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# The Evolution of Military Systems during the Hundred Years War



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The Hundred Years War (1337-1453) was a crucial period in the evolution of European warfare. By the end of the conflict, the traditional means by which Europeans conducted warfare had changed dramatically. The age of the armored knight had essentially ended and military gallantry was replaced with practicality. The war ushered in a new age of warfare; the reliance on feudal levies diminished, making way for more professionalized, standing armies. This shift carried on into the early modern era, which military historians have categorized as a military revolution. The military revolution thesis argues that the emergence of professional, wage based armies, as well as the rising prominence of gunpowder weaponry created an unparalleled period of military innovation. Medieval military historians have successfully linked the Hundred Years War to the military revolution thesis; however, the majority of attention is given to the English. Their initial reliance on paid infantry coupled with an abundance of English centered scholarship has made the English connection to the military revolution clearly defined. French military efforts are discussed only in regard to Charles VII's military reforms that allowed the French to win the war. While Charles VII's military reforms were an important piece of the military revolution, the largely unanalyzed period of French resurgence during the reign of Charles V was just as revolutionary. The reign of Charles V, when France set aside traditional medieval tactics, had a significant influence not only on Charles VII's reforms, but the overarching evolution of European warfare.

In 1955, historian Michael Roberts introduced the idea of a military revolution. Roberts' idea of the military revolution, characterized the early

modern era, particularly 1560-1660, as a period of vast military change. As the medieval period came to an end, new weapons, tactics, and military systems were adopted by European countries. Out of the shadow of feudalism, professional, wage based armies emerged. Unlike the feudal armies of the medieval period, early modern military systems were formed on the idea that they would be standing armies. Though the men who composed these units may not have been professional troops from time of recruitment, prolonged enlistments molded them into highly effective and professional forces. According to Roberts, armies of the early modern era were unlike "a collection of bellicose individuals, in the feudal style; it was to be an articulated organism of which each part responded to the impulses from above."<sup>1</sup> A centralized command structure would prove far more effective than a horde of feudal levies.

Geoffrey Parker, in his work *The Military Revolution*, expanded the concept previously introduced by Roberts. What is particularly notable of Parker's work is the fact that he extended the revolution's reach. In his discussion of the increased reliance on infantry in the early modern era, Parker pays tribute to English archers during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. During the Hundred Years War, English archers essentially dominated in pitched battles. It was because of the reliance on missile weapons such as the English longbow during the latter medieval period that handheld gunpowder weapons were so attractive to early modern European armies.<sup>2</sup> Initial analysis of the Hundred Years War, coupled with the reliance on ranged weaponry, reveals that the English were among the first European nations to enter this period of military innovation. Analogous to English strategy at Crécy (1346) and Agincourt (1415), volley

1. Michael Roberts, *Essays in Swedish History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1967), 198.
2. Geoffrey Parker, *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West 1500-1800*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 16.
3. *Ibid.*, 19.

firing became a benchmark of European warfare by the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These new armies, including those who opposed them, were required to spread themselves out in order to maximize the output of fire and to reduce their own casualties.<sup>3</sup> As seen in the English victories of the Hundred Years War, those failing to take the proper precautions against massed missile fire were likely to meet disaster.

Among the most prominent analyses of military change in the Hundred Years War is Clifford J. Rogers' "The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years War." Rogers argues that the military significance of the Hundred Years War can be attributed to two major revolutions; the infantry revolution and the artillery revolution. The infantry revolution, according to Rogers, is a concept adopted by the English; their use of longbowmen allowed them to dominate in pitched battles. Additionally, Rogers argues that the enfranchisement of men of lesser social status had large effects on the level of battlefield carnage. This large, wage based force, caring little for the chivalric ways of their social superiors, were much more likely to kill their enemy as opposed to capturing him.<sup>4</sup> This led to tremendous numbers of casualties, particularly among the French, whose armies consisted mainly of feudal levies. Rogers also states that the failure on part of the French to produce an effective force of archers led to many of their failures throughout the war.<sup>5</sup> According to him, the French would not enter the sphere of military revolution until the reign of Charles VII, when they adopted massed artillery.

Although artillery had been used throughout the war, Rogers argues that the artillery revolution truly manifested itself during the later years of the war and did so primarily in the French military. By 1453, the French were spending more than twice the money on artillery compared to other facets of the military.

This remarkable investment in artillery allowed French commanders to engage in pitched battles with the English without fear of being outgunned.<sup>6</sup> The large artillery train assembled by the French proved deadly, especially at Castillon in 1453. The military doctrine of Charles VII was one centered on artillery and a large, professionalized standing army. With his newly reformed military, Charles effectively expelled the English from France, bringing an end to the war.

