirical quest but as a journey for spiritual and intellectual fulfillment. Rigid Edwardian and Arabian gender roles defined who participated in covert operations as well as how they were conducted. Economic shifts of the era, especially the pursuit of oil, reinforced the strategic importance of intelligence gathering in the Middle East. Such covert activity exemplifies the complex relationship between cultural identity and imperial ambition. In this way, British espionage was both an extension of Edwardian *mentalité* and a strategic endeavor.

Although British intelligence schemes were nothing new, Edwardian agents reshaped intelligence collection with their unscrupulous methods in Arabia. Their exploitative approach left deep and lasting fractures, fueling ethnic, religious, and economic upheaval that persists in the Middle East today. Perhaps these effects were unclear to the T. E. Lawrences and Gertrude Bells of their day. Perhaps agents viewed themselves as seekers of knowledge and order, captivated by the landscapes they moved through. Yet, their work helped solidify imperial control, redrawing borders and setting into motion geopolitical tensions that remain unresolved. To understand their legacy is to recognize how intelligence, wielded in the service of empire, is not the simple gathering of information, it is the reshaping of nations, for better or for worse.

The Redefining of Women's Role in Parisian Society: 1914 to 1918

By Mason Krogh, Texas A&M University

The German declaration of war in August 1914 forced France to join World War I. Germany wasted no time invading neutral Belgium to secure a more advantageous route to Paris, which led France to assume a defensive position and mobilize nearly 3.8 million soldiers.[1] This mass mobilization impacted the French home front by removing much of the male population from their typical places in the workforce. The French government looked to women as early as August 1914 to fill open jobs.[2] Parisian women of all social and economic classes answered the call to duty and assumed new roles in factories, trades, and society. The efforts of women on the Parisian home front bolstered the French war effort by increasing the country's ability to supply troops on the front lines. Taking inspiration from those who joined the workforce early, more women entered war industries as the war went on. They gained widespread recognition. Women's involvement in the war effort helped to challenge Parisian society's pre-existing views of gender roles in society.

Violence and heroism on the frontlines dominate modern conceptions of warfare. But industrialized warfare involves and demands sacrifices from a broad cross-section of civil society. Furthermore, these costs of warfare are dynamic and can affect individuals differently from losing loved ones, jobs, financial opportunities, and access to goods. The lack of consideration for the effects of war on the home front has resulted in the contributions of many working women being overlooked. Scholars have argued that women's

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[1] "The Army of 1914 in Seine-et-Marne," Archives Départementales de Seine-et-Marne, accessed October 22, 2024, https://archives.seine-et-marne.fr/fr/army-1914-seine-et-marne#:~:text=Organization%20of%20the%20French%20army,divisions%20and%2010%20cavalry%20divisions.

[2] Peggy Bette, "Women's Mobilization for War (France)," International Encyclopedia of the First World War, 3, updated October 8, 2014, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/womens-mobilization-for-war-france/#easy-footnote-11-1089353.

contributions to Parisian metalworking industries reinforced traditional Parisian gender roles during World War I.[3] Other scholars have focused on the accommodations made for Parisian women in factories that served to protect their traditional roles as mothers.[4] Lastly, some scholars have argued that the role of Parisian women in nursing has gained the most recognition because of their relevance on the frontlines.[5] I argue that between 1914 and 1918, women contributed greatly to the war effort in Paris by serving in various occupational roles which were determined by their social class. This is evident in Parisian women's roles, such as serving as military nurses and working in factories to create goods that supported the French military.

Women in Nursing

The emergence of women in important industries and the mobilization of female nurses to reach the frontlines of war changed women's traditional roles in Parisian society. Before the war, Parisian women were often confined to the boundaries of their social classes. For upper-class women and members of the bourgeoisie, their primary role in society revolved around serving their husbands and caring for children. In some cases, these wealthy families even hired caretakers for their children and removed this responsibility from the role of upper-class women altogether. However, historian Gary Girod notes that inflation resulted in many wealthy

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[3] Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries, 1914-1939* (Cornell University Press, 1995), 39-40; Mathilde Dubesset, Françoise Thébaud, and Catherine Vincent, "Female Munition Workers of the Seine," 1991, in *The French Home Front 1914-1918: The Legacy of the Great War*, edited by Patrick Fridenson, translated by Bruce Little (Berg Publishers, 1992), 190.

[4] Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality,* 39-40*;* Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 103.

[5] Peggy Bette, "Women's Mobilization for War (France),"; Margaret H. Darrow, "French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front (The Legacy of the Great War) (Berg Publishers, 2000), 134.

families dismissing domestic servants as they "reduced expenses" in response to financial struggles.[6] This led upper-class women to embrace a more active role in their households and Parisian society by entering the workforce and caring more directly for their families. In sharp contrast, working-class women in Paris often worked as domestic servants or in labor roles to provide a source of income. Women who had previously worked as domestic servants, having experience in caretaking, adjusted to different nurturing roles throughout society once the war began.

Throughout the First World War, the most observed contribution of upper to middle-class women to the war effort in Paris was service in the medical field. Female workers dominated the medical field, except for on the front lines, where military medics supported the health of the soldiers. This field offered the greatest opportunity for women in Paris to directly witness the effects of war. Nurses in Paris came from various backgrounds, primarily falling into the middle-class, but these women were united by the sacrifices they were willing to make for their country. In his journal recording his journey through France, Joseph G. Butler Jr., an American businessman, recalls meeting a woman named "Mrs. Benet" in Paris, who he refers to as "a society woman, but in nurse's garb and actively at work."[7] Butler's observations highlight that the women serving in the Parisian workforce were not all doing so out of necessity for pay, but also out of patriotism for France. Mrs. Benet was a woman of high society who chose to serve as a nurse to fulfill her duty to her country.[8] This exemplifies the sacrifices

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[6] Gary Girod, "The Women Who Make the Guns: The Munitionettes in Glasgow and Paris and Their Lack of Interaction with the Far-Left Agitators," *Labor History* 61, no. 2 (2019): 203–12, accessed November 2024, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/citedby/10.1080/0023656X.2019.1667493?scroll=top&needAccess=true.

[7] Joseph G. Butler Jr., *A Journey Through France in War Time* (The Penton Press Cleveland, 1917; Project Gutenberg, 2007), 24, accessed November 2024, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/20464/20464-h/20464-h.htm#I.

[8] Joseph G. Butler Jr., *A Journey Through France in War Time,* 24-26.

women from higher social classes in Paris were willing to make to contribute to the war effort. Many middle-class women volunteered to serve as nurses during World War I and, in doing so, treated wounded soldiers.[9] This provided women with insight into the conditions of the frontlines and exposed them directly to the harsh impacts of the war.

In addition, nurses in Paris during World War I served as unpaid volunteers. This led to upper-class and middle-class women dominating the occupation. Margaret Darrow, an expert on French social history, wrote that "while elite women founded hospitals and middle-class women volunteered to staff them, working-class women were excluded."[10] Darrow's statement highlights the limiting effect that the lack of paid nursing positions had on working-class women in Paris. Oftentimes, these working-class women could not work without pay, so the societal precedent that nurses worked unpaid hindered their ability to perform these duties for their country. This contributed to a class as nursing in wartime Paris became dominated by middle-class women.

Nursing in Paris proved to be most accessible for upper-class women. The American Red Cross gained prominence throughout World War I and enlisted women from across the United States to serve overseas in Europe. However, the job opportunities to serve as a nurse overseas were primarily limited to upper-class women because of specific requirements. Nancy O'Brien Wagner, a Red Cross historian, lists requirements for Red Cross volunteers, including youth, acceptance of a "nominal salary," and some previous knowledge of French or Italian languages.[11] At this time, women

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[9] Joseph G. Butler Jr., *A Journey Through France in War Time,* 24-26.

[10] Margaret H. Darrow, *French Women and the First World War*, 134.

[11] Red Cross Foreign Service, "Qualifications necessary for women stenographers, bookkeepers and clerical help," Dee Smith Papers, MHS. As of August 1918, the sisters of soldiers were allowed to enroll if they promised not to visit their brothers; Northern Division Bulletin (Minneapolis), Aug. 15,19I8, p.1. of the 5,860 who worked in France, 802 received no pay; American Red Cross During the War, 45-47, quoted in Nancy O'Brien Wagner, "Awfully Busy These Days: Red Cross Women in France During World

from upper-class families were most educated and had the ability to serve a cause with very little pay in return. This resulted in the mass of upper-class women who flocked to join the American Red Cross.

The French war effort attracted support from the American Red Cross and received nursing units from the organization. Elizabeth Ashe, a nurse with the American Red Cross, wrote in a letter to a loved one that a French nurse that she worked under in Paris helped to manage "two hundred trained nurses in the field" who were "the wives of officers and people of intelligence."[12] This is significant because it shows the abundance of women in Paris who desperately wanted to support the French war effort. It is also noteworthy that Ashe describes the women as "wives of officers and people of intelligence."[13] Her statement further separates the women from the working-class by highlighting their husbands' positions of power within the French military. This supports the idea that the nursing field in Paris during wartime was largely composed of upper- and middle-class women.

Nurses in Paris held multifaceted roles focused on serving communities throughout the city rather than reserving assistance solely for soldiers. In addition to supporting the war effort, Ashe records her experiences working in children's hospitals.[14] This proved to be a very important task because, oftentimes, children did not receive the care they needed if their fathers were at war and their mothers were working. Ashe recalls, in a letter to a loved one, that these children also lacked basic clothing to keep them warm.[15] Nurses like Elizabeth Ashe served a vital role on the

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War I," *Minnesota History* 63, no. 1 (2012): 26, accessed November 2024, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41704981.

[12] Elizabeth H. Ashe, *Intimate Letters from France: During America's First Year of War* (Big Byte Books, 2014), August 12, 1917, letter, Nook edition.

[13] Elizabeth H. Ashe, *Intimate Letters from France*, August 12, 1917.

[14] Elizabeth H. Ashe, *Intimate Letters from France*, November 13, 1917.

[15] Elizabeth H. Ashe, *Intimate Letters from France*, November 4, 1917.

French home front by caring for those who were impacted by the sacrifices demanded by the war. One such example of the care they provided was the distribution of clothing to Parisian children in need. These women were not merely bystanders who stayed at home while men fought for their protection; these women actively contributed to the war effort by tending to soldiers and caring for the general population.

