

Case Studies: Warfare 1250-2003

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Battle	Leader(s)	Reasons for its Outcome / Key Points	Role of Leader
Battle of Falkirk 1298	William Wallace (Scotland) & Edward I (England)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● English Army was approx. 15,000. The Scottish was approx. 10,000. ● Wallace did not defend his flanks. ● Wallace's cavalry and archers were not as effective as those of Edward I. ● English longbows created gaps in the schiltrons, which the English cavalry could exploit. ● English cavalry attacked the gaps in the schiltrons - proving that they could be decisive - but only when synchronized with the longbow. 	<p><u>Wallace</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of schiltrons <u>nearly</u> worked. Even after the Scottish cavalry was driven off & their archers destroyed, they still beat off the first English cavalry attack. ● Wallace chose a good elevated position on the top of a ridge; hard ground to the side of a hill, with a marsh to the front and hill to the rear. But his flanks were unprotected - this was a basic and fundamental error of his command. ● Wallace's cavalry and archers played no effective part in the battle. He chose to face the English with insufficient troops - but this was the first time that the English archers had showed their strength and ability. ● He chose to stand and fight - this cost him his life and Scotland's freedom. ● The Scottish nobles failed to adequately support Wallace. <p><u>Edward I</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● His troops nearly starved. His plan to supply his troops by sea only just worked. His logistical planning was innovative, but also highly risky. ● Despite superior English forces, his deployment of the cavalry was risky and vulnerable against schiltrons that had not been attacked by the longbowmen. ● By deciding to attack, Edward forced Wallace to fight in a position where his flanks were undefended. In essence, he outmaneuvered Wallace and exploited his weaknesses. ● Edward's use of English longbows against the schiltrons was the key turning point of the battle. These created gaps in the schiltrons, which the English cavalry could charge into and exploit. The Scottish schiltrons and soldiers were then killed or scattered. ● Edward I had been successful in raising a large army.

Battle of Agincourt 1415	Henry V	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● English army was approx. 6-9000. The French was approx. 12-15,000. ● The English army chose the terrain of the battle to suit them and took up defensive positions. ● The English longbow men decimated the French army, who had no way to protect themselves. They could fire 100,000 arrows a minute. ● The French had archers, but hardly used them. Their crossbow men could not get the English within their range to have an impact. ● The French cavalry had little success against the English archers; instead they churned up the muddy ground still further. ● When the French dismounted knights attacked, they were severely hampered by the mud and a narrowing approach, while under a constant barrage of English arrows. ● The French knights bunched together as the approach narrowed, became bogged down by the mud and were crushed by successive waves of reinforcements. ● Henry ordered the French prisoners to be slaughtered, while the remainder of the French forces withdrew. 	<u>Henry V</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Henry V was trapped on his route Calais in France and had to fight with an inferior force; so Henry used the terrain to compensate for his numerical deficiency in troops. ● Henry V chose an excellent defensive position. Woodland protected his flanks and narrowed the battlefield where the English were positioned. He also chose to fight on recently ploughed ground, to impede French knights. ● Henry oversaw the judicious placement of English knights and archers. The knights were dismounted in the centre, flanked by archers. This proved to be effective against the French. ● Use of English longbows was the decisive force in the battle. They had a significant impact against the French attackers. Henry also ordered the archers to drive sharp stakes into the ground to protect themselves from a French cavalry charge, subsequently ensuring that they were well protected from the inevitable French cavalry attack when it came during the battle. ● Henry V was a brave leader who fought side-by-side with his troops, inspiring them in the process.
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Battle of Naseby 1645	Oliver Cromwell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parliament had approx. 13,000 troops, while the Royalists had 9000. ● The Royalists attacked the Parliamentarians; cannon played very little part in the battle. ● Close-quarter fighting limited the use of cannon. ● Royalist infantry and cavalry did not work together and their cavalry failed to regroup after a charge, while the Parliamentary cavalry were disciplined and regrouped for subsequent charges. ● Parliament's cavalry was decisive; the technical limitations of muskets made this possible. ● Royalist cavalry, led by Rupert of Rhine, quickly collapsed. It was also undisciplined. They gave no real assistance to the Royalist infantry, leaving them isolated. The infantry were subsequently captured. 	<u>Oliver Cromwell</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Key in setting up the New Model Army in 1644. ● Recruited and trained the best cavalry in war, while promoting the best soldiers, not the just well-born men (Self-Denying Ordinance, 1645) ● His presence boosted the morale of his men. His fanatical religious convictions and belief in the righteousness of his cause contributed to his personal bravery and determination as a commander. Cromwell's Puritan version of Protestant Christianity created a steely sense of perseverance in battle, which motivated not just him but also his troops. ● Cromwell's army were subject to a strict disciplinary code and had to undertake routine drill training - this helped them remained coordinated, unified and focused during the heat of battle. ● Cromwell advised Fairfax to change his position before the battle, to make it appear weaker to the Royalists; this perhaps baited the Royalists into a premature attack, to the advantage of Parliament. ● Cromwell's cavalry (Ironsides) proved themselves to be skilled, determined and disciplined. They could charge, rally, then charge again - which the royalists could not do. This resulted from Parliament's high level of discipline, drill training and Cromwell's battlefield leadership. ● Cromwell personally led the cavalry attack on the Royalist centre and the east wing of the battle. ● Cromwell was supported by Sir Thomas Fairfax - an inspirational general, who led the infantry at Naseby.