Rogers successfully links the Hundred Years War to the military revolution; however, the period of French resurgence in the latter half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century is left undiscussed. This is likely due to the small amount of scholarship dedicated to the French. Far more material is available from the English point of view; this influx of Anglo-centric scholarship makes the task of acknowledging French military accomplishments during this time difficult. With a lack of Franco-centric scholarship, biases emerge. An example of this can be seen in a discussion about Bertrand du Guesclin, Constable of France during the reign of Charles V. Du Guesclin, who will later be discussed in detail, carried out a guerrilla war against the English. Dismissal of his tactics is illustrated by French historian Edouard Perroy, who categorized du Guesclin as a "mediocre captain, incapable of winning a battle or being successful in a siege of any scope, just good enough to put new life into the bands of pillaging *routiers*"<sup>7</sup> While Perroy's work on the Hundred Years War is a useful guide in any study of the war, a broad selection of source material is needed to accurately support the effectiveness of du Guesclin's tactics. The small amount of Franco-centric scholarship makes it difficult to paint an accurate picture of figures such as du Guesclin, regardless of a particular author's nationality. In order to avoid information gaps and cultural bias, a variety of scholarship must be utilized.

The need for French military reform was apparent from the first major engagements. The opening stages of the Hundred Years War proved devastating for the French. The tenacity of Edward III resulted in a resounding victory at Crécy in 1346. Historians have attributed Edward's victory at Crécy to his longbowmen. The longbow, a bow stave nearly six feet long with 100 to 150 pounds of draw force, proved deadly in the hands of a well-practiced Englishman. When positioned in an open field of battle, English longbowmen inflicted heavy casualties against any foe with the zeal to meet them head on. Edward's order of battle at Crécy on August 26, 1346, consisted of two bodies of longbowmen flanking a central force of dismounted men at arms.<sup>8</sup> The French force under Philip VI, relying heavily on the shock factor of a large force of mounted knights, took heavy casualties as they charged Edward's position. These tactics proved futile, for when the battle was over, nearly 1,500 French knights lay dead.<sup>9</sup> Crécy was a sign for both sides that the war would not be brief and that the traditional tactics of the mounted knight were becoming obsolete.

With the momentum leaning in favor of England, Edward, the Prince of Wales, otherwise known as the Black Prince, organized a series of raids in 1355 and 1356. His campaigns relied on a strategy referred to as a *chevauchée* (literally translated as cavalcade). The *chevauchée* was a strategy which used the destruction of farmlands, looting, rape, and murder as a means of demoralizing French rural populations and damaging their ability to support an army.<sup>10</sup> Edward's grand strategy proved more lucrative than any Englishman could have imagined; apart from the loot taken from French towns, the English claimed yet another major victory over the French. During the 1356 raid, a French force shadowed the Prince of Wales, looking for the opportunity to

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4. Clifford J Rogers. The Military Revolutions of the Hundred Years' War. The Journal of Military History 57, no. 2 (April 1993): 256.

5. Ibid., 251.

6. Ibid., 274.

7. Edouard Perroy, The Hundred Years War (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), 148.

8. Jonathon Sumption, The Hundred Years War: Trial by Battle (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 526-527.

9. Ibid., 528-530.

10. H.J. Hewitt, The Black Prince's Expedition (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2004), 46.

11. Desmond Seward, The Hundred Years War: The English in France 1337-1453 (New York: Atheneum, 1978), 88-91.

avenge Crécy and the destruction of their lands. The English army positioned itself near the town of Poitiers and waited to receive the French, led by King John II, son of Philip VI. Unlike the French force at Crécy, John's army was almost entirely dismounted. The battle commenced with a French cavalry charge of 300 knights who were given the task of eliminating the English archers, enabling the infantry to approach the English men at arms unchallenged. The cavalry charge ultimately failed and as a result, the infantry attack took merciless fire from the English flanks. As devastating as the arrow fire was, the English struggled to keep the numerically superior French at bay. Fortunately for the Prince of Wales, a force of 150 mounted men at arms and archers under the Captal de Buch, hit the French from behind. John's army, thinking the Captal's troops were more numerous than they actually were, retreated in confusion.<sup>11</sup> The battle of Poitiers was a humiliating French defeat that resulted in the capture of King John II. The simple act of dismounting the army was far from the military reform France required. These tactical shortcomings allowed the English to expand their holdings in France to more than twice what they had been prior to 1337. However, with John II out of the picture, his son Charles took control. Charles, unlike his predecessors, knew how to neutralize the combat effectiveness of an English army. It was during his reign that France set aside the chivalric ideals of medieval warfare and began to fight a different war.

Edward III's last campaign in 1359 saw the early stages of a new French strategy. The campaign was an immense logistical undertaking. Knowing that the French countryside, particularly the Champagne region, was devastated by the conflict, Edward arranged a supply train of over 1,000 wagons.<sup>12</sup> Edward's 10,000 man force set out from Calais on November 4<sup>th</sup> 1359; less than two weeks

into the campaign, supplies dwindled. In order for Edward to effectively maintain his army, foraging became necessary; however, the French Dauphin Charles (who would later become Charles V) made foraging increasingly difficult. In his strategy to combat Edward's advance, Charles adopted a scorched earth policy. At the command of the Dauphin, the French countryside in the path of the English army was abandoned and burned; the citizens who lived in these areas were ordered to take what supplies they could carry and move into larger fortresses. Supplies that the inhabitants could not carry were burned, denying Edward's army the supplies they desperately needed. The French populace lying in the path of the English advance stayed within the confines of fortresses. Additionally, mounted troops were often sent forth from the towns to harass English foragers.<sup>13</sup> With this simple, yet prudent strategy, Charles began to effectively neutralize the English force. Without proper supplies, Edward's time in France became increasingly limited, creating a dire need for a tactical victory.

