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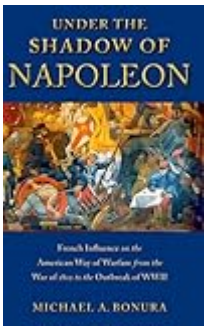

Michael A. Bonura. *Under the Shadow of Napoleon: French Influence on the American Way of Warfare from Independence to the Eve of World War II.* Warfare and Culture Series. New York: New York University Press, 2012. Maps. 318 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8147-0942-9.

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This is a book about the philosophical assumptions that motivate armies to fight the way they do. Michael A. Bonura calls it âan armyâs intellectual framework of the battlefieldâ or a âmilitary paradigmâ (p. 7). He asserts that it is created not by military experience alone but also by such diverse factors as the personalities of leaders, industrialization, and the beliefs of society at large. In fact, the author draws a direct connection between modern tactics, which arose during the French Revolution, and Enlightenment ideas. The French army, being the first to adopt these new tactics, served as a model for the US Army during the 1800s. In Bonuraâs view, the French concept of warfare remained dominant until France was defeated by Nazi Germany in 1940. General Winfield Scott successfully used French tactics during the War of 1812. Bonura analyzes the gradual process of convincing the army to adopt those tactics, and the promulgation of the tactics by means of professional education, and regulations. He was an instructor at the US Military Academy when he wrote this book, and had an ideal vantage point from which to research the academic history of that institution. He divides his study into six major periods: the French Revolution; the War of 1812 to the Mexican-American War; the Mexican-American War to the Civil War; the Civil War to the Spanish-American War; the Spanish-American War to World War I; and World War I to World War II. For each of these periods, he looks at the training of soldiers and officers and the cultural influences of the time, and ends by showing how a major war affected the military paradigm of each period.

The new French model of warfare developed during the French Revolution. It was a result of the dire military situation and the changed cultural assumptions about the role of the people that resulted in citizen-soldiers whose aims matched those of the new revolutionary state. Bonura writes, âThe logical systems of tactics imagined in the minds of the last military philosophes of the Enlightenment came to life through the passion, duty, and discipline of the citizen-soldier of the French Revolutionâ (p. 18). Patriotic soldiers, who were motivated to win, could be counted on to return. Desertion rates plummeted and troops could be trusted to forage in the countryside. This allowed French armies to be more mobile. With this new freedom of movement, divisions became more independent and that independence forced commanders to rely more on their own initiative. Mobility allowed the French to seize the initiative against static, ancien rÃ©gime armies, and led to a philosophy of attack. All of these factors played into creating the âFrench combat methodâ (p. 18). âThese ideas included

a dedication to offensive operations that culminated in an assault, the creation of an infantry army composed of nonspecialized infantry units, a linear but noncontiguous understanding of the battlefield, a desire to combine the effects of all auxiliary arms into the main infantry battle, and the adoption of nondogmatic tactics executed through the initiative of the officer corpsâ (p. 2). A short study of the Battle of Fleurus serves to illustrate the difference between the French and ancien rÃ©gime tactics.

Even though the French model had proved effective in Europe, it was difficult to implement in the United States. During the American Revolution, Baron von Steuben, although a Prussian, taught an adaptation of British drill methods, simplified for the Continental army. Those were still in use during the War of 1812. General Scott used the 1791 French drill manual to train his army of 3,500 men at Buffalo, New York. Victories at the Battle of Chippawa and Lundyâs Lane proved the effectiveness of the French model. Later, Scottâs reputation as a war hero and his forceful personality helped influence the adoption of the new French method. A resurgence of anti-British feeling after the War of 1812 coupled with the growing Napoleonic myth in America caused an American cultural shift toward French ideas. In addition, West Point, created in 1802, standardized its curriculum during the War of 1812, and adopted the French system of combat as its standard. Bonura traces what was being taught at West Point as well as the changes in military manuals during this period. He states that âwhen taken as a whole, the intellectual changes in the American way of warfare from 1775 to 1848 were revolutionaryâ (p. 89). Scott commanded American forces at the Battle of Chapultepec during the Mexican-American War. It is this battle that provides the illustration of French tactics in the field in the mid-1800s.

During the period between the Mexican-American War and the War between the States the military paradigm changed little. The author traces tactical studies to show that, although adaptations were made for rifled muskets, the overall system of tactics still followed the French model. He gives a detailed analysis of several books by Dennis H. Mahan, who taught engineering at West Point, as well as *Elements of Military Art and Science* (1846) by Henry Halleck, one of Mahanâs students. The works of these two men provided an American analysis of military theory. They both used Napoleonic examples to illustrate their theories. Two battles, First Bull Run and Cold Harbor, are compared to illustrate how little the intellectual framework of battle changed during the war. In the end, the author suggests that dedication to the same principles of warfare was a greater cause of massive casualties than failing to recognize how industrialization had changed warfare. Victory comes from innovation of one side, which gives it an advantage over its opponent. Since both sides remained committed to the French doctrine, which the officers of both armies had been taught at West Point, neither side could achieve an advantage.