From the beginning of the war, paid military medics commissioned by the French military provided medical services on the frontlines. However, the challenges presented by World War I contributed to the Ministry of War to order "the admission of Red Cross volunteers to the war zone" in the spring of 1917.[16] The decision to allow volunteer nurses to enter the war zone was influenced by the lack of distinction between the home front and the frontlines during World War I. The effects of this order further exposed nurses previously trained and serving in Paris to the brutality of the frontlines. Consequently, the exposure of nurses to the frontlines resulted in nearly "10 percent of nurses involved in the traveling operating rooms" losing their lives.[17] This loss displays the sacrifices made by female nurses during World War I. In areas along the frontlines, female volunteers serving the Red Cross were the first to medically address wounded soldiers, endangering their lives through their proximity to battle. This impacted previously existing beliefs on gender and warfare by challenging the perception that war was a masculine affair. These Parisian women bravely risked their lives to tend to the needs of wounded French soldiers along the frontlines.

Even though the majority did not serve on the frontlines, women serving as nurses in Paris during World War I experienced the harsh realities of warfare and were individually affected by their circumstances. It is important to consider the effects World War I had on all women contributing to the war effort. Nancy O'Brien Wagner notes that nurses in Paris dealt with many challenges, such as "flies, lice, fleas, hives . . . food shortages, food

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[16] Margaret H. Darrow, French Women and the First World War, 139.

[17] Peggy Bette, "Women's Mobilization for War (France), 134.

and coal rationing, and high prices."[18] Women serving as nurses in Paris experienced challenges unique to the home front that their contemporaries often did not consider a part of warfare. However, the challenges faced by these women at home characterized their wartime experiences in Paris. Women made sacrifices in support of the war effort that ultimately contributed to France's success.

Nearly one thousand French nurses gained recognition as recipients of the prestigious Croix de Guerre, the French medal presented in honor of bravery during times of war.[19] However, this praise was short-lived and overshadowed by the tales of valor on the frontlines that were deemed more notable under the masculine ideals of warfare. The service of Parisian nurses during World War I did not fit into French society's lens of warfare, and thus, their experiences were greatly diminished by their contemporaries.

Women in Industry

Throughout World War I, factory employers often hired working-class Parisian women to work jobs that involved the repetitive completion of tasks requiring little to no thought. In addition, they hired an overwhelming number of women for factory that they considered appealing to feminine qualities. The roles that women took on in the industrial workplace during World War I reinforced gender-based prejudice in Paris. Historical records of job assignments often illuminate gender biases towards women in the workplace.

Factory managers often assigned jobs to women based on prejudiced perceptions of gender roles. This is evident in war industries organized around assembly lines. Laura Lee Downs, an expert on the role of French women in the workplace, wrote that "women usually started on simple machine work" that "turned out a long series of standardized parts." These

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[18] Nancy O'Brien Wagner, "Awfully Busy These Days: RED CROSS WOMEN IN FRANCE DURING WORLD WAR I," Minnesota History 63, no. 1 (2012): 28, accessed October 2024, http://www.jstor.org/stable/41704981.

[19] Margaret H. Darrow, French Women and the First World War, 142.

women were also placed into groups that were "under the supervision of a single skilled man."[20] Following the rapid mobilization of women into the Parisian workforce, these women were not immediately granted the opportunity to learn skilled trades or even manage themselves.

Instead, factory owners and managers placed female workers under the command of a man and made them do mindless tasks. This negatively affected women's role in the workplace by setting the precedent that women were under the management of a male supervisor while they were left to complete insignificant tasks. Perceptions of gender held by Parisian factory owners influenced work assignments given to Parisian women in the workplace. However, women in the workforce gained power by having strength in numbers. In her book, historian Laura Lee Downs records that "between January 1916 and January 1917, the number of women in private munitions plants rose 3.5 times; the numbers in state factories rose nearly 2.5 times."[21] The large growth of women in munitions factories between January 1916 and January 1917 illustrates the changing economic scene of Paris during World War I. Unskilled women were being used to replace skilled male workers, so the men could join the French military. The conscription of working-age French men to the military provided opportunities for women to assume industrial careers and become less of a minority in the workforce.

Women's role in Parisian workplaces during World War I reinforced gender-based divisions. As the number of women in factories increased, factory managers were able to separate men and women into separate departments. According to the authors of "Female Munitions Workers of the Seine," "there were rarely any women on supervisory staffs," demonstrating the lack of power granted to the growing number of female workers in factories.[22] Oftentimes, workers of the opposite sex did not interact with each

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[20] Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, 39-40.

[21] Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, 41.

[22] Mathilde Dubesset, Françoise Thébaud, and Catherine Vincent, "Female Munition Workers of the Seine," 190.

other, and only male supervisors interacted with the women subordinate to them. In this way, men were able to continue to control women in the workplace without presenting other working men as their equals.

Jobs in industry were widely available to women of all social classes. According to the authors of "Female Munitions Workers of the Seine," factories employed "housewives" from the bourgeoisie, "white-collar workers, and laborers."[23] Factories appealed to women from various classes by offering paid positions in industry that directly supported the war effort. The opportunities presented to women were determined by their social class. Gary Girod, a French historian and author, records that middle-class women were allowed to become "factory inspectors, supervisors, and police," often earning much more than their "pre-war salaries."[24] In contrast, working-class women fulfilled roles as unskilled laborers on "assembly-lines."[25] The roles of women in Parisian industries demonstrate the various opportunities available to women during this period and how social class determined the opportunities available to different women.

In addition to having greater employment opportunities, better-educated, upper-class women had the opportunity to become business owners. In his diary, Joseph G. Butler records his experience with two female entrepreneurs, the Callot sisters, in the dress-making industry. Butler notes that the women had "three thousand employees, principally women."[26] During his time in the factory, Butler and his colleagues marveled at the women's expertise in dressmaking and fashion. Butler's observations demonstrate the opportunities that were available to women from different social classes in Paris between the years 1914 and 1918 and the rise of prominence by women in Parisian industries. Educated women who had

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[23] Mathilde Dubesset, Françoise Thébaud, and Catherine Vincent, "Female Munition Workers of the Seine," 187.

[24] Gary Girod, "The Women Who Make the Guns," 203–12.

[25] Gary Girod, "The Women Who Make the Guns," 203–12.

[26] Joseph G. Butler Jr., *A Journey Through France in War Time*, 24.

sufficient funds had the opportunity to embark on their journeys as entrepreneurs. These women primarily hired working-class women, as it was easier for them to manage other women, displaying that the rise of upper-class women in industries consequently helped working-class women. The opportunities granted to women by other women throughout World War I demonstrates the success of female-owned businesses in Paris at this time. The success of female-owned businesses served as a valuable example of Parisian women's ability to not only contribute to industries but also serve as industrial leaders.

The accessibility of factories provided job opportunities accommodating to women from all social classes, creating a diverse collective of women. Working-class women worked on assembly lines to support their families while their husbands fought on the frontlines, whereas upper-class women worked in supervisor roles to garner an additional source of household income. Social class diversity among women within factories resulted in the blending of cultures that gave rise to the collective title of the *munitionettes*. Although used to praise the Parisian women working in factories, the term displays the effects of gender roles in Paris at this time. The incorporation of the suffix "-ette" is employed by journalists to feminize the factory workers and reaffirm popular Parisian beliefs on gender in society.[27] The diversity among women in factories contributed to the formation of a label to represent the spirited Parisian women who responded to the call of duty to contribute to their country's war effort.

During World War I, Parisians debated traditional values and expectations placed upon women because of the controversial discussion of women's roles in war. Societal standards expected women to produce children who would one day support the nation, yet the growing demands of the Parisian economy required women to fill in the roles of men who were serving in the war. When birthrates in Paris decreased as Parisian women funneled into various occupations, the French government, in the words of historian Susan Grayzel "launch[ed] intensified campaigns about the necessity of women performing the vital service of replenishing -

[27] Gary Girod, "The Women Who Make the Guns," 203–12.

reproducing - the nation as [a] race."[28] These public campaigns led by the French government highlight the social changes that took place in Paris. The efforts taken to support the traditionally perceived roles of Parisian women in society as mothers and caretakers illustrate the stubborn consistency of gender roles in society that contributed to the role of women in the economy and society. Nonetheless, women in Paris contributed to the French war effort by continuing to reproduce and replenish the country's population.

One of the first measures taken by the French government to promote birth rates throughout the country was to improve healthcare for pregnant and nursing mothers. By providing support for mothers, the French government encouraged women to bear children and mediated the country's decreasing birth rate. In the early days of the war, the military government of Paris served a vital role in the administration of healthcare to mothers after "the Ligue Contre la Mortalité Infantile" came under the government's authority.[29] This action made certain that "no pregnant woman would lack aid despite the crisis of war," illustrating the government's objective to provide support for all pregnant women in their husbands' absence while they were on the frontlines.[30] Therefore, by providing women with proper healthcare, the government gave all Parisian women accessible medical assistance regardless of their societal role.

The French government promoted pregnancy and motherhood through direct legal actions to protect the lives and welfare of Parisian women, specifically Parisian women in industry. This is evident in the "1917 law that permitted new mothers to breast-feed their children while at the workplace," exhibiting the priority that the French government placed on protecting the rights and welfare of mothers.[31] The significance of this law lies in its consideration of a mother's role in the economy, specifically in the

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[28] Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, 103.

[29] Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, 107.

[30] Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, 107.

[31] Susan R. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, 108.

workplace. By allowing women to breastfeed in the workplace, the French government prevented discrimination and supported a woman's ability to raise her family. This reflects the changes occurring in the Parisian economy throughout World War I that supported the growing recognition of women in society. Laws protecting women's roles in the workplace echo the challenged perception of traditional gender roles in Paris and the growing prominence of women in Parisian society.

In addition to government-led actions, certain French companies employed women in industry and supported their female workers by instituting pronatalist policies that served to protect a woman's ability to support her family. One prominent example of such policies is those instituted by the explosives firm La Feuillette. The company's upper management sought to support their female workers while enticing them to return to work following a period of maternity leave. La Feuillette's female workers received 50 Francs at the start of their maternity leave and, following the child's birth, received 200 Francs for a son and 100 Francs for a daughter. In addition, the company awarded birthday presents of 100 Francs for a female worker's child's first birthday, demonstrating the shared sentiment that increasing the country's declining birth rate was of the utmost importance.[32] Although some may argue that La Feuillette's pronatalist policies were used to keep workers positive and loyal to increase production, the policies still represent significant progress in the French economy. Regardless of the motives of upper management, these tactics spread throughout the Parisian metal-working industries to protect their female workers. In Paris, at this time, there were no legal obligations for a company to provide maternity leave. These policies display significant changes in the role of Parisian women in the economy. Throughout the war, Parisian women's role in the economy had grown so much that employers and elites began to consider their significance and protect their well-being.