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<p>Battle of Waterloo 1815</p>	<p>Duke of Wellington</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Allies had approx. 118,000 troops, of which 25,000 was British. The French had approx. 73,000. The large casualty rate (25,000 French and 23,000 Allied) reflects the fact that maximum firepower was used at close range. • Napoleon initially judged the ground too muddy for cavalry, so he used artillery. However, the soft ground swallowed many of his cannonballs, and the ridge made it difficult to aim at the British infantry. In addition, Wellington wisely ordered his infantry to lie down on the reverse side of the ridge, to protect themselves. • Wellington was aware that Napoleon might try to attack his flanks and he prepared for this eventuality. When Napoleon sent a diversionary attack to Wellington's right flank to try and trick Wellington to move men away from the centre, Wellington did not weaken his centre by removing troops. On the flank, 2000 British Coldstream Guards formed infantry squares and resisted. When Napoleon launched his main assault at 1.00pm, Blucher's Prussian reinforcements began to arrive - Napoleon's tactics had cost valuable time. The British infantry squares, supported by hidden field artillery, meant that the French attack was unsuccessful. • Wellington was able to hold the British line until reinforcements arrived at just the right time to support the British. • Napoleon's Imperial Guard were unable to breakthrough. 	<p><u>Wellington</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellington knew that he needed to plan defensively and constructed his plan accordingly - he needed to avoid defeat until his small force could be reinforced by the Prussian army, whereas Napoleon needed to attack. Blucher led the Prussian army, who were allied with the British. Given that Wellington's force was smaller than Napoleon's, this was a sensible strategy. • Wellington personally chose a very good defensive position - it was perfect for defensive action. He drew up his troops on the reverse side of a <u>ridge</u>, to reduce the impact of enemy artillery, as the French couldn't see the potential targets. The French infantry also struggled to shoot accurately at troops on the reverse of the ridge. The battle area was small (5km across). He also set up two positions in front of the ridge to break up the French assault. • Wellington was not tricked by Napoleon's attempted flanking maneuver - he was prepared for this and, crucially, did not weaken his centre. • Wellington formed his infantry into small columns, able to quickly form squares when required, which was a form of defense effective against attack. • Wellington commanded his men effectively - When the main French infantry attack began, Wellington co-ordinated his response by ordered the Allied artillery to fire, the infantry to stand in lines with bayonets fixed and the cavalry to attack with swords drawn once the French had started to retreat. • Wellington's deployment of infantry worked - At 4pm, when the French cavalry began to charge, Wellington responded by ordering the infantry behind the ridge to form 13 squares and the allied artillery to fire. All 13 squares held firm. Their tactics were to wait - impassively and silent - until the last moment. Then the British would fire disciplined volleys at point-blank range, following up with bayonet charges.
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| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Wellington's Presence - When the French took the crucial group of stone buildings known as ' La Haye Sainte' - making Wellington's centre vulnerable - Wellington reinforced the line by sending extra troops to that area and making himself visible to his troops, riding up and down the line, imploring them to stand and fight, to the death if necessary. This bolstered morale at a crucial juncture of the battle. He seemingly held the army together by presence and example. This was one of the greatest - and perhaps the last - of the historic battles in which such an immediate role was played by a commander-in-chief.● Wellington helped to inspire his men to stand firm; When La Haye Sainte fell and Wellington's infantry began to falter, vital Prussian reinforcements arrived. Napoleon knew that this was his final chance, so he ordered his elite Imperial Guard to attack. Wellington ordered his artillery to fire on them and his infantry to stand in lines when they were close.● Wellington's use of artillery was quite old-fashioned. Instead of concentrating his guns in one place, he spread his artillery across the line, limiting their ability to decisively attack / bombard any one aspect of the French Army.● Napoleon's mistakes and miscalculations played a significant role in the French defeat and Allied victory. Napoleon failed to destroy the buildings with artillery that were crucial to Wellington's defence was a crucial failure. |
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<p>Battle of Balaclava 1854</p>	<p>Lord Raglan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Part of the Crimean War; the Russians were fighting the British, French and Turkish allies. This was the first photographed war, although these could not be printed directly in newspapers until the 1880s. ● Russian attack succeeded in taking the Turkish redoubts and prepared to tow away the guns. ● 8.30am; 2300 Russian cavalry attacked 700 British infantry & Turkish forces. The Allies formed lines and fired rifle volleys towards the Russians and used grapeshot. ● The leaders were Lord Raglan, Lord Lucan, Lord Cardigan and Captain Nolan. ● 300 British heavy cavalry charged using swords and pistols at the 2000 Russian cavalry. The Russian retreated. ● At 11am the British Brigade of Light Cavalry charged towards the Russian Don Battery in an attempt to capture their guns. They were fired upon by the Don Battery and from the hills on both sides of the valley. Those that made it to the Don Battery were confronted by the Russian cavalry and had little choice but to return to the valley. Less than half of the 673 who began the charge returned uninjured; 113 were dead. It was a fiasco for the British. ● The Russians claimed Balaclava as a victory, capturing redoubts and some large guns. ● The battle showed that artillery was having a greater impact in warfare, limiting the impact of the cavalry charge. The British had dug trenches in this war, setting a precedent that would dominate by WW1. 	<p><u>Lord Raglan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Charge of Light Brigade was ultimately caused by miscommunication on the battlefield, incompetent leadership and personal animosities between individual leaders. These failings could be brutally exploited and result in a significant loss of life and casualty rate in battle in the mid-19th century and beyond. ● Raglan was blamed by the press and the government for the sufferings of the British soldiers in the terrible Crimean winter during the Siege of Sevastopol owing to shortages of food and clothing although this, in part, was the fault of the home authorities who failed to provide adequate logistical support.