The need for logistical support turned Edward's grand campaign from one of conquest to one of desperation. From December 4, 1359 to January 11, 1360, Edward's army encircled the city of Rennes. Fortunately for the city's defense, Charles' scorched earth policy left the besiegers lacking in supplies. Having failed to take the city by storm in January, Edward was forced to retreat.<sup>14</sup> Logistical deficiencies kept Edward's army relatively inactive until early March when they moved toward the city of Paris in hopes of forcing Charles to sue for peace. On April 7, Edward's army arrived just south of Paris to find that the Parisians had burned the southern suburbs of the city and retreated behind the walls. For several days, the English attempted to draw the French army into the open; the dauphin's troops did not take the bait. On

April 12, after failing to bring the French to battle, Edward withdrew from the city. By the end of the month, Edward's forces had reached their breaking point, forcing Edward to call a diplomatic meeting, one which resulted in the treaty of Brétigny.<sup>15</sup> Charles' strategy had not only prevented a disaster the likes of Crécy, it had also birthed a period of French military reform.

Though the English had not suffered a devastating loss on the level of Crécy or Poitiers, the invasion of 1359 was largely a failure. The Dauphin Charles had learned from the mistakes of his father and grandfather. The scorched earth policy Charles enacted took the initiative away from the English who, due to their difficulties in supplying large armies, depended on foraging for survival. If Crécy and Poitiers had taught the French anything, it was that the current French military system was unfit for open field combat with English archers. While one can attribute Charles' unwillingness to fight a pitched battle to a possible lack of manpower following the disaster at Poitiers, the effectiveness of his strategy cannot be ignored. The English invasion of 1359 proved that the French were clearly capable of success as long as they possessed a willingness to adapt. Although Charles' military doctrine was just beginning to form during this time, it was clear that under his authority, France had a fighting chance.

The Treaty of Brétigny introduced a period of peace as well as a new challenge for the French monarch. The state of the English economy was such that maintaining a large standing army was out of the question. Bands of unemployed mercenaries who had previously fought in English armies, known in France as the *routiers*, wrought havoc amongst the French populace. What made these "free companies" particularly threatening was the fact that they were professional soldiers. Composed of English, Breton,

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12. Jonathon Sumption, *The Hundred Years War: Trial by Fire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 425.

13. *Ibid.*, 427

14. *Ibid.*, 431

15. Sumption, *Trial by Fire*, 442-444.

16. Perroy, *The Hundred Years War*, 154.

17. *Ibid.*, 155.

18. Seward, *The Hundred Years War*, 106.

19. Richard Vernier, *The Flower of Chivalry: Bertrand du Guesclin and the Hundred Years War* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 21.

Spanish, and German mercenaries, these companies ran rampant through the French countryside.<sup>16</sup> The *routiers* made their living in the exploitation of civilians; their activities included kidnapping French citizens for ransom, storming towns and villages, selling safe passage on the roads, as well as theft of food supplies.<sup>17</sup> The *routiers* also had a tendency to form large groups known as the “Grand Companies”. These companies such as those led by the infamous Arnaud de Cervole, the Archpriest, accrued large amounts of wealth from the relentless theft and murder of French civilians.

During the early 1360s, the French government lacked the power to solve the *routier* problem militarily. The absence of a French response forced lords to pay these companies off in order to prevent the destruction of their property. Other than a crusade against the Turks that never materialized, few efforts were made to rid France of the *routiers*.<sup>18</sup> Luckily for Charles, the year 1365 presented him with an opportunity to solve the problem of the companies. Rather than attempting the laborious task of quelling the *routiers* by force, Charles incorporated them into the expeditionary force sent to the Iberian Peninsula to fight a war of succession in Castile. The man who led this army thrived in the warfare style of the *routiers*; his name was Bertrand du Guesclin.

Du Guesclin, unlike the common French lord, was not born into gallantry. The only surviving record of his childhood shows that his parents wished him dead, for he was an especially ugly child.<sup>19</sup> An outsider from birth, du Guesclin found solace in warfare and violence. Rising to prominence during the Breton Civil War, du Guesclin proved that he was more than capable of effectively fighting the English. One of

the most notable of Bertrand’s exploits during this time was performed during the siege of Rennes in 1342. The English-held city was retaken by du Guesclin in a manner uncustomary to the chivalric ways of the time. Posing as woodcutters, du Guesclin and his men were admitted into the city. Upon entry du Guesclin and the accompanying force dispatched the English garrison.<sup>20</sup> This Trojan horse style of fighting exemplified du Guesclin’s military ethos. Throughout the early stages of his military career, du Guesclin made a name for himself as a guerrilla fighter. It was only fitting that Charles V, whose military practices in 1359 reflected this asymmetrical warfare, went to him for assistance in ridding France of the *routiers*.