The emerging group of Parisian women working in industry, given the title the *munitionettes* for their contributions to the munitions industry in

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[32] Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*, 172-173.

support of the war effort, supported the French military by consistently producing metal products and munitions. Media sources around the world applauded these women for their achievements throughout the war and helped them gain international recognition for their prowess in production. One such example is displayed in an American newspaper article discussing the experiences of two American Y.W.C.A secretaries working in France during wartime. The article praised the massive workforce of nearly "eight thousand females" working in support of the war effort, and one of the secretaries even states that the *munitionettes* bear "the burden of the war."[33] Similar to the American newspaper's lavish praise for the Parisian women, an article reporting on a British commission sent to study the French methods of production applauded "the self-sacrificing patriotism with which the women of France are wearing out their lives."[34] The praise for the *munitionettes* highlights the recognition French women received for their valuable contributions to the war effort. Throughout the war, the production of Parisian women in industry challenged prior social beliefs and norms on gender roles. This demonstrates the value placed upon the productivity of women working in factories and how it affected their role in Parisian society.

The rapid mobilization of women into the workforce resulted in sex-based divisions and discrimination in the workplace. Parisian gender norms carried over into the workplace as large numbers of unskilled Parisian women joined the workforce at entry-level jobs. Women's career roles typically fell within society's perception of gender roles. In many ways, this pattern supported society's pre-existing beliefs and further limited women

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[33] "The Work of Two Y.W.C.A. Secretaries in France," *Evening Star*, October 20, 1918, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Lib. of Congress, accessed November 2024, https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1918-10-20/ed-1/seq-48/#date1=1915&index=8&rows=20&words=munitionettes&searchType=basic&sequence=0&state=&date2=1918&proxtext=munitionettes&y=15&x=17&dateFilterType=yearRange&page=1.

[34] "French Women as Munition Makers: A Story of Patriotism," *Current History (1916-1940)* 4, No. 2 (May 1916): pp. 321-322, accessed November 2024, https://www.jstor.org/stable/45323282.

by creating a set of expectations that undervalued the abilities of female workers in comparison to men.

Conclusion

For France to be victorious, World War I demanded sacrifices from Parisian women that changed the social dynamics of the city. Parisian women's role in contributing to the effort challenged traditional beliefs of gender roles in society. These contributions came from patriotic women with different social backgrounds and standings in society who had a desire to support their country. Women from the upper and middle classes flocked to volunteer organizations to serve as nurses and caretakers who provided for soldiers as well as the general population of Paris. These Parisian women left their impact on the war by directly interacting with the victims of the brutal frontlines and the orphans resulting from the cruelties of warfare. Working-class women in Paris gained a significant role in industries throughout the war and contributed to France's military success. Regardless of opportunities granted to them by their social class, Parisian women challenged traditional societal beliefs regarding a woman's role in the economy and society by contributing to the war effort in their various occupations. At the same time, women maintained their traditional roles in Parisian society as mothers and caretakers. Parisian women's role as both mothers and contributors to the economy resulted in greater social consideration for women and enhanced support for both children and mothers. The contributions of Parisian women to the French war effort in World War I led to women gaining recognition for serving significant roles in Parisian society.

The Paradox of Precision: Strategic Bombing and American Exceptionalism in Total War

By Nicholas Chrimicles, Columbia University

The Allied strategic bombing campaign of World War II has traditionally been portrayed as a narrative of pragmatic evolution: the abandonment of precision bombing in favor of area bombing as operational realities overwhelmed pre-war doctrine. This thesis challenges the conventional wisdom by revealing a striking paradox—the persistent American commitment to precision bombing throughout the conflict, which defies theoretical predictions about the nature of modern warfare. J.F.C. Fuller's theory of omni-state warfare, which predicts the inexorable progression toward maximum destruction as modern states mobilize their populations for total war, provides a powerful framework for understanding the barbarism of World War II.[1] Yet as this thesis demonstrates, the United States presents an exception to Fuller's theory. Despite operating within an omni state framework, the United States maintained a consistent commitment to precision bombing, with empirical data showing that approximately 69% of bombs dropped were precision-targeted rather than area bombing.

My argument proceeds in three stages, each challenging conventional narratives about strategic bombing. First, I demonstrate through comprehensive analysis of United States Strategic Bombing Survey data that precision bombing dominated the American campaign throughout the conflict, with no transition toward area bombing even as the war intensified. Second, I examine the complex relationship between bombing operations and their media representation. Through analysis of thousands of contemporary newspaper articles, I show that American media maintained a consistent focus on precision bombing, mirroring the actual conduct of the campaign. This challenges simplistic notions of wartime propaganda and

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[1] J.F.C. Fuller, W*ar and Western Civilization, 1832–1932: A Study of War as a Political Instrument and the Expression of Mass Democracy* (Duckworth, 1932), 18.

reveals how America's democratic institutions processed the moral complexities of modern warfare.

Finally, drawing on Fuller's framework of omni-state warfare while acknowledging its limitations, I argue that America's commitment to precision bombing reflects a distinctive strategic culture that valued efficiency, technological sophistication, and moral restraint even in the crucible of World War II. While other omni states embraced the destruction Fuller's theory predicts, the United States cultivated a doctrine of controlled, limited warfare even as it mobilized for total victory. This American exceptionalism in strategic bombing theory and doctrine reveals deeper currents in national character and military thinking that shaped the country's approach to conflicts throughout the twentieth century and beyond.

Wars *aux allures déchaînées*

Warfare exposes the underlying values of society conducting it. The American approach to strategic bombing reflects fundamental patterns in how mass societies wage total war. To fully grasp these patterns, we must explore not only the events themselves but also the reasons behind American society's specific choices in warfare.

J.F.C Fuller's work serves as a lens through which to view the American approach to strategic bombing. It is important to acknowledge that Fuller was a problematic figure—a pre-war Nazi sympathizer who attended Hitler's 50th birthday celebration in 1939 as an honored guest. Despite these troubling political affiliations, his analytical framework offers valuable insights into the transformation of warfare in the modern era. As an influential military theorist writing both before and after the war, Fuller identified a causal connection between mass society and the emergence of total war: warfare unlimited in scope and unconstrained by traditional military objectives, involving the mobilization of entire societies and the deliberate targeting of civilian populations. Rather than total war being something invented by the Nazis when they invaded Poland (as one eminent historian has claimed), we find in Fuller's analysis the very principles that

underpin modern states (what Fuller refers to as omni states) as the driving forces behind the phenomenon of total war. [2]

Before the advent of mass politics, warfare operated within clearly defined limits. As James Q. Whitman demonstrates, wars under monarchical sovereignty were conducted as contained political disputes, with professional armies acting as instruments of statecraft. [3] Fuller aptly characterizes this earlier form of warfare as an "auction-room" where conflicts, though certainly brutal, remained confined to designated battlefields and did not consume society at large.

This contained nature of warfare was fundamentally transformed by Rousseau's concept of the "general will." This idea endowed the nation-state with what Fuller terms a "quasi-divine sanction," creating a powerful new mythology around popular majorities' supposed ability to divine and pursue the general interest. Although Fuller regarded this assumption as "patently fallacious," he recognized how it "flattered the popular imagination and unthinkingly was accepted as an article of faith."[4]

The French Revolution ignited a profound reimagining of warfare, where the fusion of collective will, and state authority redefined the very nature of conflict. Gone were the days of sterile, controlled battles—replaced instead by a dynamic, emotionally charged struggle. As Fuller observed, "a new order of living and of killing emerged out of the cry of '*Vive la nation*!'" Decisions about war and warfare were no longer guided by cabinet politics but by what he called "the occult powers" of "wealth and public opinion

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[2] J.F.C. Fuller, W*ar and Western Civilization, 1832–1932*, 18.

[3] James Q. Whitman, *The Verdict of Battle: The Law of Victory and the Making of Modern War* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 133-171.

[4] J.F.C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789–1961: A Study of the Impact of the French, Industrial, and Russian Revolutions on War and Its Conduc*t, Rutgers University Press, 1961, 24-36.

economics and emotionalism."[5] When warfare became an expression of the general will, traditional restraints proved powerless against the unleashed passions of the nation.

The triumph of popular sovereignty unleashed what Fuller terms "the jinni of popular absolutism" from its "monarchial brass bottle," transforming the auction-room of war into a slaughterhouse.[6] This transformation stemmed from mass politics' activation of humanity's deeper tribal impulses. Fuller argues that this pattern emerges from our evolutionary heritage: "Man as he is can only be explained by man as he was, and never by man as we would like him to be."[7] When channeled through mass participation in politics, these ancient tribal loyalties transform political opponents and foreign nations into existential threats to the collective.

This combination of tribal psychology and mass political institutions transformed warfare into wars of righteousness—conflicts that expressed not merely territorial disputes or political calculations, but fundamental conflicts between entire societies and their ways of life. Warfare in the age of omni states thus became unbound from traditional limits, pursuing not just military victory but the complete transformation of the enemy society.

Churchill's wartime leadership exemplified this democratic drive toward righteous warfare. His declaration that victory must be achieved "at all costs" and his characterization of the enemy as "a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime" captured the moral absolutism inherent in democratic warfare.[8] In place of the careful calibration of power that had characterized traditional diplomacy, democratic societies pursued total victory through the complete destruction of their enemies.

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[5] Fuller, W*ar and Western Civilization, 1832–1932*, 18.

[6] Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, 24.

[7] Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, 41.

[8] Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, 310.

This outcome of total war cannot be traced back to any individual, whether it be Churchill or Hitler. Rather, it stemmed from the inherent nature of mass democracy itself—the unleashing of "the jinni of popular absolutism." When warfare became an expression of the general will, it inevitably took on the character that Fuller described as *aux allures déchaînées*— wars of frenzied appearance, unbound from traditional limits and driven by the passionate certainty of righteous conviction.[9]

The Character of Strategic Bombing

Empirical evidence presents a striking paradox. Analysis of mission-level data from the European theater reveals that none of these likely patterns materialized. Instead, we observe a remarkable consistency in the ratio between precision and area bombing throughout the conflict, with precision bombing remaining the dominant approach even as the absolute scale of operations increased dramatically.[10]

To distinguish between precision and area bombing, this analysis employs a straightforward but effective methodology: missions using any incendiary munitions are classified as area bombing, while those exclusively using high explosive bombs are categorized as precision bombing. This method does not distinguish between day and nighttime missions as inherently precise or area bombing. This classification system,

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[9] Fuller, *The Conduct of War*, 33.

[10] See Figure 1, This was part of an effort taken on by the author. The full project, along with the methodology may be found at https://github.com/nac-codes/thesis_bombing, All materials are open-sourced, and can be downloaded using this index.

while potentially generous in identifying area bombing, provides a clear empirical basis for understanding the tactical nature of different missions.