Bonura sees the period after the Civil War as a time when the US Army followed the German example of making the army more professional. Major General Phil Sheridan observed the German army during the Franco-Prussian War and concluded that it represented the best of modern warfare. Most impressive was the German staff system. This led to a cultural shift from French to Prussian/German ideas. âThe history of the armyâs intellectual framework of the battlefield was rewritten to align itself more closely with the growing acknowledgment of German military excellence. The army looked to German organization, educational institutions, and military exercises for inspirationâ (p. 170). This shift led to a professionalization of the army, which further standardized training and tactics. US officers recognized an affinity with their German counterparts since both armies had restructured their tactics based on French methods. Much like the Americans, the Prussians adapted to French tactics after the Battle of Jena, but bolstered its ranks with Landwehr regiments. An 1867 manual on infantry tactics eliminated bayonet drill, and, even though it was later reinstituted, Bonura calls this the âfirst significant deviationâ from the French system of tactics since 1815 (p. 144). Another manual, the 1891 *Infantry Drill Regulations*, also made major changes when âthe extended order drill became the sole drill of the battlefield,â thus giving primacy to skirmish tactics. It also made the squad the âprimary unit of combatâ (p. 147). In spite of these changes, however, Bonura concludes, the French combat method did not change. âThe army still believed in the primacy of the offensive and the effectiveness of the predominantly infantry army with a nonspecialized infantry, which fought using a linear but noncontiguous order of battle that integrated the effects of the auxiliary arms to support the main infantry battle and utilized a nondogmatic system of tactics through the initiative of commanders at all levelsâ (p. 170). The Battle of Santiago is the example of how tactics had not changed substantially since the Civil War.

Although the military recognized the need for professionalism, change did not come easily. It was not until Progressive reformers took control of Congress that improvements in education and administration could be im-

plemented. Under Elihu Root, the new secretary of war, promotion of officers was based on a system of merit and examinations, rather than seniority. In 1903, the General Staff Act created a general staff corps supervised by the chief of staff. American staff officers observed the Boar War and the Russo-Japanese War. The author argues that, in spite of evidence to the contrary, both American and German observers clung to their outdated beliefs in the French style of warfare. World War I forced a parting of the ways, however. During the war, the Germans moved toward specialized units of âstorm troopersâ to attack enemy weak points, to punch a hole in the enemy line, which could then be utilized by the regular line troops. Bonura believes that the American military should have drawn the same conclusion, even though its time in combat was shorter. Instead, the Americans increased the number of automatic weapons, and improved infantry-artillery coordination, but âofficers came away from the experience feeling once again that though adaptation was necessary, the armyâs intellectual framework of the battlefield was vindicatedâ (p. 212). To illustrate American tactics during the Great War, Bonura uses the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne.

The author begins the next chapter by saying that âalthough the officer corps as a whole considered the armyâs intellectual framework of the battlefield based on the fundamental elements of the French combat method validated in WWI, the experiences of the war led to a period of experimentation.â The period of experimentation led to âan intellectual revolutionâ and a ânew paradigmâ that brought about the rejection of the French method of warfare in favor of the method used by the Germans to conquer Poland and France (p. 213). Based on the fact that the *Infantry Drill Regulations: (Provisional) 1919* had no section on defensive operations, Bonura believes that the âarmy adopted tactical regulations following WWI that remained committed to the French combat method and the armyâs existing intellectual frameworkâ (p. 215). Nonetheless, the author points out that General John Pershing created several boards to evaluate the armyâs performance in World War I and to recommend changes to procedures and organization. The national economy caused severe budget cuts, which meant the recommended changes never materialized. Even so, the army continued experimenting with mechanized units, and in 1928 the Mechanized Force Board âcreated an armored combined-arms organization and tentative tactics for such a unitâ (p. 217). Because of restricted resources, this new tactical unit was never integrated into the army as a whole. Even so, ideas were changing. The *Manual for Commanders of Large Units*, published in 1923, gave serious attention to defensive operations when it stated that, in most cases, victory came from successful counterattacks following defensive battles. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Germans published their *TruppenfÃ¼hrung* in 1936. These field service regulations outlined the new German doctrine of the battle group, which included various types of units depending on the job at hand. It also envisioned many types of specialized troops as well as tank battalions to punch through enemy lines. All of these ran counter to the French combat method. Back at home, the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, began teaching the idea of combat teamsâincluding artillery, machine guns, and tanksâwith the infantry. This coincided with the beginning of World War II and the German victories in Poland and France using the combat method known as blitzkrieg, which employed combat teams coordinated with tanks and airpower. Consequently, when George C. Marshall became chief of staff in 1939, he ordered the reexamination of all army doctrine with a view to countering successful German methods. The end result was the coordination of infantry, specialized units, artillery, tanks, and airplanes, and it was contained in the Infantry Field manual *7-5: The Organization and Training of InfantryâThe Rifle Battalion*, published in 1940. This, according to Bonura, was the final revolutionary step that overturned the French paradigm of war.