War between England and France perpetuated well beyond the boundaries of the two respective countries. In the latter half of 1365, civil war erupted in the Iberian country of Castile. France had been on good terms with the Castilians until Charles V’s sister-in-law Blanche de Bourbon, wife to the unfaithful King Pedro of Castile, died by mysterious circumstances. To deteriorate relations further, Pedro (often referred to as Pedro the Cruel) signed a treaty, aligning himself with King Edward III.<sup>21</sup> The French would seek recompense for the death of Blanche de Bourbon, the demise of Pedro, and the accession of Enrique de Trastamara, an illegitimate son of Pedro I’s father, to the throne. In support of Enrique, Charles V ordered du Guesclin to organize an army of *routiers* for an expedition into Castile. The *routiers* composing this force included many from the Breton region, men who had fought against du Guesclin during the Breton Civil War. Additionally, those who either occupied fortresses or were likely going to remain in France, were chosen for

this army. With the addition of a small number of French knights, du Guesclin’s army numbered nearly 12,000 men.<sup>22</sup> The recruitment of the *routiers* not only relieved Charles V of a great headache, it also put du Guesclin at the head of an army of professional soldiers.

The professional nature of the *routiers* was not the sole characteristic that separated them from the traditional Feudal levies that fought the English at Crécy and Poitiers. Similar to the armies fielded by Edward III and the Black Prince, the *routiers* were wage based troops. In order to effectively bring them under an appropriate level of control, du Guesclin organized a system of payment. This task seems to be one to which he was well suited; according to popular legend, du Guesclin was very successful in acquiring payment from Charles V for these troops.<sup>23</sup> His ability to acquire payment for this *routier* force was a large factor in the army’s success. Du Guesclin’s correspondence shows that he was in fact successful in acquiring money from the French monarch for this army:

A touz ceuls qui ces presentes lettres verront, Bertran du Guerclin, chevalier, conte de Longueville, chambellan du Roy de France, mon tresredoubté et souverain seigneur, salut. Savoir faisons que parmi certaine somme de deniers que le dit roy mon souverain seigneur nous a pieca fait bailler en prest, tant pour mettre hors de son royaume les compaignies qui estoient es parties de Bretagne, de Normandie et de Chart[r]ain et ailleurs es basses marches....<sup>24</sup>

The money allocated by Charles allowed du Guesclin to recruit the larger, more organized groups of these companies from various areas throughout France. By the end of 1365, du Guesclin and his army of *routiers* departed for

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20. Vernier, *The Flower of Chivalry*, 43.

21. *Ibid.*, 84.

22. Sumption, *Trial by Fire*, 529-530.

23. Vernier, *The Flower of Chivalry*, 89.

24. Michael Jones, ed., *Letters, Orders and Musters of Bertrand du Guesclin, 1357-1380* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2004), 40-41. Translation: To all whom these letters will be presented, Bertrand du Guesclin, Count of Longueville, Chamberlain of the King of France, my most my most respected and sovereign lord, salutations. Be it known that this sum of money from the king my sovereign lord has been advanced to send out of his kingdom the companies from parts of Brétigny, Normandy, the Chartrain, and other areas...

25. Vernier, *The Flower of Chivalry*, 90.

26. Sumption, *Trial by Fire*, 533.

27. Jones, *Letters Orders and Musters of Bertrand du Guesclin*, 55.

28. Vernier, *The Flower of Chivalry*, 96.

29. Vernier, *The Flower of Chivalry*, 106.

Spain. The brutal nature of the *routiers* made it impossible to completely eliminate their violent tendencies as they moved south; however, there was no large scale destruction of towns or villages as seen prior to their recruitment into the French military.<sup>25</sup> As the campaign progressed, it became increasingly evident that the prospect of payment was the only true shield against their fury.

The brutal nature of the *routiers* required a nearly constant flow of payment. Though the prospect of wages kept a large amount of the companies invested in the campaign, their destructive nature could not be completely controlled. The army entered Spain through the French allied kingdom of Aragon, then ruled by King Peter IV; the 12,000 man force was the largest army that had entered Iberia in over a hundred years.<sup>26</sup> In order to keep the level of destruction under control, Peter IV contributed vast amounts of money to du Guesclin's army. On one particular occasion in February of 1366, Peter authorized a large payment to one of du Guesclin's esquires in order to prevent the destruction of the modern-day city of Huesca.<sup>27</sup> The conduct of the *routier* army imposed a significant time restraint on du Guesclin for neither the French nor the kingdom of Aragon could afford to keep the *routiers* under one banner forever. Fortunately, once the campaign to place Henry of Trastámara on the throne began in late February in 1366, things came to a rather swift conclusion. After little more than a month, the campaign concluded and Enrique of Trastámara was made King of Castile. Du Guesclin's army had encountered little resistance, likely due to the horrific reputation of the *routiers*.<sup>28</sup>

The French success in Castile in 1366 was largely due to the ability of du Guesclin and his allies to supply the army with wages. Though rather unorthodox, this professional force achieved far more than the French feudal levies of Crécy and Poitiers.