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<p>Western Front during WW1 & Battle of the Somme 1916 (inc. nature of trench warfare & war of attrition)</p>	<p>General Haig</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Somme was fought in 1916. A stalemate had occurred in WW1 between 1914-1916, with both sides digging vast trench systems, with 'no-man's land' between them. This was a war of attrition. • Haig was under pressure from the UK government to attack the Germans - thus, just defending was not an option for him. • Preceding the Somme offensive, a 7 day heavy artillery bombardment of German lines took place, firing 1.7 million shells. • At 7.30am on 01/07/1916, 120,000 infantry went 'over the top' with 30kg backpacks, with a 'creeping barrage' of shells ahead of them. The German defences were intact, and mowed down the attackers with machine guns. They were able to get back to their largely unscathed positions once the British bombardment ceased. • 20,000 British infantry were killed, with 40,000 missing, wounded or captured. • German trenches remained intact, as did the barbed wire, hindering the British advance. • Somme offensive lasted for 5 months, with no changes to overall strategy. Gradually, ground was won by the British, but very little. • Conscription was introduced in 1916. 	<p><u>General Haig</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Haig did not learn from the failure of earlier mass infantry attacks. Haig believed that they would work eventually. He was old-fashioned in his belief that infantry advances could succeed against machine guns. He believed that trench-warfare was a transient phase in the war, although it lasted much longer than he expected (until 1918) • The mass artillery bombardment proved to be ineffective in destroying German positions and defences. instead it merely signposted the imminent British attack on the German positions. • Haig failed to carry out adequate surveillance of German defences after the Allied artillery bombardment. • Tanks were used for the first time, but with little effect. • Haig ignored the advice of younger generals such as Sir Henry Rawlinson, who argued for new tactics, such as making a series of smaller gains which could be consolidated. • Haig was obstinately optimistic in continuing to send men 'over the top' when their was little real hope of a breakthrough. • Haig had to tie down as many German troops as possible at the Somme, to ease the pressure on the French at Verdun. He was therefore ordered to go on the offensive - defending was not an option for him. His offensive at the Somme secured this key objective. • Haig calculated that while the Allied death toll was high, for Germany, it would be ultimately catastrophic. • New weapons had not yet fully proved their worth (gas, aircraft and tanks), so those that were already established had to play the main role in the battle. Tanks were simply too primitive to be war-winners, and their use in a supporting role in regards to the infantry was probably wise at the Somme. • Ultimately, it is unlikely that any commander could have made a breakthrough at the Somme. Haig's culpability lies in his failure to recognise the limitations of his resources made achieving a breakthrough highly unlikely.
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<p>Iraq War (inc. high-tech weaponry & surveillance) 2003</p>	<p>NA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invasion of Iraq was led by US troops, supported by Britain. It took just 16 days to capture Baghdad, and 21 to take most of the key cities. ● Allies used 'shock and awe' tactics. This was asymmetric warfare, with the Allies having much greater firepower. ● Extensive surveillance of the location and nature of Iraqi territory had taken place, especially of missile and defence sites, much of which was carried out by UAV's and drones. ● Air strikes, beginning weeks before the actual invasion, had taken place against key defence sites, considerably softening the Iraqi defences. ● Armed advance, using tanks and armoured personnel carriers, supported by aircraft, helped achieve a rapid advance on key cities, including Baghdad and Basra (the key British objective). ● Allied weapons performed well. The British Challenger 2 tanks made rapid progress. Only 2 were lost (one to friendly fire). The Americans lost 16. Infantry were more vulnerable in 'Scimitars', which were armoured personnel carriers. ● The insurgency that followed the invasion proved far more difficult for the Allies to manage. Guerrilla tactics, IEDs and suicide bombings presented significant and deadly dangers to the Allied soldiers. 	<p><u>N/A</u></p>
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