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Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763*. London and New York: Pearson Press, 2011. xi + 660 pp. Maps, notes, and index. £24.99 U.K. (pb). ISBN 978-0-582-09239-6.

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The Seven Years' War goes by many names. It has been called the "War for Empire," the "Contest for Continents," or "the First World War," among others, as this eighteenth-century conflict stretched across Europe from Portugal to Russia, infiltrated India, dominated the seas, and decided the fate of North America, with consequences for Africa and the Caribbean. While some authors have cited the war's consequences for the French and American Revolutions, lately it has caught attention because of its global nature.^[1] Conferences, as well as recent and upcoming publications are asking questions regarding the war's far reach and global impact. *The Global Seven Years War*, Daniel Baugh's substantial tome from Pearson Press, weighs in on this recent interest by focusing deeply on a slice of the larger war.^[2]

Baugh casts the Seven Years' War as primarily "a great power contest" between those "two great Nation States of the eighteenth century," France and Britain (p.1 and p. xiii). For these two powers, the war was "global," in the sense that it involved each state's naval powers and sent its armies to distant climes (p. 1). Rather than try to encompass the war in its entirety, including the experiences and perspectives of the Canadians, Anglo-Americans, Amerindians, Sepoys, Nawabs, and other Europeans who took an active part, Baugh asks tough questions about the sometimes slippery decision-making processes of both the English and French ministers of war, diplomats, and monarchs. How, he asks, did London and Versailles manage a war of such scope and magnitude, and how did their strategic decisions affect its outcome? In exploring these questions, Baugh follows the impact of these decisions, and infiltrates, with staggering detail, the various theaters of war for French and British armies and navies. The Anglo-French Seven Years' War—perhaps a more appropriate title—receives very thorough treatment, while settling some questions about France and England and raising many more.

As a diplomatic history, the book is successful in helping the reader understand why and how parts of the globe had geopolitical or strategic importance to England or France in this particular conflict. Among the international issues and topics that he illuminates, Baugh characterizes Canada as a piece in the larger geopolitical puzzle for France. He goes to great lengths to describe why Hanover, a German state on the continent, was so important to England (p. 97). He also covers the importance of Spain as a naval ally (p. 101), and reports on the much-neglected British presence in Portugal (p. 602). Here, Baugh's focus on the decision-making process among elites in the French and British governments allows him to cover geographical areas that may have been involved in the war, but did not sport the most dramatic battles.

As a military history, the book succeeds beautifully in laying out the causes, conditions, movements, and consequences of individual battles in all theaters of the war, especially at sea. Baugh lets the war unfold chronologically, and he leaps between the discussions in the metropolises, the North American, European, and Indian theaters, as well as battles at sea, as each year of the war requires. While it can be tempting to dismiss actual battles in favor of only focusing on causes and consequences, Baugh delineates, in clear

terms, how and why certain battles favored certain armies, and how each event unfolded. The work is strongest in its description of these encounters. The account of the fall of Quebec, which proved to be not the last battle, but “the” greatest showdown between French and British forces in America, is gripping in its prose. He lays out the actions of each army clearly, and keeps even well-versed readers engrossed. The account of the battle of Minorca, usually not highlighted by American historians in favor of battles in North America, is harrowing.

Baugh fronts each entanglement between British and French forces in every part of the globe with thorough accounts of the decisions in Versailles and London that called for battle. He includes professional biographies of the prominent commanding officers, as well as the condition of the soldiers. Especially in India and North America, he describes the European armies’ relationships with native groups—sepoys, nawabs, and Amerindians—and how each army effectively or ineffectively mobilized their support. Finally, Baugh does not neglect the importance of logistics, providing context of the location of each army’s navy and supply issues.

Baugh also strikes an excellent balance between the naval and land battles and between the battles which proved decisive and those that, despite their dramatic execution, proved less so. He clearly shows that the Seven Years’ War, because of its global scope, made naval battles particularly important. Though not as glorious, gripping, or sexy as the battle of Quebec, the battle of Quiberon Bay between the British and French fleets off the coast of Brest proved to be more decisive, since it robbed France of the use of much of its navy, thereby forcing the French government to abandon Canada to its own devices for the remainder of the war.

Likewise, there is a propensity among American historians to give undo credit to the skirmishes at Jumonville’s Glenn and Fort Necessity for starting the Seven Years’ War in North America, featuring as they do a young, inexperienced George Washington. Baugh places these events in their proper context, by providing a fascinating, yet sober account of Jumonville’s Glenn, while reminding the reader that the skirmish in the colonies did not necessarily mean war (p. 88). Later, he provides a much larger, more in-depth account of the Battle of Minorca, which did lead France and Britain to declare war and spread the conflict across three continents. These distinctions allow the reader to measure the significance of individual engagements to the context of the war as a whole.

Baugh’s work may not be as valuable when it comes to understanding the French perspective, as he struggles to untangle decision-making at Versailles. For example, he overplays the influence of the Marquise de Pompadour, Louis XV’s mistress, calling her the “key personage” of the court (p. 30), and implies she was largely in control when he gives her perspective preference over that of Louis XV (p. 421). Whenever Baugh seems at a loss to explain France’s approach to the war, he points to Pompadour as the probable cause. While the Marquise did wield influence at court and used her influence with the king to gain positions and recognitions for her favorites, she did not single-handedly run (or ruin) the war, as Baugh appears to imply.