As Bonura states in his introduction, this is an intellectual history of the US Army. He analyzes the culture of the army as seen through its education system and the publications it produced. At the time he wrote this, he was an instructor at West Point with full access to that institutionâs archives. This advantage is evident in the thorough research and copious evidence he presents in the book. Tracing the development of ideas and the implementation of those ideas as they take hold is a fascinating topic and the author treats it with a great deal of skill.

To help understand the shift of ideas, the author adopted the analytic framework of Thomas Kuhn, who analyzed scientific revolutions in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), and created the now ubiquitous phrase âparadigm shift.â It has been a long time since I read Kuhn, but, if I remember correctly, his idea was that scientists have an intellectual framework that ties all their evidence together. Gradually new evidence is discovered that counters the accepted paradigm. Because it does not fit into the paradigm, the new evidence is ignored. This continues until the body of new evidence is so great that the old paradigm is overturned. The

change is preceded by a short period of competing ideas as the old and new struggle for dominance, making the change seem like a sudden revolution, rather than a gradual change. To me, at least, this did not seem to fit what appeared to be a gradual adaptation to changing technology. The Kuhnian model got in the way of the explanation more than once. The American adoption of French methods appears logical enough. Citizen-soldiers had different capabilities than conscripted professionals and American troops were more akin to their French brothers in arms than to their British counterparts. It is during the Civil War that the argument seems to be less convincing. Bonura contends that âboth the Union and Confederate commanders were committed to the same fundamental elements of the French combat method found in their frameworksâ (p. 132). At the regimental level this is probably true, but did Robert E. Lee continuously attempt decisive Napoleonic victories because of a slavish commitment to French tactics? Certainly James Longstreet counseled Lee on the advantages of the defense, thus contradicting the French paradigm of offensive primacy. Might Lee have been forced into attempting to score a knockout punch by the manpower and materiel limitations of his army? This would be a hard thing to prove, but the French paradigm argument seems incomplete nonetheless. After the Civil War, the army reassessed its tactics and made skirmish order the predominant formation for combat. It also adopted Prussian army methods and professionalism in the officer corps. Why this turn to Prussian organization did not constitute a shift away from the French model is somewhat confusing.

Finally, the period from World War I to World War II seems to be a response to the special circumstances of World War I and to the rapid developments that occurred during that war. Were the changes due to years of contradictory evidence building up against the accepted French paradigm? That may have been a contributing factor, but war had changed and armies had to change with the times. The front lines extended all the way across Europe. Napoleonic ideas of rapid movement and decisive victories were impossible. Military aircraft and tanks went from being nonexistent to forming an important part of the military lexicon. And yet the author looks at the *Infantry Drill Regulations: (Provisional) 1919* and states that the US Army âremained committed to the French combat method and the armyâs existing intellectual framework.â Russell F. Weigley, in *The American Way of War* (1973), discusses the creation of the US tank corps in 1918. Following the ideas of the British, it was hoped that tanks could punch

through enemy lines and create openings for the infantry. Although the war ended before this strategy could be implemented, surely this was the shift away from emphasis on the infantry and non-specialized troops. The US Army, as well as the other armies in the war, had shifted its intellectual framework before the war was over. Possibly the *Infantry Drill Regulations: (Provisional) 1919* were called âprovisionalâ for just that reason. Also Bonura says that military officers felt their concept of battlefield tactics had been upheld during the war and yet there was a flurry of experimentation with other tactics after the war. The Mechanized Force Board is a good example. It would seem that this is a case of adaptation to existing circumstances. World War I ended any reliance on Napoleonic tactics. They simply did not work anymore. Thus, the intellectual framework seems to be one of pragmatism and reassessment after each major conflict. Admittedly, this is a quibble, but readers may find it beneficial to read this excellent history of army education without trying to fit military changes into Kuhnâs theory. The book is well researched. It contains thirty-two pages of endnotes, but no bibliography. It offers eleven maps to illustrate the battles although they are small and in black and white. The reader will probably want to access other maps on the Internet.

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