Leaving the Fight

Surrender in warfare has determined the fate of governments, states, and nations. It has reduced powerful commanders to powerless captives and inflicted submission, degradation, and even death on common soldiers held as prisoners of war. It has also led to civilian detainees being grossly mistreated and murdered. However, surrender, prisoners of war, and detainees have rarely been addressed as general phenomena in warfare. *Leaving the Fight* is then an essential history of the evolution of surrender from the Middle Ages to the present day. John A. Lynn II explores the different forms taken by surrender, from the abject capitulation of armies and states to the withdrawal of forces from military interventions deemed to be unwinnable, such as in Vietnam and Afghanistan. He also considers the fates of prisoners of war and civilians detained by military forces from harsh treatment intended to intimidate foes to attempts to win over hearts and minds.

John A. Lynn II is Emeritus Professor of History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His previous publications include *Another Kind of War: The Nature and History of Terrorism* (2019) and *Battle: A History of Combat and Culture* (2003). He has served as president of the US Commission on Military History and vice president of the Society for Military History and was awarded the Morrison Prize from the Society for Military History in 2017.

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Leaving the Fight

Surrender, Prisoners of War, and Detainees in Western Warfare

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To Andrea Lynn

For nearly six decades now she has been my wife, partner, collaborator, editor, and constructive critic – as well as being an author in her own right.

I could not have done it without her.

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Preface

The origins of the volume before you today go back to my decades-long fascination with military surrender as practiced during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe. At that time, sieges and the capitulations of garrisons were the very stuff of campaigns. The surrender of a fortress or fortified town followed guidelines set out in international agreements, called cartels, and then detailed in formal capitulations negotiated between the victors and vanquished. These capitulations stipulated the fates of defeated garrisons and affected inhabitants. Some fifteen years ago, my interest in early modern surrender broadened and intensified into a study of surrender per se across the centuries and encompassing the surrender of states, military units, and individual combatants.

At that point, I also concluded that examining the taking and treatment of prisoners of war was essential to my work, since these prisoners were a key consequence of surrender. And, as I advanced the range of my inquiry to include modern insurgencies, I was compelled to include the detention of civilians, confined much as prisoners of war because of their role, or suspected role, as combatants in irregular conflicts.

The project has now resulted in the publication of *Leaving the Fight: Surrender, Prisoners of War, and Detainees in Western Warfare.* Work on it was interrupted by my writing *Another Kind of War: The Nature and History of Terrorism* (2019). But if I had to set aside my research on surrender, prisoners of war, and detainees, it was always my intention to return to these subjects and give them the attention they deserved.

Surrender in warfare has determined the fate of governments, states, and nations. It has reduced powerful commanders to powerless captives and inflicted submission, degradation, and even death on common soldiers held as prisoners of war. And it has led to civilian detainees being grossly mistreated and murdered. Yet as important as they are, the subjects of surrender, prisoners of war, and detainees have rarely been

addressed as general phenomena in warfare. Certainly, specific surrenders during particular wars have been discussed at length. Consider, for example, Appomattox. But we lack a broad-ranging comparative literature. The most useful general English-language survey is *How Fighting Ends: A History of Surrender* (2012), edited by Holger Afflerbach and Hew Strachan; Afflerbach has also published *Die Kunst der Niederlage: Eine Geschichte der Kapitulation* (2013). Claire Miot, Thomas Vaisset, and Paul Vo-Ha have recently produced an edited volume, *Cessez-le-feu, cesser les combats de l'époque moderne à nos jours* (2022). Prisoners of war and detainees have also garnered some attention in specialized works such as Paul Vo-Ha, *Rendre les armes: Le sort des vaincus XVIe–XVIIe siècles* (2017); Heather Jones, *Violence against Prisoners of War in the First World War* (2014); and a RAND study, *The Battle behind the Wire: U.S. Prisoner and Detainee Operations from WWII to Iraq* (2011). But again, the general literature is sparse, although there is Laurent Jalabert, *Les prisoniers de guerre* (2018). There is certainly room for more explorations of the subject. It is hoped that my book will simply be one more link in a much longer chain of study and discovery.

While conducting my historical exploration of surrender, I received a Public Scholar Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2017, for which I am most grateful. I interpreted the purpose of such public scholarship to be the production of serious academic work on matters of public interest written in a manner accessible to a broad audience. While my primary goal here was to write a history, I also did so in hope of extracting from that history what might be of value in dealing with current issues of political and military policy. This most affected Chapters 7 and, especially, 8.

In these pages, I focus on the Western experience of warfare since the late Middle Ages to the present. Those who champion current interest in global approaches may see this emphasis as evidence of cultural myopia, but it is not. My choice has been based on judgments of economy, importance, and potential policy relevance. A work of truly global breath would also have to be of encyclopedic length, and I did not want to take on such an extensive project. Also, the modern codification of surrender, prisoners of war, and detainees emerged primarily from Western experience. Medieval European chivalric codes of honorable surrender, designed initially for elite warriors, expanded to include all combatants in the cartels contracted between warring states from the seventeenth century and into the nineteenth. From this base came the Geneva and Hague Conventions, 1864–1907, then revised as the Geneva Conventions in 1929, 1949, and the Protocols of 1977. It can be argued

that international humanitarian law of war can be seen initially as an offspring of warfare and surrender in Europe.

I have also chosen to emphasize land warfare in this study, for similar reasons of economy. But more basically, I have been a historian of land warfare throughout my entire career. It is my chosen ground and I have opted to keep my feet dry in this effort as well. It is hoped that this study will encourage a master of naval warfare to produce a volume on surrender at sea.

In dealing with the decades after World War II, the Western focus of this volume concentrates on American armed conflicts from the Korean War through the Afghanistan War, longest in US history. If there are insights and guidance from the past that would benefit American readers, they would be most likely found in American military experience through the decades following 1945. The nature of warfare was fundamentally altered owing to the potential catastrophe of nuclear war and the need to avoid Armageddon by foregoing head-to-head fighting between the great powers. Proxy wars became the most common form of armed confrontation, and the United States' stature as a preeminent military force put it on the frontline in such struggles. And, after the Korean War, American interventions took on the mode of counterinsurgency and, later, counterterrorism, even when combined with more conventional operations in what we now label as hybrid warfare.

This discussion cannot address every war and surrender, but I have made choices that matter most to me for their importance in the history of surrender, prisoners of war, and detainees. My choices have a great deal to do with my judgment of what matters most in documenting continuities and contrasts and the historical trend toward more humane treatment of prisoners of war and detainees.

But before launching into the narrative and analysis presented in these pages, I must express my thanks to individuals who have helped me along the path that has led to this book. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Michael Watson at Cambridge University Press for his patience and support going back over a decade. Hew Strachan and Holger Afflerbach encouraged my first ventures into the general subject of surrender, and Paul Vo-Ha has been both supporter and foil in my conceptual evolution. Mark Grimsley of the Ohio State University has given me invaluable advice and counsel on the manuscript. Thanks as well to my *équipe française*, including Paul Vo-Ha and captained by Hervé Drévillon. Among the stalwarts, I also want to thank Emilie Dosquet, who has been so intelligent and kind. And I must express my great

gratitude to my son, Morgan Lynn, for his essential technical IT assistance in completing the book for publication.

But above all, I thank my wife, the author Andrea Lynn, who has provided her skills as an editor, along with her questions and input concerning concept and argument. I realize it has not been easy on her, as she has had to bear with this, my latest obsession.