Baugh’s emphasis on Pompadour’s role is understandable, as French decision-making and court behavior can seem mystifying. For example, when trying to understand why both France and Britain pressed for war in 1755, when the conflict in the Ohio Valley could have been settled peacefully, Baugh presents a plausible case for why Britain “could not afford to accept France’s proposals,” but then states, “the puzzle is to explain French firmness,” especially considering the relative weakness of the French Navy. Rather than try to unpack French decision-making, Baugh assumes that “Versailles was captivated by some potent illusions” (p. 73). Likewise, the author cannot understand why France undertook such heavy burdens in the European conflict, and sees Louis XV making “a geopolitical and military mistake of the first magnitude” (p. 182).

Such judgments seem to belie Baugh's earlier pledge in the preface "not to presume that what happened had to happen" (p. xii). Elsewhere, the author is at a loss to understand why France would commit troops and money to Austria (pp. 228-229). He does not seem to consider French military culture, court pressure (outside of Pompadour), or the influence of French army officers on diplomatic decisions. One reason why France was eager to commit to war, especially a meaty war in Europe, was the need of its officers to prove themselves on the battlefield, especially against Prussia. French noble officers relied on constant war to support their existence and privileges.

Cultural aspects of the French elite, such as honor, international prestige, and *la gloire*, are not factored into Baugh's analysis, but they may have supplied some answers, or at least some possible alternatives for framing French decisions. Because nearly all court nobles had a place in the French army, an analysis of that eighteenth-century French institution, its goals, and weaknesses, would have been a fruitful place to look in understanding French behavior.^[3] Baugh's intent is to focus on diplomacy and operational military history, but as neither of these occurred in a vacuum, it would have aided his explanation to include cultural aspects of the French army and court.

Perhaps because Baugh restricts his book to the two competing powers of France and England, it is full of comparisons between the two countries. Especially since Baugh has difficulty uncovering the motives behind many of France's decisions, he usually favors Britain in these comparisons. From the first chapter, Baugh states that "the quality of British governmental leadership conferred a decisive advantage" (p. 17). If the author had channeled these observations into a larger argumentative structure on how a decision-making process that bore certain characteristics was largely responsible for British victory, then these comparisons and evaluations would have more resonance. As it is, the constant comparisons and evaluations of each decision prove distracting, and lend the book a decisively Anglo-centric flavor. Even certain points where French diplomats performed well are tainted. Baugh admits that "Choiseul managed French diplomacy expertly," but then immediately counters it with: "but it was not hard to look like a negotiating genius when dealing with an opponent so eager to make peace" (p. 560). While Baugh's work presents multiple reasons why the British won the war, his preference for British sources and leadership styles inhibits him from fulfilling his earlier promise to look at the war "from both sides" (p. xii).

Baugh admits that his sources favor the British over the French. He found the French archive he visited (the *Archives du Ministère des Affaires Etrangères*) (p. xiv) "generally unhelpful" in "finding reliable information about how decisions were made at the court of Versailles" (p. 1). Considering that archive was unhelpful, it is surprising he did not try others, such as the archives at the *Service Historique de la Défense* or *Archives Nationales d'Outre Mer*. Such difficulty at the archive, or being unable to find documents that answer his questions, leads Baugh to describe "policy making at Versailles [as] not only opaque but often ill-considered and incoherent" (p. 622). Perhaps policy making could be better characterized as more inconsistent and confused, but Baugh leaves this work to French scholars. No doubt the lack of French archival documents consulted means that his picture of the French court is incomplete. On the other hand, the "British archives provide an almost daily record of British high-level decision-making" (p. 2). Such a plethora of well-organized sources on a topic help Baugh cast the British system as "remarkably competent"—a characterization that may reflect his research experience (p. 622). Baugh's honesty about his sources is refreshing, in that it contextualizes his characterizations and difficulties, and signals to French historians where more work needs to be done.

Despite the issues with Baugh's description of the French court, this book is an important reference work. It deserves a place on the shelf of all scholars teaching or studying the Seven Years' War, because of its complete accounts of the military side of the war, especially the naval battles, from the early skirmishes to the final treaty of 1763. For the same reasons, and for its often gripping, fast-paced writing style, it will find an eager audience among interested non-academic readers.

NOTES

[1] Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: the Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Random House, 2002); Jay Smith, *Nobility Reimagined: The Patriotic Nation in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

[2] Omohundro Institute: Contest for Continents: The Seven Years' War in Global Perspective; Niagara University and Brock University, Thomas A. Chambers and David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, Program Chairs; "1759 Revisited: The Conquest for Canada in Historical Perspective," London, England, September, 2009. Paul Mapp, *The Elusive West and the Contest for Empire, 1713-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Mark Danly is currently editing a book of essays examining the global nature of the Seven Years' War, to be published by Brill University Press.

[3] Rafe Blaufarb, *The French Army 1750-1820: Careers, Talent, Merit* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Rafe Blaufarb, "Noble Privilege and Absolutist State Building: French Military Administration after the Seven Years' War," *French Historical Studies* 24 (Spring 2001): 223-246; André Corvisier, *L'Armée Française de la fin du XVIIe siècle au ministère de Choiseul: Le Soldat* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964); André Corvisier *Armies and Societies in Europe, 1494-1789*, trans. Abigail T. Siddall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979) ; Albert Latreille, *L'oeuvre militaire de la révolution: l'armée et la nation à la fin de l'ancien régime: les derniers ministres de la guerre de la monarchie* (Paris: Chapelot, 1914); Emile G. Léonard, *L'Armée et ses Problèmes au XVIIIe Siècle* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1958); Christy Pichichero, "Le Soldat Sensible: Military Psychology and Social Egalitarianism in the Enlightenment French Army," *French Historical Studies* 31 (2008): 553-580; Jay M. Smith, *Culture of Merit: Nobility, Royal Service, and the Making of Absolute Monarchy in France, 1600-1789* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

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