As successful as du Guesclin and his army of *routiers* had been in 1366, the following year brought new troubles. Pedro I had survived the exploits of 1366 and sought out an alliance with the English, hoping to reclaim Castile. As a result of the pact with Pedro, the English recalled the *routiers* back into service, threatening the confiscation of any holdings in England if they refused.<sup>29</sup> Without the professional army at his back, du Guesclin and his Castilian allies suffered a defeat at the battle of Nájera on April 2, 1367. Du Guesclin was captured by the Black Prince and remained in captivity until late 1369. The Prince of Wales, having once again recruited the men of the free companies, turned the tide of the conflict in favor of Pedro I. However, the English war effort required the constant flow of funds.<sup>30</sup> Pedro I had promised to fund the Black Prince's expedition but was unable to acquire proper funding. This lack of reimbursement forced the Black Prince to tax his French holdings in Aquitaine; the English campaign in Spain had been an economic failure.<sup>31</sup> In 1369, after English support had been withdrawn, Pedro I was cornered by Enrique and the recently released du Guesclin at the castle of Montiel where he was killed by Enrique himself.<sup>32</sup> The ultimate triumph of Enrique de Trastámara, despite the unfortunate setback that was Nájera, was not only another success for Charles V,

but the beginning of a French resurgence.

The English financial debacle in Castile provided Charles V with the perfect opportunity to begin the task of reclaiming southwestern France. The Castilian expedition had cost both the English and the French a large amount of treasure, but the French allies were far more financially accommodating than Pedro I. As a result of Pedro's failure to deliver on his promises, the Black Prince looked to his lands in France for tax revenue. The Prince of Wales implemented a hearth tax upon his holdings in Aquitaine. Naturally, his subjects were infuriated at the idea of paying for a campaign that yielded little financial gain.<sup>33</sup> Despite the treaty of Brétigny, inhabitants of the Prince's holdings began to flock to Charles with appeals. The Black Prince was summoned to Paris in January 1369 to answer for this unjust tax. The reply Charles received was "Sirs, we will gladly go to Paris, but I assure you that it shall be with helmet on our head and 60,000 men."<sup>34</sup> The insolence of the Black Prince, coupled with a refusal to strike down the hearth tax, resulted in the renewing of the war in June 1369.

If recent French military doctrine was any indication, one could ascertain that the French would certainly fight differently than they had prior to John II's capture in 1356. Charles V's new strategy needed a commander, one who was proven in guerrilla warfare. In 1370, Charles appointed du Guesclin Constable of France.<sup>35</sup> The appointment of du Guesclin was but a piece of Charles V reform of the French military. The Castilian affair had shown how effective an army could be if the troops

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30. Seward, *The Hundred Years War*, 107.

31. Gordon Corrigan, *A Great and Glorious Adventure: A History of the Hundred Years War and the Birth of Renaissance England* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2014), 176.

32. Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Geoffrey Brereton (London: Penguin Books, 1968), 173.

33. Vernier, *The Flower of Chivalry*, 148.

34. Seward, *The Hundred Years War*, 110.

35. Corrigan, *A Great and Glorious Adventure*, 177.

36. Jones, *Letters, Orders and Musters of Bertrand du Guesclin*, 142. Translation: Bertrand du Guesclin, duke of Molines, Constable of France, to our friend Etienne Braque, treasurer of wars of the king or his lieutenant, salutations. We send this enclosed under our seal; 1,135 men at arms we selected to serve the king our lord in these present wars under our authority, of which there are four knights banneret, 51 knights, and 1,080 men at arms received by us in Paris on January 1, 1370.

If you will please quickly send the payment in an appropriate manner. Given under our seal beginning on the above mentioned date. The Constable

37. Charles Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages: Volume II 1278-1485* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1924), 198.

38. Seward, *The Hundred Years War*, 111.

39. Oman, *A History of the Art of War in the Middle Ages*, 198-199.

40. Jonathon Sumption, *The Hundred Years War Part III: Divided Houses* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 75.

41. David Nicolle, *The Great Chevauchée: John of Gaunt's Raid on France 1373* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2011), 22.

were provided with monetary incentive. Rather than maintaining an army by feudal means, the French soldiers under the constable were paid. Du Guesclin successfully maintained this small, professional French force, with money allocated by the French government:

Bertrand du Guesclin, duc de Molines, connestable de France, à nostre amé Estienne Braque, thresorier des guerres du Roy nostre sire ou à son lieutenant, salut. Nous vous envoions enclose sous nostre scel du secret le monstre de onze cent trente et cinq homes d'armes, lesquels nous avons retenus pour server le Roy nostre sire en ces presentes guerres sous nostre gouvernement, dont il y a quatre Chevaliers Bannerets, cinquante et un Chevaliers Bacheliers, et mil quatre vingt Escuiers de nostre compaignie reçeus par nous à Paris le i. jour de Janiver l'an 1370. Si vous mandons que pour toutes lesdites gens vous nous faciez prest et paiement de leurs gages en la manière qu'il appartiendra. Donnè audit lieu sous nostre secret l'an et jour dessus dit. Par mons, le Connestable<sup>36</sup>

This system of pay allowed du Guesclin to maintain a standing and well-disciplined army composed of French soldiers. The fact that these troops were recruited for long term use as opposed to a brief campaign, implies that they embodied a level of military professionalism similar to the armies of the military revolution. With this small, exclusive fighting force, du Guesclin implemented a strategy that was ultimately successful in turning the tide against England.

Du Guesclin would conduct warfare reminiscent to what the French had done during Edward III's 1359 campaign.

