

**Bruno Cabanes (dir.), Thomas Dodman, Hervé Mazurel, Gene Tempest (coord.), Une histoire de la guerre. Du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle à nos jours, Paris (Éditions du Seuil) 2018, 800 p., 4 ill., ISBN 978-2-02-128722-6, EUR 32,00**

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**Beatrice Heuser, Glasgow**

Heralded by the publisher as »un livre événement«, a book that is an event, this is truly the case. This edited volume is not a classic single-authored account of the evolution of warfare in all its dimensions, progressing chronologically from Napoleon to the present, which has of course been done successfully by several authors (if perhaps not covering the whole period). It takes a different approach which arguably only an edited volume with over 700 pages and over 60 contributions could. Instead of following an overall chronological pattern, the volume approaches war more as an anthropologist would, thematically. The four major themes revolve around perceptions of war (»La Guerre moderne«), the soldier (»Mondes combattants«), the experience of war, both from the point of view of the soldier and that of the civilian, and how wars end and the long shadow they cast over subsequent ages: the scars they leave, and how they are remembered (»Sorties de guerre«). These larger sections are not always convincing in their order, as some chapters in different sections cover adjacent themes.

The volume includes great names from both sides of the Atlantic and of the Channel, as well as younger researchers. English-language contributions have been translated into French. Jean-Vincent Holeindre gives a competent summary of the evolution of thinking about warfare and strategy, strongly inspired by Clausewitz whose interpretation of war as a chameleon he shows to be lastingly apposite. Hew Strachan ponders the rise, fall and lately disappearance of the central battle from warfare. Alan Forrest explains the concept of the citizen-soldier, largely constructed, of course, by Revolutionary America and France in the 18<sup>th</sup> century from ideational building-blocks taken from the rich quarry of Antiquity.

Fashionably, John R. McNeill writes about warfare and the destruction of the environment, and Katherine Hall about drones. Michael Neiberg stresses the impotency or else dangers of technology when not strictly subordinated to strategy. Richard Overy in two contributions dissects the state's comprehensive mobilisation for war in the great wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a subject enlarged upon by Jennifer Siegel's chapter on war finance, by Odile Roynette's on the »industrial production« of soldiers from boy-scouts to paramilitary organisations, and Robert Gerwarth's on the total mobilisation of society in total war – and about the bombing war, seen from the perspective of the civilian victims. This is neatly complemented by Karen Hagemann's chapter on the



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home front, and especially the role of women in war. Carl Bouchard covers pacifist movements, following an old tradition, but taking off and becoming global after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (a special chapter is dedicated to the shadow of Hiroshima by Ken Daimaru). Professional soldiers and soldiers recruited from the European powers' respective colonies are the subjects of the chapters by Jörg Echternkamp and Eric Jennings. The recruitment of volunteers and the transition from volunteers (e. g. in the French Revolutionary Wars) to compulsory conscription is the subject of the chapter by Hervé Mazurel, female soldiers are covered by Mary Louise Roberts (did you know that 800 000 women served in the Red Army between 1941 and 1945, of whom 500 000 came under fire, and 200 000 fought with partisans?, p. 320), child soldiers by Manon Pignot (UNICEF estimates that there are 250 000–300 000 child soldiers today, p. 337).

Slightly curious is Caroline Elkins' chapter that defends the British Empire as mainly defensive, boldly claiming that British imperialism is a »myth«. All-too brief a summary by Adam Baczko tries to deal with guerrilla and counter-insurrection in only 8 pages, while John Lynn is given 13 for terrorism, arguably only the far end of a spectrum of insurgency a.k.a. *guerrilla*. Baczko's chapter is remarkably complemented by Victor Louzon's on revolution taking the guise of warfare in Mao's China and its contextualisation in Communism's world-wide struggle. Rebellion of another sort is treated by Nicolas Offenstadt, who homes in on the disobedient soldier. Fabien Théofilakis discusses the prisoner of war in the changing context of two centuries. Morale is the subject of Emmanuel Saint-Fuscien's chapter, and Clémentine Vidal-Naquet prettily explores one of the pillars of soldiers' morale, the letters to and above all from home.