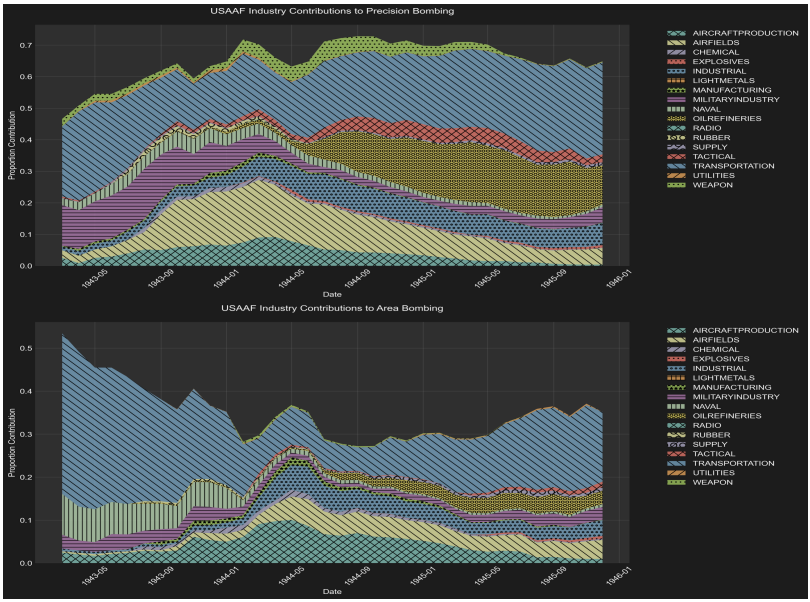

Figure 1: Analysis of USAAF bombing patterns by industrial sector, showing that both precision and area bombing persisted throughout the war rather than one replacing the other. While overall proportions remained stable, some sectors like transportation saw increased area bombing.

Those operational failures of precision bombing in many cases led to the adoption of area bombing—which does not align with empirical evidence, therefore we must seek new frameworks to understand the operational choices made during the bombing campaign. The relatively balanced application of both precision and area bombing throughout the war suggests that the simple dichotomy emphasized by previous historians fails to capture the reality of Allied bombing strategy.

This evidence undermines a key justification for the campaign's civilian toll—those operational limitations forced a shift to area bombing. Instead, both precision and area bombing were deliberate, parallel strategies from the start. Before exploring the root causes of this approach, we must first examine whether either strategy was truly necessary or effective at achieving its stated aims.

Area Bombing

The extraordinary resources devoted to area bombing reflected an emphasis on general destruction yet proved ineffective at achieving its stated economic objectives. If area bombing had successfully undermined the Nazi economy through civilian and urban targeting, we would expect to see either significant labor force reductions or the diversion of resources from military to civilian needs. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) found neither outcome.

The USSBS's comprehensive analysis found no evidence supporting either of these anticipated outcomes. The Survey's Overall Report explicitly states that "bomb damage to the civilian economy was not a proximate cause of the military collapse of Germany," further noting that there is no evidence that "shortages of civilian goods reached a point where the German authorities were forced to transfer resources from war production in order to prevent disintegration on the home front."[11]

Additionally, German civilian employment levels remained stable throughout the war. The USSBS's analysis of the German economy reveals that the total employment of Germans, including those drafted into the Wehrmacht and accounting for casualties, remained "practically unchanged throughout the war."[12] Even more telling, Germany maintained significant untapped labor reserves throughout the conflict. While Britain reduced its

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[11] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Overall Report (European War), National Archives, 38.

[12] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, German Economy Report, National Archives, 9.

domestic service workforce from 1.2 to 0.5 million workers during the war, Germany's comparable workforce decreased only marginally from 1.5 to 1.3 million. [13] This persistence of substantial civilian sector employment suggests that Germany retained significant economic flexibility, directly contradicting the notion that area bombing had put any significant pressure on the civilian economy.

The recovery capacity of German cities further undermines the strategic logic of area bombing. The United States Strategic Bombing Survey's analysis of ten heavily bombed German cities reveals an "extraordinary ability to recover from the effects of ruinous attacks." Hamburg provides a striking example: despite losing nearly one-third of its housing stock and suffering over 60,000 civilian casualties in the devastating "Operation Gomorrah" raids of July-August 1943, the city recovered 80% of its productive capacity within just five months. When industrial output was affected, the analysis shows that worker absenteeism, rather than physical destruction, accounted for most production losses. Moreover, damage to local transportation and utility infrastructure proved insignificant, with services typically restored before industrial facilities had completed repairs.[14]

A detailed investigation of German cities subjected to area attacks provides further evidence of their limited effectiveness. The Hamburg study concluded that "concentrated attacks [precision bombing] on limited targets were more effective in disrupting vital production than were the area raids on workers' quarters throughout the city." More broadly, the report found that area raids generally damaged "sectors of the German economy not essential to war production" and consequently "did not have a decisive effect upon the ability of the German nation to produce war material."[15] While

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[13] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, German Economy Report, 9.

[14] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Overall Report, 72-73.

[15] Gian P. Gentile, *How Effective Is Strategic Bombing? Lessons Learned from World War II to Kosovo* (New York University Press, 2001), 78.

cities experienced immediate declines in their labor force following raids, they typically recovered most of their industrial workforce within two to three months.

Area bombing proved ineffective on multiple levels. First, despite causing the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, it failed to significantly impact the availability of labor. Second, the destruction it caused was insufficient to force a reallocation of labor or resources from military to civilian needs. Finally, even in the cities that were directly targeted, productivity quickly recovered, resulting in a minimal overall effect.

While the fog of war meant that bombing's precise effects remained uncertain during the conflict, the doctrinal foundations for precision bombing had been well-established in interwar military thought.[16] The decision to pursue and expand a strategy of generalized destruction—targeting not just economic assets but civilian populations—represented a marked departure from this theoretical framework. What ideological forces drove this embrace of area bombing despite its divergence from established military doctrine?

Precision Bombing

Precision bombing doctrine, developed at the Air Corps Tactical School between the wars, rested on a sophisticated understanding of industrial economies as interconnected systems. This "industrial web" theory posited that modern economies contained critical nodes where targeted strikes could trigger cascading failures throughout the entire system. By identifying and destroying key bottlenecks—particularly in transportation, power generation, and essential industrial processes—strategic bombing

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[16] *Conrad C. Crane, Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (University Press of Kansas, 1993), 29.

planners believed they could efficiently paralyze an enemy's war economy, while causing minimal overall damage, death, and destruction.[17]

However, this strategy's effectiveness depended entirely on the target economy operating at maximum capacity with minimal redundancy. Without tight supply chains and significant resource constraints, precision strikes would prove merely disruptive rather than decisive, as the enemy could simply redirect resources or activate spare capacity to maintain production. Evidence from the United States Strategic Bombing Survey reveals that the German economy maintained significant underutilized capacity throughout the war, making it particularly resistant to precision bombing strategies. The most striking example was Germany's refusal to fully mobilize its workforce, most notably women—not due to ideological constraints, but simply because the additional labor was not required. Additionally, the administrative sector remained bloated, with 3.5 million workers in public administration positions that could have been redirected to war production.[18]

This economic slack extended to both civilian consumption and industrial capacity. Germany maintained what the Strategic Bombing Survey termed a "guns and butter" philosophy, with civilian consumption levels exceeding pre-war 1929 levels well into the conflict.[19] Even more telling, most German armament facilities operated on single shifts despite having the infrastructure for multiple shift operations. The USSBS noted that "machine tool and machinery capacity was generally in excess of needs," with raw materials like steel remaining "freely available for all current purposes," including non-essential civilian construction projects.[20]

The German economy was structured for a series of quick victories that would enhance German living standards rather than a prolonged conflict

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[17] Alexander B. Downes, "Defining and Explaining Civilian Victimization," in Targeting Civilians in War (Cornell University Press, 2008), 39.

[18] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, German Economy Report, 9.

[19] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, German Economy Report, 7.

[20] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, German Economy Report, 9, 20-1.

requiring increased mobilization.[21] This infrastructure meant that the German economy the Allies were bombing had in fact more capacity to produce goods than it utilized which made it a poor candidate for precision bombing strategies predicated on disrupting highly strained industrial systems. Again, we are faced with a question: why did the United States pursue this ineffective strategy anyway?

Still, the strategic bombing campaign achieved notable successes when it effectively targeted critical industries, yet these victories also highlight how much more efficient the overall effort could have been. USAAF data reveals that approximately 83% of bombs were directed at targets with significant regenerative or dispersal capacity, including aircraft production facilities, industrial areas, and naval installations. In contrast, sectors with limited redundancy—such as chemical plants, utilities, and specialized manufacturing—received only 17% of the total effort.[22]

Operations targeting transportation networks illustrate both the potential and limitations of precision targeting. While the campaign eventually crippled German logistics, with coal shipments plummeting from

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[21] Alan J. Levine, T*he Strategic Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945* (Praeger, 1992), 34. This is a point that's been made by others; Richard Overy, The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War Over Europe, 1940-1945 (Viking, 2013), 255. It is worth noting while Germany had a *material* cushion, it was under severe economic strain, as outlined by Tooze. By 1944, Wehrmacht expenditures alone exceeded the total national income of the late 1930s; Adam Tooze, The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy (Allen Lane, 2006), 414.

[22] Full analysis of USAAF tonnage (1,054,708.40 total tons): Easily dispersible/regenerative targets (82.7%): Transportation (405,038.14, 38.4%), Aircraft/Airfields (197,310.60, 18.7%), Industrial Areas (103,426.67, 9.8%), Military Industry (52,739.97, 5.0%), Manufacturing (7,474.76, 0.7%), Naval (22,467.20, 2.1%), Supply (11,522.81, 1.1%), Tactical (43,535.28, 4.1%), Other misc. (29,441.57, 2.8%). Less dispersible/strategic bottleneck targets (17.3%): Oil (163,244.13, 15.5%), Chemical (9,557.85, 0.9%), Explosives (6,553.02, 0.6%), Light Metals (67.20, 0.0%), Radio (184.00, 0.0%), Rubber (1,317.28, 0.1%), Utilities (2,943.60, 0.3%), View at https://github.com/nac codes/thesis_bombing/blob/master/attack_ data/reports/summary_statistics/s ummary_statistics_detailed.txt.

7.4 to 2.7 million tons between August and December 1944, much of this effect could have been achieved more efficiently. [23] As one German general noted to the USSBS, concentrated attacks on specific rail lines or bridges proved far more devastating than dispersed bombing of marshalling yards throughout Germany. Indeed, Peters concluded that focusing exclusively on bridges could have achieved complete transportation paralysis with far fewer bombs.[24]

Raids against Germany's oil infrastructure demonstrated similar potential for concentrated precision targeting. Attacks on synthetic fuel plants reduced production from 359,000 tons to just 24,000 tons between early and late 1944, with cascading effects across nitrogen, methanol, and rubber production. [25] Yet the most compelling example of missed opportunity comes from Haywood S. Hansell Jr.'s analysis of electrical power targeting. Hansell demonstrated that just 35,000 to 48,000 tons of bombs—a fraction of the 198,000 tons dropped in spring 1944—could have knocked out two-thirds of German electrical generation capacity for six to eighteen months. His detailed probability analysis showed that precision attacks on power stations were well within operational capabilities, suggesting that political rather than technical constraints prevented this potentially decisive strategy.[26]

The strategic bombing campaign presents us with a remarkable paradox. Despite theoretical predictions that would anticipate a campaign dominated by area bombing, the evidence reveals a persistent commitment to precision bombing throughout the conflict. Neither approach achieved its full potential effectiveness—area bombing failed to undermine civilian

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[23] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, German Economy Report, 12-3.

