



# The French Army and the First World War (Armies of the Great War)

By *Elizabeth Greenhalgh*

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**The French Army and the First World War (Armies of the Great War)** By Elizabeth Greenhalgh

This is a comprehensive new history of the French army's critical contribution to the Great War. Ranging across all fronts, Elizabeth Greenhalgh examines the French army's achievements and failures and sets these in the context of the difficulties of coalition warfare and the relative strengths and weaknesses of the enemy forces it faced. Drawing from new archival sources, she reveals the challenges of dealing with and replenishing a mass conscript army in the face of slaughter on an unprecedented scale, and shows how, through trials and defeats, French generals and their troops learned to adapt and develop techniques which eventually led to victory. In a unique account of the largest Allied army on the Western Front, she revises our understanding not only of wartime strategy and combat, but also of other crucial aspects of France's war, from mutinies and mail censorship to medical services, railways and weapons development.

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### **Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"There's far too much in this book to summarize here, but let it suffice to say that this is an essential read for anyone interested in the Great War."

A. A. Nofi, The NYMAS Review

"The Anglophone military history of the Great War runs something like this: French generals callously massacred their own infantry in fruitless offensives in 1914-15; the French poilus heroically held Verdun in 1916; and in 1917, an exhausted French Army came near to collapse, only to be rescued by a revitalized British Army, the Americans, and the tanks. Greenhalgh's impressive new work provides an important corrective to this myth. The French Army was, in fact, the linchpin of the entire Allied effort, and the story of its victory is central to understanding the real war. Based on printed primary sources as well as archival research, the volume offers not only a comprehensive history of the army's operations on multiple fronts, but adds significant detail on the mobilization of French manpower to sustain a war of attrition fought primarily on French soil ... This fine book is an important corrective to most Great War narratives. Bottom line: mandatory for modern history collections. Summing up: essential."

G. P. Cox, Choice

"A cogent and eminently readable rebuttal to the inaccurate stereotypes that have long dominated non-specialist view of the French Army in World War I. She shows a French Army that was flawed, but whose officers and men continually sought new ways to overcome the momentous challenge they faced."

Andrew Orr, H-France

"The French Army and the First World War is a tour de force and will remain the single best book on its subject for the foreseeable future. Enhanced by well-chosen photographs, detailed tables, and a helpful, concise bibliographic essay, it is essential reading for all students of the French military, World War I, and military history in general."

Michigan War Studies Review

#### About the Author

Elizabeth Greenhalgh is a QE II Research Fellow (Australian Research Council), based in the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra. She has published a large number of refereed articles on aspects of the Great War, and is the author of *Victory through Coalition: Britain and France during the First World War* (Cambridge, 2005). In 2007 this book won the accolade of a Choice magazine Outstanding Academic Title. In 2011 she published *Foch in Command: The Forging of a First World War General* (Cambridge, 2011) and a French translation appeared in September 2013. For many years she was editor of *War and Society*, the international peer-reviewed military history journal. She has considerable experience of working in French and other European archives, and has presented papers on the First World War at conferences in Australia, Britain, France, Canada and the United States. Currently she is working on a study of 1918 analysing, as its title states, *How the Allies Won*.

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