Emotions and long-term effects on the psyche of soldiers and civilians who have survived war are treated instructively in further chapters: Thomas Dodman with his focus on the psyche of the soldier, and Raphaëlle Branche with the thorny question of whether colonial warfare brutalised Europeans involved in it, or whether Europeans with their racism rendered warfare outside Europe more brutal than it had previously been, with the help of superior firepower and other technology. Heather Jones' chapter covers the most recent part of a long history of a weapon targeting particularly civilians: artificially produced famine, which in previous centuries was known as scorched earth tactics. Mass rape, treated by Raphaëlle Branche, is another such systematic weapon, as has only recently been recognised by the United Nations, but Branche fails to convince when she argues that the sex drive of soldiers in war is purely a social and cultural construct – it is too perennial to be only that. That it is a matter of social construction, by contrast, whether officers allow their soldiers to unleash it or even encourage them to do so, is quite clear.

In the section on the experience of war, a fashionable topic of the 1990s makes its brief comeback in Hervé Mazurel's chapter of the soldier's body in war. Bruno Cabanes explores a particularly sombre yet prevalent issue which was rarely touched, namely the challenge in war of how to dispose of the many bodies of the dead that accumulate. Anne Rasmussen deals with the fate of injured

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combatants in war. Alya Aglan and Johann Chapoutot sketch the experience of occupation and its effects – they rightly point out that international law seems particularly naïf in presuming that occupying forces have the interest of the local populations in mind and must be trusted to govern them equitably. A different sort of alienation is the theme of Sheldon Garon's sketch of Japan's take on World War II, where traditionally the actions of Japanese soldiers on the Asian mainland are interpreted as virtually unrelated to the experience of war coming to Japan in the last phase of the war. Civil Wars are interestingly explored by Anne Rolland-Boulestreau and José Luis Ledesma, refugees and the internally displaced are covered by Daniel Cohen with very impressive statistics. Bruno Cabanes outlines the challenges of the reintegration of returning veterans into society, and Danièle Voldman tackles life among the ruins in post-war urban societies. Grief and mourning are the subject of Annette Becker. Annette Wieviorka and Élisabeth Claverie ponder the problem of the witness and the judge, both aiming to establish the truth and to preserve it.

Johann Chapoutot has an excellent little chapter on the vacillating role of the hero in modern warfare, where technology and massive firepower theoretically leave no space for the hero, but makes all equally weak, equally vulnerable. Also brilliant is a chapter by art historian Laurence Bertrand Dorleac on the turning point in the pictorial representation of war constituted by Goya's series of paintings known as »Los desastres de la guerra«. This was not entirely without precedent – think of Breughel the Elder's symbolic »De Dulle Griet« of 1563, representing war as a folkloric woman stomping across the world leaving a trail of death and destruction, or Callot's etchings cycle »Misères de la Guerre«, in their finely chiselled detail reflecting the horrors of the Thirty Years' War. Goya shares the spirit of horror of both these painters, but his approach is quite different: with crude and simple brush or pen strokes, he sketched scenes from the Spanish Guerrilla uprising against the French, with only few individuals represented each time, each time depicting one scene as realistically and thus horribly as possible for him.

The collection is not entirely without flaws: Samuel Moyn in an otherwise good article falls into the classical trap of claiming that Francis Lieber's code of 1864 was the »first codification« of modern laws of war, which is nonsense as there is a long list of ordinances and articles of war going back at least a thousand years before Lieber, and there is no good reason to claim »modernity« began in 1864. Another myth has been the banana peel on which Leonard M. Smith has duly slipped and fallen: that of a »Yalta« deal of February 1945, supposedly between America and the USSR, a myth invented by de Gaulle because he was not invited (as established by Reiner Marcowitz in his seminal article<sup>1</sup>).

Masha Cerovic is left befuddled by her reading of the a-historic nonsense which Carl Schmitt, inexplicably popular in France



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<sup>1</sup> Reiner Marcowitz, The Myth of Yalta, in: Cyril Buffet, Beatrice Heuser (eds.), Haunted by History. Myths in International Relations, Oxford 1999, p. 80-91.

today, wrote on »the partisan«, and would have done well to read the considerable literature published in key journals such as »Small Wars & Insurgencies«. Christian Ingrao does himself and his readers no favour by omitting to clarify what his chapter on »extreme violence« actually deals with: Massacres? Particularly large numbers of dead as inflicted through mass starvation or air raids on cities? Particularly sadistic forms of killing inflicted on select individuals or groups? Having said that, his chapter makes some insightful points about the long-term brutalisation of societies where civil war blended into international war and vice versa.

And finally, regrettably, there are no references, neither as footnotes, endnotes, or Harvard-style, but short bibliographic essays which do not tell us much about sources. Nevertheless, this is an outstanding contribution to the literature on war, and deserves its place in every serious library.



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