organizing model, the author is a bit too quick in his rejection of alternative explanations for the failure of Japan's opposition. But, all in all, this is a very valuable book and an excellent text for any course in contemporary Japanese politics.

–Ronald J. Hrebenar

LEARNING THAT FIRE KILLS

Robert A. Doughty: *Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War* (Cambridge, MA: Belnap Press, 2005. Pp. xii, 578. $39.95.)

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In 1914, Europe was a powder keg, divided into two armed camps, each of which commanded massive armies of citizen-soldiers apparently prepared to die for their respective fatherlands. It was a continent riven with dissention, whose leaders increasingly viewed every dispute as a zero-sum game, in which they dare not yield lest they face the ire of their nationalistic populations and threaten the solidity of their fragile alliances. Therefore, war came as no surprise in 1914. What was a surprise, for most people anyway, was that it lasted so long and was so terribly destructive. The expected war of annihilation revealed itself to be a war of attrition. Four years and millions of casualties later, the fighting ended more out of exhaustion than military victory.

Robert Doughty's impressive new book on the French army in World War I adds to a growing literature—indeed, one might add obsession—with that war, especially in Europe. Leonard V. Smith's 1994 book, *Between Mutiny and Obedience*, focused on the evolution of discipline and command relationships in the French Fifth Infantry Division. In 2003, Smith joined with French historians Stéphane Audoin-Rouszeau and Annette Becker to publish *France and the Great War 1914–1918*, which concentrates on the experience and legacy of the war in French memory. The tactical dimensions of the French war were covered by Michel Goya in *La chair et l'acier: l'armee française et l'invention de la guerre modern (1914–1918)*, published in 2004, a year after Anthony Clayton's very useful overview, *Paths of Glory, the French Army 1914–1918*, appeared. American military historian Robert Doughty has produced a major, archive-intensive history of the French army in World War I that focuses on the intersection of strategy, planning, and operations.

Waging war is about balancing dilemmas, and the French faced them in spades, usually with unhappy results. French Commander-in-Chief Josef Joffre had to plan for, and fight, a war against an enemy that was superior in practically every organizational and technological category. While

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Doughty gives Joffre generally high marks for whipping the French army into shape for combat, he exposes the French commander's confusion about the nature of the coming conflict. Doughty also gets off to a fast start in an opening chapter that might have benefited from more discussion of the tumultuous decade of the Dreyfus Affair that churned French civil-military relations and its impact on French war preparation. According to Doughty, once Joffre recovered from his disastrous, casualty-intensive early mistakes, he began to wage a more "sensible and effective campaign" (p. 97) that delivered a "miracle" victory on the Marne in September 1914. On the other hand, some decades ago, Gerhard Ritter observed that the Schlieffen plan was so ambitious that it would have collapsed under its own weight whatever Joffre did, or did not, do. Unfortunately, what Joffre accomplished by November 1914 was to deliver a butcher's bill of 400,000 dead French soldiers and a German army camped out for the duration in northern France.

As captain of the home team, Joffre argued that the Allies must pressure the Central Powers lest Berlin and Vienna exploit their interior lines to pick off the Allies in a piecemeal fashion. Unfortunately, an argument that made perfect strategic sense was an operational and tactical nonstarter in a war in which no army possessed the skill or the technology to break the trench deadlock. Joffre launched a series of what he called "partial offensives" in 1915 while he waited for the British to mobilize and the Russians to do something dramatic on the Eastern front. By 1916, however, Joffre's strategy of burden shifting was unraveling—the Russians had shot their bolt, what was left of the Serbian army had been shoved into northern Greece, the Italians were stalled on the Isonzo, and the Rumanians entered the war only to be crushed in a matter of days. The British inflated their diminutive prewar professional force into a reasonable replica of a continental nation-in-arms. However, the Saint-Cyr and Ecole de Guerre educated French remained quietly appalled at the amateur staff work and naïve tactics of their British counterparts.

Meanwhile, the French army was being hammered to a pulp at Verdun, thanks, in part, to Joffre's inattention to intelligence reports that predicted a German offensive on the Western Front and his inability to grasp German Commander Falkenhayn's strategic objectives and operational methods. Furthermore, he failed by believing that the French government would even think Verdun worth defending. In two-and-a-half years, Joffre produced failed offensives and high casualties. The French commander, once untouchable as the first French general to thrash a German army since Napoleon, was by mid-1916 damaged goods. Doughty chronicles the shuffle of command arrangements calculated both to preserve Joffre—and with him the government of French Prime Minister Aristide Briand—and bring his casualty-intensive offensives under control.

They failed. Joffre was promoted to marshal of France and banished from the front. Senior performers like Foch and Pétain were passed over in favor a

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young, headline-grabbing thruster who had captured the strong points of Vaux and Douamont at Verdun—Robert Nivelle. The elevation of a Protestant, pro-Republican artilleryman to high command illustrated an endemic problem in French civil-military relations—politics trumped competence in a republic that distrusted its praetorians. A second predicament endemic to all armies in that war was that tactical innovations were interpreted as strategic solutions, a syndrome that afflicts the twenty-first century no less than it did the early twentieth. Nivelle proved no exception, seeking to elevate the deep penetration artillery barrage that he had mastered at Verdun into a strategy of the "continuous thrust." This, he claimed, was superior to the hitherto go-stop-go offensives, made necessary as an advance was suspended while the artillery displaced forward to prepare the next assault. The lugubrious Pétain cautioned that German trenches could only be taken one at a time. What worked in the narrow confines of the Verdun salient would fail if tried on a broader front. He was correct—Nivelle's offensive on the Chemin-des-Dames was called off after three days.

Philippe Pétain's promotion to commander of the French army on Nivelle's demise was regarded as a *pis aller* by almost everyone, including Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau who gradually maneuvered Fernand Foch into a position of influence. Although this confused the command structure, in Doughty's view, it made for good chemistry. Foch was a more imaginative thinker, more opportunistic, and better at working with allies. For his part, Pétain understood that the French army was on the verge of meltdown, that its tactics were outmoded, and that, with the Russian collapse of 1917, the great reckoning with the German army was on the horizon. The French held in 1918 in the face of a series of massive German offensives, but barely. Their underperformance came about in part because they were forced to offload so much equipment to supply the enthusiastic but underequipped American doughboys, who arrived with their uniforms and a change of underwear. America's entry into the war, while a lifesaver for France, sabotaged Pétain's plan to modernize and mechanize the French forces and, therefore, deprived them of punch.

Doughty has written a solid, single-volume, chateau-view history of the French army's participation in the war that focuses on doctrine, manuals, and operational orders issued by senior commanders forced to reconcile the requirement for action to the paltry means at their disposal. It is a history of the French army in World War I with the face of battle factored out. We get little feel for French military culture and how it impacted choices. The German army remains a shadowy, beyond-the-parapets force to which the French react, rather than interact. Nevertheless, it is a significant achievement, one that is likely to remain a standard treatment for years to come.

–Douglas Porch

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