[24] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, Interrogation of Generalmajors Peters, 315-316.

[25] United States Strategic Bombing Survey, German Economy Report, 12-3.

[26] Haywood S. Hansell, *The Strategic Air War Against Germany and Japan: A Memoir* (Office of Air Force History, 1986), 278.

morale or disrupt the workforce, while precision bombing often targeted regenerative industries rather than critical vulnerabilities.

The evidence demonstrates that more precision targeting of specific targets could have achieved greater strategic effect with less destruction. Haywood Hansell argued at the time that focused strikes on systems like electrical power could have brought about a swift conclusion before D-Day. Even Albert Speer noted that Allied bombing concentrated on the "mouth" of German production rather than its "source." The principles of effective precision bombing were understood—yet the United States pursued exponentially increasing tonnage rather than concentrated attacks on critical nodes.

While elements of area bombing reveal the temptation of total war seeping into military thought—particularly in the transportation sector where incendiaries were used despite their tactical ineffectiveness against rail infrastructure—what stands out most about the American bombing campaign is not its destructiveness but its restraint. In a conflict characterized by unprecedented barbarism on multiple fronts, the persistent American commitment to precision bombing represents a remarkable exception to Fuller's prediction that omni-state warfare would inevitably trend toward maximum destruction.

This exceptional restraint becomes even more striking when we consider that it persisted despite the emotional pressures of total war and the operational challenges of precision bombing. What is clear from our analysis is that the strategic bombing campaign was neither a simple story of pragmatic adaptation to operational realities nor a predetermined descent into barbarism, but rather a complex negotiation between military necessity, technological capability, and moral restraint.

The Paradox of American Warfare

When viewed through Fuller's framework, the strategic bombing campaign reveals a striking paradox in American warfare. While omni-state theory predicts an inexorable slide toward maximum destruction and area bombing, the empirical evidence shows a persistent American commitment to precision bombing throughout the conflict. This commitment to

precision—accounting for 69% of all bombs dropped—defied theoretical expectations about how mass societies wage total war.

This raises profound questions about the nature of warfare in democratic societies. What was it about American strategic culture that resisted the pull toward indiscriminate destruction that characterized other belligerents in the conflict? The answer cannot be found in mere operational necessities or technological limitations. Rather, it suggests something distinctive about American society itself—a complex interplay between democratic values, technological faith, and moral self-conception that moderated the destructive impulses Fuller identified in mass warfare.

This is not to suggest that American bombing was free from excess or inefficiency. As we have seen, both precision and area bombing could have been more effective with better target selection and concentration of effort. The persistent focus on dispersible targets rather than critical bottlenecks like electrical systems and the exponential scaling of bombing operations suggest that American warfare was still influenced by an emphasis on overwhelming force rather than maximum efficiency. Yet even this inefficiency took a distinctive form—prioritizing the scale of precision bombing operations rather than defaulting to indiscriminate destruction.

What emerges from this analysis is not a simple narrative of American moral superiority or exceptional restraint, but rather a more complex picture of a democracy at war. The strategic bombing campaign represents neither a pragmatic adaptation to operational necessities nor a predetermined descent into barbarism, but rather America's distinctive negotiation between the emotional imperatives of total war and a persistent commitment to limited, precise warfare. Understanding this paradox—how American democracy simultaneously mobilized for total war while maintaining core commitments to precision and restraint—offers crucial insights into both the past conduct of warfare and its future evolution in an age of increasingly precise destructive technologies.

The Twenty Years Armistice and the "Mechanical Force": French Interwar Defense Policy and the Debacle of 1940

By Kang Jie Ng, Columbia University

The problem facing France at the end of 1918 was stark: France had won the Great War but lay economically and demographically crippled by the end of the conflict. The Treaty of Versailles had secured French security for the foreseeable future, but French leaders were pessimistic about France's ability to hold off another concerted German attack.[1] Worse still, the Allied support that France had counted upon in the immediate aftermath of the war; the wartime alliance with the United States and Great Britain, disappeared soon after the war.[2] France stood alone, with only the nascent states of Eastern Europe to rely on for support, and little Belgium. With limited support, French policymakers realized the inevitability of defeat in another total war with Germany in the same manner as 1870 and 1914.[3] Hence, French hopes rested on the strength of its own forces to resist any initial German aggression, but also crucially, on the prospect of external intervention.

At the same time, the Great War had demonstrated the rise of new technologies and doctrinal methods which had allowed the Allies to breach the Hindenburg line and destroy the German army in the West in 1918. Within this context, French policymakers tried to grasp for new solutions with which France could buy time: time for allied support to enter the war, time for France to mobilize, time for economic warfare to take effect. How best could the French army make use of the new technologies of the modern

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[1] Jeffery A. Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered: The French High Command and the Defeat of the West, 1940* (Praeger, 1979), 5-13.

[2] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered,* 5-13.

[3] Robert A. Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919–39* (Archon Books, 1985), 41-45.

age? The lessons of the Great War had been multi-fold. New motorized vehicles had proven highly useful at providing mobility to a strategic reserve.[4] Tanks, as infantry support vehicles, were highly effective in a combined arms assault in breaching the trenches of the western front. Planes and air superiority had been important in ensuring good reconnaissance and preventing enemy intelligence gathering, and the beginnings of assault from the air had been seen. Artillery emerged as the undisputed king of the battlefield, key to any major offensive. Maréchal Phillipe Pétain, the hero of Verdun, laid out his thoughts thusly: The offensive is the fire which advances, the defensive is the fire that stops. The cannon conquers, the infantry occupies. (*L'offensive, c'est le feu qui avance ; la défensive, c'est le feu qui arrête. Le canon conquiert, l'infanterie occupe.)*[5] A command of all these tools had brought France victory in the Great War and seemed necessary for any future war.

But the Great War taught another lesson: the advantages conferred by strong fortifications. In this regard, the shadow of Verdun hung over the leaders of the French army. Because of Petain's *noria* policy, most of the French army, and consequently most of France's leaders, military or civilian, had fought at Verdun.[6] In that conflict, the specter of massive forts like Douaumont and Vaux had dominated the battle, allowing for fire to be poured down upon attacking infantry columns, frustrating any offensive. It is not for nothing that Alistair Horne once argued that the loss of Douaumont in the early days of the battle cost France two hundred thousand men.[7] The ability

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[4] Robert Forczyk, *Case Red: The Collapse of France* (Osprey Publishing, 2017), 46.

[5] Paul Valéry, 'Réponse Au Discours de Réception de Philippe Pétain | Académie Française', 22 January 1931. https://www.academie-francaise.fr/reponse-au-discours-de-reception-de-philippe-petain. Petain later became infamous for his collaboration with the Nazis.

[6] Alistair Horne, *The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916*, Revised ed. (Penguin Books, 1994), 875-890.

[7] Horne, *The Price of Glory,* 875-890.

of a small number of troops, ensconced in strong defensive positions, to hold up entire divisions and inflict horrendous casualties on the attackers, had been well-noted by the French.[8]

In this context, France also faced a series of conflicting priorities during the interwar years. The destruction of the war, the cost of reconstruction, and the subsequent economic malaise of the depression ensured limitations on France's defense expenditures.[9] Internal political divisions between the right and the left remained fractious.[10] During this period of time, France suffered from a serious lack of funds for the military budget, with pay for soldiers remaining low.[11] This created a situation in which the military struggled to attract career professionals that would form the core of the military.[12] As another result of this budgetary weakness, spending on new weapons, training, and other necessary expenditures remained inadequate to sustain the totality of French defense requirements, which ranged from the colonies to the Rhine. Most of the army's budget, therefore, went just to upkeep and personnel, with only fortifications receiving significant multi-year funding until 1936.[13] The Ministry of Armament was dissolved, and the defense industry was left to the private sector.[14] The aviation industry fell from an employment level of 200,000 in 1919 to 5,000, and reached only 15,000 by 1929.[15]

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[8] Horne, *The Price of Glory,* 875-890.

[9] Judith M. Hughes, *To the Maginot Line: The Politics of French Military Preparation in the 1920's* (Harvard University Press, 1971), 111.

[10] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line,* 35-36, 123, 209.

[11] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line,* 35-36, 123, 209.

[12] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line* 35-36, 123, 209.

[13] Laurent Giovachini, *L'armement français au XXe siècle* (ELLIPSES, 2000), 40-41.

[14] Giovachini, *L'armement français au XXe siècle,* 40-41.

Manpower was also a serious issue. Conscription was reduced from three years to eighteen months in 1923 and reduced once again to one year in 1928.[16] While in 1935 this was raised to two years, the manpower available did not increase by as much as it should have; the recruitment class of 1936-1940 was almost half of what it should have been due to the horrendous losses of the First World War and the accompanying drop in birthrates in the intervening years.[17] Thus, France operated on a critical manpower shortage that increased the defensive tendencies of the high command; the nation could not afford another war as costly as in 1914.[18]

It was a combination of these strategic challenges that determined how France would fight the next war. Lacking the funds and the political will for a professional army and knowing that the next war would be total in nature, France settled on an army based primarily on mass mobilization of conscripted and untrained civilians.[19] Additionally, the general staff felt that France's economic and demographic weakness demanded a doctrine and strategy of caution and economy. Battle became thought of as something to be managed carefully, *methodically,* to avoid wasteful casualties for the long war to come. The French army hence adopted a doctrine of "methodical battle." The weakness in manpower and the reliance on conscription further highlighted the importance of fortifications to buy time for mobilization and would (theoretically) allow the French army to hold more ground with less troops. This would free up the best of France's divisions for maneuver.[20]

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[15] Giovachini, *L'armement français au XXe siècle,* 40-41.

[16] Giovachini, *L'armement français au XXe siècle,* 40-41.

[17] Hughes, *To the Maginot Line,* 187.

[18] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 41-45.

[19] Forczyk, *Case Red*, 39.

[20] Forczyk, *Case Red*, 39.