This strategy, commended by English historian Sir Charles Oman, involved the familiar willingness to sacrifice French lands.<sup>37</sup> This strategy proved effective once again in the summer of 1369 and in 1370 when two consecutive raids were conducted by Sir Robert Knollys and John of Gaunt. Both men achieved relative success in destroying French lands; however, the reluctance of Charles V to give battle prevented any major gains.<sup>38</sup> Despite the reluctance to give battle, du Guesclin's strategy was far from defensive. Rather than meeting the English in a pitched battle, du Guesclin and his band of professional soldiers, conducted a guerrilla war. His policy included quick assaults on small garrisons, night attacks, and raids on English supply lines. Above all, du Guesclin would refuse battle with the English even if he held a numerical advantage.<sup>39</sup> Du Guesclin knew that England could not maintain a war with an enemy that could not be brought to battle; therefore attrition was key. He, along with other French commanders, was able to do this by moving quickly and maintaining strict discipline amongst small bodies of troops.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the most notable instance of this strategy at work was the 1373 raid of John of Gaunt.

The largest invasion during this period of the war was John of Gaunt's raid of 1373 which saw the full effect of Charles V's military doctrine. John of Gaunt, the third son of King Edward III, intended to lead a large force from Calais to the beleaguered English holdings of Aquitaine in southwestern France.<sup>41</sup> John of Gaunt's force of 5,000 to 8,000 men, divided into three columns, departed the city of Calais on August 4, 1373. Strangely, they did not travel directly south but instead traveled southeast around Paris through the Champagne region. Though they had wrought a

notable level of destruction upon the French countryside, they were failing to lure French commanders into open battle.<sup>42</sup> Reminiscent of Edward III's 1359 campaign, the French populace was ordered to remain inside walled cities; the advice of French commanders to Charles V was to "Let them go on. They cannot rob you of your heritage with fires and smoke. They will grow tired and crumble away to nothing."<sup>43</sup> By early September, after nearly a month of raiding, John of Gaunt was still on the move, but had failed to bring the French out into the open.

The raid began to truly decline when the English reached the city of Troyes on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September. John of Gaunt's army devastated the outlying area of the city while the French remained behind the walls. After failing to force the French into battle before the walls of the city, the English moved into the suburbs to attack. As the English proceeded, the French garrison launched a counterattack that claimed a number of English lives (estimates range from 120 to 600).<sup>44</sup> To make matters worse, the western column of the army (the English force had reformed into two columns by this time) was ambushed on September 27<sup>th</sup>. Though the French largely avoided battle during the raid, contingents of French cavalry shadowed the English advance south. The trap was set by French commander Olivier de Clisson near the city of Sens. A small force of 200 French cavalry was positioned nearly a mile away from the main French force of nearly 1,500 men near Sens. In pursuit of the retreating cavalry, the English ran into de Clisson's main body and suffered nearly 600 casualties.<sup>45</sup> Clisson's ambush was the most devastating loss for the English during the raid and was irrefutable evidence that John of Gaunt was failing his mission.

42. Barbara W. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century* (New York: Penguin Random House, 1978), 286.

43. Froissart, *Chronicles*, 188.

44. Nicolle, *The Great Chevauchée*, 55.

45. *Ibid.*, 58.

46. *Ibid.*, 59.

47. *Sumption, Divided Houses*, 194.

48. Nicolle, *The Great Chevauchée*, 68.

49. Tuchman, *A Distant Mirror*, 287.

50. *Sumption, Divided Houses*, 139-141.

51. Perroy, *The Hundred Years War*, 168.

52. Seward, *The Hundred Years War*, 116-117.

53. Corrigan, *A Great and Glorious Adventure*, 183-184.

As with Edward III's expedition in 1359, it was obvious that an English army conducting such a long campaign in France would rely on foraging for the acquisition of food and other supplies. In early October, the French populace near Avallon were ordered to bring all food supplies into walled cities as well as deconstruct mills in order to deny their use by the English.<sup>46</sup> In addition to the shortage of food supplies, the French were still in pursuit of the English as they crossed the Loire and Allier rivers. In order to maintain distance, the English left their entire baggage train at the bank of the Allier. The loss of the baggage train came at the worst possible time, for the English force continued on through the winter months in territory with few inhabitants and bereft of food.<sup>47</sup> By the time the expedition reached Bordeaux on Christmas Eve of 1373, most of the horses had died. Many of the men entered the city without mounts or armor.<sup>48</sup> John of Gaunt's great raid, covering nearly 900km of French countryside had been a monumental failure. The failure of the *Chevauchée*, due largely to the unwillingness of the French to fight an open battle, proved once again that English tactics reminiscent of the Crécy and Poitiers campaigns were ineffective against Charles V's France.

Charles V, along with commanders such as Bertrand du Guesclin had by 1374 reduced English holdings to what they had been previous to the battle of Crécy in 1346. Looking back on the Crécy and Poitiers campaigns, it is clear that the French were capable of victory. English tactics during Charles V's reign were largely identical to what they were when the war began; however, the lack of a centralized command structure under Philip VI and John II prevented wise tactical decisions from being made. This period of French resurgence was

due to Charles V and du Guesclin's ability to recognize the failures of their predecessors and adapt. Their tactics, though considered "the direct antithesis of combat for honor"<sup>49</sup> were effective in bringing about French victory.

