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The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871

By Geoffrey Wawro



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The Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 violently changed the course of European History. Alarmed by Bismarck's territorial ambitions and the Prussian army's crushing defeats of Denmark in 1864 and Austria in 1866, French Emperor Napoleon III vowed to bring Prussia to heel. Digging into many European and American archives for the first time, Geoffrey Wawro's Franco-Prussian War describes the war that followed in thrilling detail. While the armies mobilized in July 1870, the conflict appeared "too close to call." Prussia and its German allies had twice as many troops as the French. But Marshal Achille Bazaine's grognards ("old grumblers") were the stuff of legend, the most resourceful, battle-hardened, sharp-shooting troops in Europe, and they carried the best rifle in the world. From the political intrigues that began and ended the war to the bloody battles at Gravelotte and Sedan and the last murderous fights on the Loire and in Paris, this is the definitive history of the Franco-Prussian War. Dr. Geoffrey Wawro is Professor of Strategic Studies at the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Wawro has published two books: *The Austro-Prussian War* (Cambridge, 1996) and *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914* (Routledge, 2000). He has published articles in *The Journal of Military History*, *War in History*, *The International History Review*, *The Naval War College Review*, *American Scholar*, and the *European History Quarterly*, and op-eds in the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Post*, *Miami Herald*, *Hartford Courant*, and *Providence Journal*. Wawro has won several academic prizes including the Austrian Cultural Institute Prize and the Society for Military History Moncado Prize for Excellence in the Writing of Military History. He has lectured widely on military innovation and international security in Europe, the U.S., and Canada and is host of the History Channel program *Hardcover History*--a weekly book show with leading historians, pundits, critics, statesmen and journalists.



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The brief, seldom-sung but crucial Franco-Prussian war gets its due in this superb history. Military historian Wawro gives a comprehensive and lucid account of the political and diplomatic dimensions of the war, which redrew Europe's map and announced the arrival of the German Empire as a world power, but his emphasis is on the conflict as an omen of the future of warfare. Dominated by the firepower of modern rifles and artillery, the bloody fighting foreshadowed the mass slaughter of World War I, while Prussia's lightning victory over France helped lay the groundwork for that conflict by stoking German militarism and enshrining a tragically mistaken confidence in the kind of onrushing offensives that would be undone by machine guns and trenches. Wawro's account is both a gripping narrative and an analytic tour-de-force. He moves easily between visceral depictions of the chaos of combat and strategic overviews of the unfolding battles and campaigns, providing along the way shrewd character studies of the politicians and generals on both sides. At the same time, he keeps a firm grasp of the foundations of military performance in weaponry, logistics and organization, based on an illuminating comparison between the undisciplined and outdated French army and the supremely professional and meticulous Prussians, whose innovations in tactics, planning, staff work and mass mobilization revolutionized European warfare. Full of colorful details and compelling insights, Wawro's vigorously written account should become the standard treatment of this watershed in military history.

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Review

"The brief, seldom discussed but crucial Franco-Prussian war gets its due in Wawro's gripping narrative history and analytic tour de force." --Publishers Weekly

"Wawro has...taken up the challenge, drawing on a wide range of sources to offer a brisk, readable, and sharp account." --Foreign Affairs

"Wawro has written an extraordinary history of the Franco-Prussian War, one of the most significant wars in modern European history...Highly recommended." --Choice

"This is an extraordinarily luminous book about not only a war but also a continent and a century. Written with verve and wit, The Franco-Prussian War harnesses scholarship and story-telling to wonderful effect. Geoffrey Wawro has given us a magnificent yarn." --Rich Atkinson, author of *An Army at Dawn* and winner of the 2003 Pulitzer Prize for History

"Wawro's [book] is so much fun to read...an excellent read for professional and interested public alike." Canadian Military History Book Review Supplement

"An insightful account of one of perhaps the most critical European war of the period between the Waterloo and the 'Guns of August'...a readable, often detailed account..." - The NYMAS Review, A.A. Nofi

"Military historians will be delighted by the appearance of this clear, well-written and effective operational history of the war...[Wawro] deserves congratulations for his fine narrative." Renaissance Quarterly

"Wawro has...taken up the challenge, drawing on a wide range of sources to offer a brisk, readable, and sharp

account." Foreign Affairs

About the Author

Geoffrey Wawro is Professor of Strategic Studies at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. His previously published books include *The Austro-Prussian War* (Cambridge, 1996) and *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792-1914* (2000). He is the recipient of numerous awards and prizes, including the Austrian Cultural Institute Prize and the Society for Military History Moncado Prize for Excellence in the Writing of Military History. In 2002, he shared a New Orleans Press Club Award for the live NBC/History Channel coverage of the parade and opening of the D-Day Museum Pacific Wing. He is also the host and anchor of the History Channel's *Hardcover History*, a weekly interview show with leading historians, statesmen, and journalists.

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