Differing Strategic Priorities: The Colonies and Naval Spending

While to any historian the threat from Germany after 1933 looms large in the imagination, we must also realize that, in the interwar years, a series of other issues also took up France's strategic focus. For one, France was still a global empire, with a variety of police commitments in the colonies. From Algeria to Indochina, vast amounts of colonial territory needed to be garrisoned. In 1935, 40% of the French army was deployed overseas.[21] This commitment often came at the expense of the metropole, where the army was undermanned, underequipped, and undertrained due to the lack of professional NCOs and officers.[22]

This large colonial commitment proved to be both necessary and costly. France continued to intervene in colonial affairs in Syria in 1920 and 1925, and in Morocco during the Rif War of 1924-1926. The conquest and suppression of Syria required consistent commitment of blood and treasure, with an estimated total of 5 billion francs spent on maintaining the French mandate, and the Rif War in Morocco required the commitment of 200,000 troops under Petain and further billions of francs to crush the revolt, with a lingering troop commitment of 35,000 into 1934.[23] Indochina remained restive, with the attempted Yen Bai mutiny in 1930 by the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (VNQDD), the Vietnamese equivalent to the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT).[24] As such, while French high command remained focused on the defense of the metropole, they could not help but devote significant efforts to the counterinsurgency campaigns in the colonies. Some

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[21] Forczyk, 37-39.

[22] Pierre Rocolle, *La guerre de 1940* (A. Colin, 1990), 56-60.

[23] Frederic Danigo, 'France and the Rif War: Lessons from a Forgotten Counterinsurgency War (Northern Morocco - April 1925 - May 1927),' United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 2010. https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA603341.pdf.

[24] Tobias Frederik Rettig, 'French Military Policies in the Aftermath of the Yên Bay Mutiny, 1930: Old Security Dilemmas Return to the Surface'. *South East Asia Research* 10, no. 3 (11 January 2002): 310. https://doi.org/10.5367/000000002101297099.

authors have posited that this commitment might have led to a diversion of focus between conventional operations and counterinsurgency operations.[25] While there is no direct evidence to indicate that this was the case, the diversion of manpower and funding was deleterious enough to an army short of resources, especially from the period of 1925-1935.

Germany was not the only threat on the minds of French defense planners. Italy loomed large in the French imagination, especially the threat from the *Regia Marina*.[26] Beginning in 1936, both the French and Italian navies embarked on large rearmament programs in response to increasing tensions between France and Italy.[27] The navy thus continued to receive a large amount of investment. By 1940, France had the world's fourth largest navy, and invested billions of francs in building bases in North Africa, new submarines, new battleships, and an aircraft carrier.[28] From 1925-1935, the French navy budget took up about 20-25% of the overall French defense budget, and in 1938, the navy appropriated about 2.2 billion francs for the construction of the new naval base in Mers-El-Kebir.[29] This was after considerable sums had already been spent on the naval base in Bizerte, which was ultimately assessed to be too vulnerable to Italian air and naval power from Sicily and Sardinia.[30] In comparison, the cost of the Maginot Line was about 5.3 billion Francs.[31] The Italian threat also necessitated the

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[25] Forczyk, *Case Red*, 41.

[26] Reynolds M. Salerno, 'The French Navy and the Appeasement of Italy, 1937-9'. *The English Historical Review* 112, no. 445 (1997): 70-73.

[27] Salerno, 'The French Navy and the Appeasement of Italy, 1937-9,' 70-73.

[28] Salerno, 'The French Navy and the Appeasement of Italy, 1937-9,' 70-73.

[29] Olivier Louis, 'De Bizerte à Mers El-Kébir: les bases navales d'Afrique du Nord dans l'Entre-deux-guerres'. *Revue historique des Armées* 217, no. 4 (1999): 31–33. https://doi.org/10.3406/rharm.1999.4877.

[30] Louis, 'De Bizerte à Mers El-Kébir,' 37-38.

construction of an Alpine defensive line on the border with Italy, which was much less complex than the Maginot Line but nevertheless required the commitment of scant resources.[32]

The Popular Front, Daladier, and the Rearmament effort, 1936-1940.

In 1936, with tensions heating up between France and Germany, a new government took power in France: The Popular Front. Thereafter, rearmament started to take on increasing political and industrial priority.[33] Huge sums started to be devoted to important rearmament projects. For the first time since the Great War, France's military had the sums needed to start investing in new capabilities. In the army, the share of the budget devoted to the acquisition of new equipment reached 50%.[34] While the Popular Front did not last long, the succeeding government of Daladier did not let up the pace of rearmament.

Tanks and Armored Vehicles

When Charles De Gaulle made his famous appeal of 18th June, he claimed that France had been "submerged by mechanical force" (*submergés par la force mécanique*). While it may have been true that France had been defeated by an enemy that utilized "mechanical" means of armored warfare combined with close air support, the enemy certainly did not possess a quantitatively superior force. By 1940, the French army had been well equipped and was comparable to its German equivalent, despite the conservative nature of the French high command. How did this happen? The governments of the Popular Front and Edouard Daladier's coalition

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[31] Philippe Garraud, 'La construction de la ligne Maginot alpine et son emploi en 1940: un système défensif novateur et efficace,' *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains* 259, no. 3 (29 September 2015): 93–94, 97-98. https://doi.org/10.3917/gmcc.259.0093.

[32] Garraud, 'La construction de la ligne Maginot alpine et son emploi en 1940,' 93-94.

[33] Laurent Giovachini, *L'Armement Français au XXe Siècle* (ELLIPSES, 2000), 54.

[34] Giovachini, *L'Armement Français au XXe Siècle,* 54.

embarked on a series of large rearmament bills from 1936 onwards. In 1936, an arms program of 14 billion francs was approved.[35] In 1938, a further 12 billion francs was approved for artillery and antiaircraft guns.[36] In 1939, the largest sum yet, of 65 billion francs, was slated for the years 1940-1943.[37] This led to an estimated doubling of military production, especially in the key priority areas of tanks, anti-tank guns, anti-aircraft guns, as well as motorized and track support vehicles. By 1939, about 2,838 tanks had been produced, rising to 4,500 by June 1940, when the blow from the Germans came.[38] This extraordinary production of tanks, including the excellent SOMUA S-35 and Char-B1, bestowed upon France a substantial advantage in the number of tanks. In addition, French tanks of the first line, which included the aforementioned S-35 and B1 tanks, possessed thicker armor and better guns than the best German equivalents, the Panzer III and IV, while other French tanks like the Hotchkiss H35 and H39 were at least comparable to similar German tanks like the Panzer I and II.[39] More to the point, in June 1940, the Germans possessed about 2,500 tanks while the French had 4,100, with 3,254 deployed on the front line against the Germans.[40]

Infantry and Artillery

Similarly, by June 1940, the German and Allied armies had gained a relative parity in terms of the infantry. Including the Belgians and the Dutch, French and British manpower on the continent amounted to about four

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[35] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered*, 35-40.

[36] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered,* 35-40.

[37] Garraud, 'La politique française de réarmement de 1936 à 1940,' 92.

[38] Garraud, 'La politique française de réarmement de 1936 à 1940,' 98-101.

[39] Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West*, Reprint edition (Naval Institute Press, 2013), 57-60.

[40] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend*, 57-60.

million troops facing three million German troops. The defenders outnumbered the attackers.[41] On a qualitative level, this parity still held, albeit to a lesser extent. In 1940, French divisions were organized according to their competence, much like the German "*Welle*" system in its implications on operational readiness (but not its implications on call-up). France had about 23 regular "active" divisions (*divisions actives*), which were fully equipped with modern anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns. It also had 12 "Group A" divisions (*série A*), which were more well equipped, although not fully, and 18 "Group B" divisions (*série B*), which were the last on the priority list.[42] All in all, including the British and Belgians, France had qualitative parity, with 35-35 first-rate divisions on both sides (*Welle* 1 and *divisions actives*) and 24-24 in second rate divisions (*Welle* 2 and *Série A*).[43] Furthermore, the French "third-rate" divisions were stationed in areas perceived to confer significant advantages to the defender, including the bastions of the Maginot Line, the Alps, and most unfortunately for France, the forests of the Ardennes.[44] There, three of the worst *Serie B* divisions were stationed, precisely at the main point of the German attack. Much ink has been spilled about the implications of believing that the Ardennes were impassable for tanks and, consequently, leaving their defense to third-rate garrison troops. More than any other decision, this probably cost France the war. The strategic error, however disastrous, does not reflect on the overall state of the French army, but rather its strategic choices in the deployment of the forces it possessed.

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[41] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend,* 57-60.

[42] Jacques Belle, *La défaite française, un désastre évitable (T.1): Le 16 mai 1940, il fallait rester en Belgique*, ECONOMICA edition (ECONOMICA, 2007), 170.

[43] Belle, *La défaite française, un désastre évitable,* 170.

[44] Belle, *La défaite française, un désastre évitable,* 170.

The Air Force

From 1937 to 1938, the air force budget almost doubled from 3.866 billion francs to 6.718 billion francs.[45] Total defense spending increased from 13 to 17 billion, an increase of 30% in one year. The government nationalized and rationalized much of the aviation and armaments industries, increasing the production of planes. By September of 1939, French industry produced 320 planes a month, and the number of workers increased from about 35,000 in 1935 to 171,000 in January 1940.[46] By 1939, combined British and French plane production outproduced the Germans by 20%, with about 10,000 Allied planes being produced in total against about 8,000 German ones. By June 1940, the number of combat planes on the French and German sides were about equal, with around 3,500 fighters and bombers on each side.[47] From a purely numerical perspective, the French and German air forces were on equal ground.

The Maginot Line: White Elephant or Force Multiplier?

The Maginot Line is one of the most controversial defensive lines ever constructed. Much has been written of the seeming ease by which the Germans were able to bypass the strong fortifications of the Maginot. The perception of its invincibility became an ironic symbol of hubris and the refusal of the French army to take the offensive, as well as its overreliance on fortifications. Critics decried how much money could have gone to more modern arms and tanks, and after the war it was described by its detractors as "a rat trap for 500,000 men" (*une ratière dans laquelle 500,000 hommes sont enfermés*).[48] Indeed, garrisoning and defending it did occupy a substantial portion of France's armies, as well as an important part of the

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[45] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered,* 35-40.

[46] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered,* 75.

[47] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend,* 66.

[48] Maurice Rajsfus, *De la victoire à la débâcle juin 1919-juin 1940* (CHERCHE MIDI, 2000), 83.

military budget before 1925. Worse still, the Maginot Line had acquired such a status within the French military that an inordinate amount of military resources were devoted to its defense, even at the 11th hour.[49] For example, the heavy B-1 tanks of the 3rd Division Cuirassée (DCr) were taken from Sedan to relieve the siege on La Ferté, where the Germans had launched a diversionary attack on the Maginot in order to keep French attention away from the offensive in the Ardennes. This was despite the fact that just ten miles to the north, the German panzer spearheads were on the verge of breaking through.