The French had made a tremendous comeback; however hostilities continued through the 1370s. These included the 1377 French raids on the English homeland. A period of French naval dominance was initiated by the naval victory of La Rochelle in late June 1372 where a large allied Castilian fleet defeated an English fleet under the Duke of Pembroke.<sup>50</sup> During the years following La Rochelle, French naval efforts grew; along with a large requisition of merchant ships for conversion, the *Clos des Galées* at Rouen launched over forty warships between 1376 and 1377.<sup>51</sup> Along with this newly christened fleet, French naval officer Jean de Vienne took control of naval affairs with the purpose of maintaining French control of the English Channel. During the summer months of 1377, the Franco-Castilian fleet raided the English coast, burning villages and claiming plunder until they were repelled by English forces at Southampton.<sup>52</sup> This strategy, although not as successful as the *chevauchées* of the Black Prince, was an undeniable sign that the tables had turned. English endeavors during the latter 1370s included a failed *chevauchée* by the newly crowned Richard II's uncle the Duke of Buckingham who, like John of Gaunt, failed to bring the French to battle.<sup>53</sup> The hostilities came to a close in 1389 when a truce was signed; though it was only meant as a temporary halt to the war, no major campaigns would be conducted until late 1415 when Henry V reignited the war.

As heroic as this period of French resurgence is, military revolution theorists tend to dismiss the military doctrine of

Charles V and du Guesclin. Why is this? Surely the tactics of Charles V and the preference toward a professional force rather than a feudal one fit into the larger military revolution. The easiest explanation for this dismissal lies within Henry V's victory at Agincourt in 1415. What overshadows the late 14<sup>th</sup> century changes in French military policy is not the fact that Agincourt was an English victory, but that the French essentially abandoned Charles V's military ideals and reverted to tactics that had failed them at Crécy and Poitiers. The battle of Agincourt would have never happened during the reign of Charles V, but his time had ended and so had French dominance.

Henry V landed in France in August 1415 and besieged the city of Harfleur between August 18 and September 22. The siege of Harfleur, which had taken far longer than Henry had hoped, was hardly a worthy prize for such a momentous campaign; Henry wanted more. Despite the fact that the army had suffered tremendous losses both from the fighting and dysentery, Henry decided to take his ragged army on a *chevauchée* toward the English garrison of Calais.<sup>54</sup> During the long trek, the French army marched parallel to Henry's force as they sought a crossing of the Somme. Using tactics similar to John of Gaunt's raid in 1373, the French pursued the English, making river crossings difficult.<sup>55</sup> French maneuvering prevented large scale destruction as Henry marched; however, on October 25<sup>th</sup>, previous tactical doctrine was tossed aside as the French accepted an open field challenge.

The battle of Agincourt is considered one of England's greatest victories. Estimates for the English strength vary from 5,000 to 8,000 while the French numbered an estimated 30,000. Similar to the English Crécy and Poitiers, Henry's army was positioned with men at arms

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54. Christopher Hibbert, *Agincourt* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 70-71.

55. *Ibid.*, 81-82.

56. Anne Curry, *Agincourt: A New History* (Gloucestershire, Tempus Publishing, 2005), 246-247.

57. Curry, *Agincourt*, 255.

58. *Ibid.*, 251-252.

59. Hibbert, *Agincourt*, 121.

60. Corrigan, *A Great and Glorious Adventure*, 259-260.

61. Seward, 125.

62. Kelly DeVries, *Joan of Arc: A Military Leader* (Brimscombe Port Stroud: The History Press, 2011, first published in 1999), 76-83.

63. *Ibid.*, 174-176.

64. Paul Douglas Solon, "Charles VII and the Compagnies D'ordonnance, 1445-1461: A Study in Medieval Reform" (PhD diss., Brown University, 1970), 22.

in the center with a wing of archers on each flank. Abandoning all tactics of the du Guesclin era, the French commenced their attack with a cavalry charge as they had done over sixty years earlier at Crécy. Over 1,000 mounted knights charged the English lines in hopes of cutting down the longbowmen and were subsequently shot down.<sup>56</sup> Following the failed cavalry attack, the main French attack came in the form of dismounted men at arms. Thousands of heavily armored French knights, in a manner reminiscent of John II's main attack at Poitiers, trudged through the muddy field over the bodies of their dead comrades, all while taking constant arrow fire from the English flanks. By the time the attack reached the English center, the French knights were exhausted; they had little chance against the English men at arms who had simply waited for their approach.<sup>57</sup> The only French success at Agincourt was an attack made on the English baggage train. However, evidence shows that the attack was made by lowly thieves rather than armored knights, for the French could not spare them. Henry's lines were in no way compromised by the raid on the baggage, which accomplished little more than the theft of some of the king's personal belongings.<sup>58</sup> Agincourt was a disaster for the French army; their losses numbered nearly 10,000 with over 1,500 taken prisoner while English losses totaled no more than 500.<sup>59</sup> Agincourt was a failure on the part of the French command to maintain the discipline that had been learned during Charles V's reign. As a result of this setback, the English would have the upper hand for the next decade.