The Maginot Line was a deeply misrepresented system, with its disadvantages and strengths both overexaggerated to different degrees. For all the discussion of the opportunity cost involved, France spent only about 5.3 billion francs on the construction of this fortification system, a sum that is roughly comparable to sums spent in much less relevant theaters, like the naval bases in North Africa and the naval buildup.[50] As such, it accounted for a very modest proportion of French military spending, especially after 1936 and the rearmament program of the Popular Front, which did much to remedy the shortcomings of the mobile arm of the French army. The fortification should also be placed in its historical context. For a French army that was reliant on mobilization and in which even the active divisions were mostly composed of conscripts (60% for the line and 74% for the officers), time was required to bring it into fighting condition.[51] The Maginot Line provided a good shield which defended the national territory against direct invasion, a screen behind which the army could mobilize. Additionally, French defense planners foresaw serious difficulties in any offensive operation from Alsace-Lorraine into the heart of Germany. Firstly, the terrain of the Rhine massif immediately across the Rhine and towards the Ruhr was

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[49] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend,* 300.

[50] Forczyk, *Case Red,* 50-52.

[51] Eugenia C Kiesling, *Arming Against Hitler: France and the Limits of Military Planning* (University Press of Kansas, 1996), 170.

not conducive to a swift advance, and any delay there would allow German forces to concentrate and defeat French forces on the frontier.[52] Additionally, after the construction of the Siegfried Line, the task of breaching the already difficult German frontier was increased.[53] It is easy to argue that France should have taken the offensive, but one should also remember that similar attempts of a headlong offensive into southern Germany by way of Lorraine had met with total disaster in 1870 and 1914. Hence, the Maginot Line and the strategy of defense in Alsace-Lorraine was not the miscalculation it was often portrayed as after the war.

However, the Maginot was neither the invulnerable fortification it was represented as, nor a viable way to economize French forces on the frontiers. In fact, the Maginot line was a highly heterogenous line with variable defensive value. Strong fortifications had only been built up in certain sectors of the line, with the rest remaining relatively unfortified.[54] For example, the Saar gap was only garrisoned by a line of concrete blockhouses and machine gun nests, far from the massive underground fortresses seen in other parts of the Maginot.[55] Many other sectors in the line were lacking in organic artillery, built in an improvised fashion, or barely covered by any prepared defenses at all.[56] It was only the propaganda of the pre-war French army that had portrayed the whole of the Maginot as an impregnable bastion.

The greater danger of the Maginot was how it drew a disproportionate number of French troops to its defense. In 1940, 36 French divisions were sitting on the Maginot against about 19 German divisions, meaning that almost half of the French army was deployed to a sector of the

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[52] Rocolle, *La guerre de 1940*, 67.

[53] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered,* 45.

[54] Philippe Garraud, 'La politique de fortification des frontières de 1925 à 1940: logiques, contraintes et usages de la « Ligne Maginot »', 14-16.

[55] Garaud, 'La politique de fortification des frontières de 1925 à 1940,' 14-16.

[56] Garaud, 'La politique de fortification des frontières de 1925 à 1940,' 14-16.

front which remained irrelevant while the main battle was being fought and lost in the north.[57] Ultimately, the Maginot was constructed for a good reason, and had several beneficial effects for the French army, especially by allowing it to mobilize safely and concentrate its mobile forces further north. However, the overattachment to the defense of the Maginot, exacerbated by the propaganda about its role as France's impregnable bastion, led to an overcommitment of scarce troops in a sector that had been made irrelevant by the line's existence. The irony of the Maginot is that by its presence, it shifted the main battlefield in the west to Belgium and the low countries. Yet the French army remained fixated on maintaining its inviolability, robbing themselves of the resources necessary for the main theater.

The Mechanized Divisions and the Armored Force: Failure of Organization?

The previous section established that the French army held a numerical advantage in tanks over the Germany army. How then can one explain the stunning disaster of 1940, where German armored columns were able to push their way past the French army and encircle the allied armies in northern France? There are two key factors: the organization of the tanks and the geographical deployment of the armored divisions.

For one, most French tanks were not concentrated in tank divisions, but rather in battalions attached to army corps as reserve units. As such, the majority of the French tanks, especially the Hotchkiss H35 and H39, were scattered throughout the French army, primarily with the infantry.[58] The tanks gave the infantry corps greater firepower, but there was insufficient *concentration* of armored forces at the operational level. Against ten German Panzer divisions, French armor was concentrated in three light mechanized divisions (*Division Légère Mécanique,* or DLMs*)*, and three armored divisions (*Division Cuirassée* or DCrs).[59] In these formations, the Germans

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[57] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend,* 300-301.

[58] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 177.

had about 2,500 tanks against 1,000 French tanks.[60] To make matters worse for the French, the DLMs and the DCrs were different in their role. The DLMs, operated by the cavalry arm, were most equivalent to the Panzer divisions, designed to move as a unit, reconnoiter, and screen against enemy movements, as well as act as the mobile reaction force of the French army.[61] The DCrs, on the other hand, were operated by the infantry, and were restricted to certain operations, such as breaking through of enemy lines and operations on enemy flanks.[62] To fulfill this mission, they had heavier tanks and artillery, but were not meant to operate independently as maneuver units. They had a greater reliance on transport by rail and lacked their own independent reconnaissance elements to find and engage the enemy.[63] Their role was to break the enemy line, move in conjunction with the infantry, and make counterattacks where necessary.

As such, in terms of armored divisions, the Germans outnumbered and outmatched the French. Worse, the DCrs and the DLMs (to a lesser extent), suffered from serious shortages of key equipment such as radios and signal equipment, anti-aircraft guns, as well as inefficient refueling operations that seriously limited their space for independent maneuver.[64] In 1940, many of the planned counterattacks by the French DCrs did not succeed because the divisions were dispersed widely over several railheads and constantly running short of fuel.[65] Very few French tanks had radios at

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[59] Dominique Lormier, *Mai-juin 1940: les causes de la défaite* (Alisio Histoire, 2020), 87.

[60] Lormier, *Mai-juin 1940: les causes de la défaite,* 87.

[61] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 171.

[62] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 169.

[63] Kiesling, *Arming Against Hitler,* 164-166.

[64] Rocolle, *La guerre de 1940,* 310.

[65] Rocolle, *La guerre de 1940,* 310.

all, making it extremely difficult for commanders to coordinate operations with other tanks, and the design of French tanks was such that tank commanders were overworked with the tasks of commander and gunner, further reducing their capacity for tactical response.[66]

Compounding this inferiority in armored divisions was the deployment of these formations. Due to political and military considerations, the French High Command had resolved in 1940 to dash into Belgium in order to take up defensive positions on the Dyle River, Plan D.[67] In the winter of 1939 – 1940, Gamelin decided to devote 7th Army, the reserve army, which included the 1st DLM, to the "Breda variant," which would put 7th Army in a position to advance to Breda and link up with the Netherlands.[68] This deprived the French army of a mobile reserve. The result was that in June of 1940, after Guderian's armor had broken through at Sedan, there were no mobile forces available to stem the tide immediately, and while the DCrs were thrown into the fight in a desperate attempt to stem the tide, their attacks were too slow and uncoordinated to decisively break the Panzer bridgeheads.[69]

Why did this happen? The Dyle-Breda plan required the French army to cover more ground than the Germans with the best of their forces, promising a battle of encounter against a German army advancing a similar distance. But politically and militarily, it had several important advantages: Firstly, it would enhance Allied unity by supporting the Belgians and preventing a collapse of Belgium.[70] Secondly, it would screen the vital industrial regions of Lille and the northeast against attack, preventing

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[66] Lormier, *Mai-juin 1940: les causes de la défaite,* 199-205.

[67] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered,* 122-133.

[68] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered,* 122-133.

[69] André Beaufre, *1940. The Fall of France. Translated by Desmond Flower and with a Preface by Basil Liddell Hart* (Cassell, 1967), 196-197.

[70] Gunsberg, *Divided and Conquered,* 122-133.

destruction similar to1914-1918.[71] Thirdly, it would concentrate French military forces on (allegedly) prepared positions, on a river, which would allow the French to consolidate strong defensive forces to meet the German offensive.[72] Lastly, it was thought that the Dutch and the Belgians would be able to delay the German army sufficiently to allow French forces to take up positions.[73] For the French army, the risk of overextension was matched by the consequences of inaction and the rewards of action.

Unfortunately, once war was declared, things went wrong immediately. Belgian and Dutch forces on the frontiers were quickly overwhelmed, with the key fort of Eban-Emael falling to German glider assault in a single day.[74] French forces arrived in Belgium to discover no fortifications had been built, and the bulk of the army, arriving on foot, struggled to catch up to the motorized formations.[75] Even so, French forces performed well against the Germans. In a series of tank battles at Hannut and Gembloux, the DLMs fought back German armored attacks, inflicting equivalent damage to what they suffered.[76] One wonders what might have been if they had been able to intervene at Sedan instead.

The Air Force

Despite the numerical parity on paper, the French and allied air forces in 1940 suffered from an inferiority that was evident in the serious losses that they took and their inability to interdict German tank columns or prevent the

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[71] Gunsberg, *Divided and Conquered,* 122-133.

[72] Gunsberg, *Divided and Conquered,* 122-133.

[73] Gunsberg, *Divided and Conquered,* 122-133.

[74] Forcyzk, *Case Red,* 160-163.

[75] Forcyzk, *Case Red,* 169.

[76] Jeffrey A. Gunsburg, 'The Battle of the Belgian Plain, 12-14 May 1940: The First Great Tank Battle,' *The Journal of Military History* 56, no. 2 (1992): 240-242. https://doi.org/10.2307/1985797.

Luftwaffe's relentless ground attacks. Why was this the case? It is noted that the French air force only put up about 900 planes to resist the initial German blow of around 2,500 planes.[77] Allied contributions by the British (400 planes) and the Belgians (120 planes) were not sufficient to compensate.[78] The *Luftwaffe* made an all-out effort in the very first battle of the campaign in the west, staking it all on the decisive moment. French airpower was held in reserve in preparation for a long war, and as a result, although both sides took heavy casualties, the *Luftwaffe* had managed, just as in 1918, to achieve local superiority on the front line for a decisive battlefield offensive.[79] Once again, this was attributable to the strategic miscalculation of French high command and their inability to rapidly respond once the situation changed.

In addition to the French failure to commit the bulk of their air force immediately, Britain held back a substantial portion of the Royal Air Force for home defense, when the threat from the German *Luftwaffe* over France was much starker. Out of forty-two fighter squadrons, only fourteen were deployed to France, and none of the newest Spitfire models.[80] Furthermore, despite the numerical parity of the French aircraft on paper, in reality most of the French aircraft were the outdated Morane-Saulnier 406, inferior to the Bf 109 that the Germans were operating in both speed and armament.[81] The Dewoitine D520, the only modern French fighter which could stand up to the German equivalents, was present in insufficient numbers to fight on even ground with the Luftwaffe.[82] This made the absence of the RAF, with its modern fighters like the Spitfire and the Hurricane, all the more serious for

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[77] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend,* 66-70.

[78] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend,* 66-70.

[79] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend,* 66-70.

[80] Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend,* 66-70.

[81] Lormier, *Mai-juin 1940: les causes de la défaite,* 85-86.

[82] Lormier, *Mai-juin 1940: les causes de la défaite,* 85-86.

allied air power. Would a greater contribution by the RAF to the battle of France have turned the tide? It is hard to predict. But as allies, it was arguable that the British had the obligation to try. Despite this, at various points in the campaign, allied forces had been able to secure limited air superiority over the key sector of the Ardennes. But for lack of more planes, they might have been able to stop the Panzers in their tracks.[83]

Methodical Battle: French High Command, Military Doctrine, and Coordination

Despite the chaos of interwar French politics, upon closer inspection, we discover a surprising constancy to the personnel at the top of the French military. From 1936-1940, Edouard Daladier served continuously as the Minister of War.[84] The most important positions in the army's hierarchy were dominated by only five officers in the twenty years between 1920 and 1940. The key figures of Maxime Weygand and Maurice Gamelin took up the key positions of vice president of the Superior Council of War and the Chief of the General Staff for basically all of the 1930s.[85] However, despite this lack of turnover, France suffered from a lack of coordination at the highest levels. There was no real joint command of the three services, no minister of national defense until 1936, and no leader specifically charged with the coordination of military activities until the eve of the war. There was, furthermore, no general staff above the three services, and there was no unity of command or joint staff work between these services.

As a result of this disjointed leadership, the military hierarchy was fragmented, and no one man had command over the whole of the military.[86] To a large extent, this was the result of the Third Republic's fear of over-empowering the military, not unjustified given the history of military coups

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[83] Gunsburg, *Divided and Conquered,* 201.

[84] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 113-135.

[85] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 113-135.

[86] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 113-135.

in France at the time. (Napoleon III and General Boulanger coming to mind most prominently).[87] There was also no centralized hierarchical system for the modernization of defense equipment or the development of new technologies.[88] In 1940, this fragmentation of the high command extended even to Gamelin's field command, which was located far away from the front, without radio or telegraph communications, relying on messenger and telephone. Neither he, nor his subordinate, General Alphonse George, who was responsible for the critical northeast front, possessed a complete staff, forcing officers to shuttle between both headquarters daily.[89] All this led to the inability to adapt, both in peace and war, to rapid changes when they occurred.

Aside from the inefficiencies of the general staff's organization, we must turn our attention to doctrine. As previously stated, French doctrine relied on two concepts: firepower and "methodical battle".

The doctrine of methodical battle (*bataille méthodique*) is best described in the words of General André Beaufre, who served in the general staff in the interwar years and was a pupil at the *École de Guerre*. This doctrine, he said: "… had reduced everything to a mathematical sum worked out with a ready reckoner—troops, ammunition, stores, casualties and time equated with the number of kilometers involved." [90] Indeed, the 1936 "Instructions for the Use of Large Units" (*les instructions pour l'emploi des grandes unités*) article 204 states: "The command fixes the rhythm, the conditions for the progression towards different objectives: the average speed of the attack, the length of halts on the objectives, the agreements for the resumption of movement, the authorities responsible for so ordering, the

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[87] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 113-135. This was also one of the main reasons why the professional army was dismissed as an operating concept for the interwar French army.

[88] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 113-135.

[89] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 113-135.

[90] Beaufre, *1940. The Fall of France,* 37-39.

movement of the artillery, etc., all the dispositions are to be decided minutely."[91]

One clearly begins to see that the whole doctrine was based on the idea of granular control of men, of the pace of advance, and probably most importantly of all, control of casualties sustained. For this was the key motivation behind the concept of methodical battle, created after the hard losses of the Great War.[92] There was to be an end to reckless offensives which outpaced the artillery and left themselves vulnerable. Manpower was to be carefully and efficiently used, supported by large amounts of firepower. Indeed, the defining characteristics of methodical battle was the primacy of firepower over maneuver, and of centralized control over decentralized mobility.

Firepower and hence the artillery was the cornerstone of methodical battle. Firepower, it was thought, would be the determinant of any future conflict. This power would be used to overwhelm and inflict great losses on any enemy formation.[93] In this regard, the experience of the Great War and the immense artillery barrages that destroyed the German fortifications on the Hindenburg Line must have been a powerful motivator for the continued centrality of firepower to French doctrine. In addition, the lethality of modern firepower was perceived to confer great advantages to any defender. In 1931, Paul Valéry, the director of the *Academie Francaise* summed up this conception of firepower thusly: "It is therefore an understatement to say that fire kills. Modern fire mows: it suppresses; it prohibits movement and life in any area it commands. Four resolute men hold a thousand in check, and strike dead or alive all those who show themselves … This is how [firepower] gets the better of movement, it buries combat, embarrasses maneuver, paralyzing, in a way, all strategy."[94] Due to the prominence of artillery in the First World

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[91] Philippe Garraud, 'Le rôle de la « doctrine défensive » dans la défaite de 1940 : une explication trop simple et partielle,' 101-102.

[92] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 90.

[93] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 91-111.

War, the offense-defense balance was perceived to tilt firmly in advantage of the defender.

Control of the French artillery was retained at the divisional, corps, and army level. The emphasis became the controlled and centralized concentration of firepower under a central direction, rather than, in the German case, the decentralization and emphasis on mobility given to the artillery.[95] The majority of the heavy artillery was organized in a way external to the unit, to be used on the strategic level. In 1926, the Regulation on the Maneuver of the Artillery emphasized: "The systematic allocation of all artillery to subordinate elements must be avoided; it constitutes an abdication of command."[96] The decision of when and how to deploy firepower was in the hands of higher formations, rather than the units who needed support immediately.

This approach towards the divisions extended towards the mobile units, including the motorized divisions and the DCrs. The new divisions, as previously mentioned, were designed in the traditional way, with the motorized and armored elements serving to increase the mobility *but not the pace of action* of the respective units. The motorized divisions were not independently fully mobile, but rather relied on trucks to bring them to the destination, where they would fight as conventional infantry units.[97] Their quick movement was always reliant on the provision of trucks in the right place and the right time, using trucks from the general reserve.[98] The DCrs were further envisioned to serve together with the infantry, with the infantry setting the pace of the offensive and together with the artillery, being part of a combined arms movement that was at its core still fundamentally designed

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[94] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 91-111.

[95] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 91-111.

[96] Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster,* 91-111.

[97] Belle, *La défaite française, un désastre évitable* 172-173.

[98] Belle, *La défaite française, un désastre évitable* 172-173.

around *planned* movements of breakthrough, defense, and counterattack. Thus, the "methodical battle" constrained the potential of the armored divisions, preventing them from achieving their full potential. Core to this was the perception that armored units, unsupported by infantry and artillery, would not be able to last on their own, and be cut off. In 1935, General Eugène Debeney, the former Chief of the General Staff, said the following regarding the potential for an armored offensive with independent armored units: "We will have a brilliant communiqué at the outset, and a few days later, a useless S.O.S.[99]

Conclusions: The Limitations of Materiel and Planning

The French army of the interwar period was not blind to the realities of modern warfare. In fact, it clearly saw France's strategic vulnerabilities and designed a strategy that had three main objectives: The modernization of the army, preparation for total war, and the preservation of French territory and manpower. The army was supported by a government that was able to provide it with the funding and materiel it needed, and it was composed of troops that were willing to fight hard when well-equipped and supported. In the years leading up to the war, France made huge strides in modernization, re-equipping its forces and envisioning the future of warfare with the new tools of airpower and armor. It also realized that war with Germany would require the total mobilization of France's population and industry and prepared itself accordingly. By any account, given the unprecedented nature of the war the French army was entering, it performed better than most other countries in its position.

The French army was defeated, not due to the backwardness of its army nor the inability of its men to fight. In the brief campaign in Belgium, and subsequently in Case Red, French soldiers fought hard against German forces, even when severely outnumbered and outgunned. It fell due to the strategic miscalculations of a general staff who mismanaged a battle of encounter and took risks that were, retrospectively, miscalculated. The high command bet everything on a plan that relied on allied cooperation, without

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[99] Kiesling, *Arming Against Hitler,* 164.

ensuring that the relevant allies were committed and cooperating. Flexibility and speed, key elements in any military operation, were severely lacking, and the French army was left scrambling in a futile attempt to rescue the strategic situation after its opening miscalculations. 1940 started the same way as 1914, but ended in ultimate disaster due to the high command's inability to deploy and concentrate the reserves in a battle of maneuver as Maréchal Joffre had managed at the "Miracle on the Marne." At the heart of this failure was a doctrine that was not well adapted to the rapidly changing conditions of war, which resulted in units that were not designed to make the best use of the equipment they were given.

In recent years, there has been a new emphasis on the industrial nature of war. Much ink has been spilt on the buildup of the Chinese navy, of the Russian mobilization and production of artillery shells, and on the US's own weaknesses with its defense-industrial base. Production of material and the acquisition of new platforms is indeed important. But of greater importance is what the military do with the weapons they have been given. Will new weapons be used in old ways, reducing their effectiveness? Or will they be positioned in formations that best ensure their success? Bureaucratic inertia against the redistribution of power and resources argues against the latter. History has shown that the deployment of new capabilities and the creation of relevant doctrine is what converts material to victory.

Another legacy of 1940 is how militaries manage the aftermath of defeat. After the armistice, just as the German army had done in 1919, the French army pinned the blame on the government, on the population, and on "traitors" who had stabbed it in the back.[100] In 1942, Pétain held a trial at Riom that charged the Popular Front government and the succeeding government of Daladier for treason, for dividing the country and not equipping the army well enough to resist Germany.[101] At the trial, Gamelin, who had been in command of French troops in 1940, loaded blame onto the

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[100] Nicole Jordan, "Strategy and Scapegoatism: Reflections on the French National Catastrophe, 1940," *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques* 22, no. 1 (1996): 26-27.

[101] Jordan, "Strategy and Scapegoatism," 27-28.

Popular Front for their perceived failures.[102] In these footsteps, the Vichy regime emerged, just as Hitler's had before it.[103] This avoidance of responsibility by the military, particularly its high command, is human nature. But the effect on democracy and governance can be crippling. One must think of the army's responsibility as one of fighting and winning wars—giving credit when things go well. But similarly, when defeat occurs, it is the role of a patriotic and democratic military to admit when they were responsible. Maréchal Joffre, who saved France in 1914, said it best: "*I do not know, if it was I who won the battle of the Marne. But I know this well: if it had been lost, it would have been lost by me*."[104]

[102] Jordan, "Strategy and Scapegoatism," 27-28.

[103] Jordan, "Strategy and Scapegoatism," 30.

[104] Marc Bloch, *Strange Defeat*, First Edition (W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 25.

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