Agincourt inaugurated a period of English dominance; by 1420, the English had claimed the throne of France, accomplishing what Edward III had set out to do nearly a century before. On May 19, 1420, the Treaty of Troyes was signed. The treaty recognized Henry as the heir of King Charles VI, while the dauphin (Charles VII) lost his claim.<sup>60</sup> Henry V's victory at Agincourt and acquisition of the French throne, muddled French military accomplishments during

Charles V's reign. Why did the French combat Henry's army at Agincourt with tactics that had proved so disastrous against Edward III and the Prince of Wales? Why did they give battle at all? The answer to this question lies within the simple fact that Charles V had essentially ended the war. As mentioned previously, English holdings had been reduced to what they had been before Edward III's first successful invasion.<sup>61</sup> Despite a few raids conducted by both sides, the fighting would not be reignited in earnest until Henry's invasion in 1415. There was no need to expend large amounts of time and treasure implementing a new military doctrine during peacetime. As a result of this hiatus, Charles V's tactics faded from memory. By the time the war began anew, the French, now fractured by civil war and under the ineffective leadership of Charles VI, reverted to what they knew best, traditional feudalism. Though the French had abandoned Charles V's military policies, the suffering wrought by Henry V was only temporary. The French would once again rise and a military doctrine similar to that of Charles V's would emerge.

The year 1429 initiated a period of resurgence for the French. The French dauphin, Charles VII, was approached by a young woman from Lorraine who claimed to be sent by God to relieve the French city of Orléans on the Loire River. The young woman, Jeanne d'Arc, broke the siege of Orléans rather quickly; conducting all out assaults on the English defenses rather than setting up for a prolonged encirclement.<sup>62</sup> In July of 1429, Jeanne and her army had successfully reached the city of Reims where Charles VII was crowned king of France. Jeanne's success, however great, was to be short-lived; during the siege of Compiègne in 1430, Jeanne was captured by the Burgundians and soon sold to and executed by the English.<sup>63</sup> As tragic as Jeanne's death was, it was not a major detriment to the French war effort, for under Charles VII, France would soon claim the final victory.

The reign of Charles VII brought

about a new age for the French military. The military reforms enacted by Charles were key factors to the French end game. Among these changes was the military reform of 1439; this reform or "Ordonnance" enacted a military system based on paid, professional troops. Unlike the English soldiers of the war who were released from service at the end of a campaign, the new French army was to be maintained both in time of war and peace.<sup>64</sup> The new military was divided into what were known as the *Compagnies d'ordonnance*; the men of these companies were experienced soldiers. Like the *rouliers*, these companies had the tendency to cause havoc throughout the French countryside; however, a system of monthly payment was arranged to keep up moral standards and discipline.<sup>65</sup> Artillery was also a major component of Charles VII's military reform and as Rogers expresses, a crucial component in the final stages of the Hundred Years War. What made this large adoption of gunpowder weaponry unique was the fact that a large number of artillery pieces were being brought together. Additionally, artillery officers were appointed, such as Jean and Gaspard Bureau, who ensured a level of professionalism amongst French artillerymen.<sup>66</sup> The French artillery train, coupled with professional artillerymen won the final victory on July 16, 1453 at the battle of Castillon. The battle began when English Lord John Talbot led an attack on a French force near Castillon. After forcing a part of the French army to retreat, Talbot ordered an attack on a nearby French artillery park where a large number of guns had been arranged. As the English approached the park, the French cannon inflicted devastating losses on the English who were soon defeated. By the end of 1453, the English held only a sliver of land near the city of Calais.<sup>67</sup> Charles VII's military reforms had successfully ended the war.

Charles VII's military system, besides the massed artillery, bears a strong resemblance to the armies under Charles V and du Guesclin. A significant difference between these two systems is the level

65. Ibid., 43-44.

66. Kelly DeVries, *Gunpowder Weaponry and the Rise of the Early Modern State*, *War in History* 5 (1998): 132-133.

67. Corrigan, *A Great and Glorious Adventure*, 278-279.

of credit ascribed to them. Historians find it difficult to consider du Guesclin and Charles V's era as part of a larger military evolution because of Henry V's successes and the French failure to permanently adopt Charles V's military policies. Rogers' discussion of Charles VII's adoption of massed artillery is likely due to the fact that they were a large part of the final French victory and subsequently a much more visible example of a larger progression in European warfare. Despite this fact, one cannot ignore the similarities that Charles VII's military doctrine bears to that of his grandfather. Without Charles V's military doctrine, Charles VII would have had no model to follow, and as a result, his military reforms may have been quite different.

The Hundred Years War brought about many military changes one can accurately attribute to Roberts' military revolution. The wealth of Anglo-centric scholarship illustrates a clear relationship between the English military system and the military revolution while a much less diverse pool of sources makes French military change far less defined. Through careful analysis, it becomes increasingly clear that French military innovation throughout the latter half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century can be accurately categorized as revolutionary. The guerrilla tactics of Charles V and Bertrand du Guesclin paired with their preference towards wage-based troops were successful in rendering English tactics useless.

Additionally, they promoted a level of military professionalism that largely prevented the failures of Philip VI and John II from being repeated. Though these ideals were not carried over to the early 15<sup>th</sup> century, Charles VII's military reforms, largely reflecting his grandfather's military ethos, allowed France to claim the final victory. The overarching influence of Charles V's military ideals earns him a rightful place in the military revolution.

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