

pulling together the diverse threads into a relatively coherent tapestry—or at least as coherent as is possible in a text reflecting on a world fractured by fault lines.

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ALLIES AGAINST THE RISING SUN

*The United States, the British Nations, and the Defeat of Imperial Japan*

Nicholas Evan Sarantakes

Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009. 458 pp. US \$39.95 cloth  
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There is no shortage of books dealing with Anglo-American relations in the Second World War. Two first-rate overviews, by William Roger Louis and Christopher Thorne, are particularly well known. The relationship between the American president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, has been analyzed to the point of exhaustion, but still lacks consensus—as does the perennial issue of how the Anglo-American “special relationship” either did or did not develop during the war. In addition, there are many studies looking at specialized matters. To mention only a few and to illustrate the diversity of the topic, there are valuable works on such matters as British propaganda in the United States (Nicholas Cull), the diplomacy of maritime logistics (Kevin Smith), and the postwar fate of Hong Kong (Andrew Whitfield).

Nicholas Sarantakes, an associate professor at the Naval War College, is quite aware of these studies but contends that the war in the Pacific has been written disproportionately from an American perspective and wishes to provide a corrective. He does so by emphasizing the contribution of what he terms “the British Nations” (British empire—or Commonwealth—would, in the reviewer’s opinion, be a better term, since it reflects both contemporary and subsequent scholarly usage) to the planning for and the actual defeat of Japan.

Following in the wake of Barbara Tuchman’s *The Guns of August*, Sarantakes takes an approach that straddles the academic and the popular. His stylistic introduction and epilogue could both have been easily deleted for an academic audience. However, such an approach does fit nicely with

the great emphasis that the author puts on the personalities involved. For the professional historian, the potted biographical sketches of the dramatis personae offer little that is novel. Indeed, for the most part they are not based on any archival research but are merely condensations (in some cases, rather drastic condensations) of existing biographical studies, with little attempt to indicate how past experience might affect the various individuals' views of the Pacific War. What is new is the wider range of subjects that the author considers. In addition to the usual suspects—Churchill, Roosevelt, the British chiefs of staff and their American counterparts—Sarantakes looks at the leading political figures in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, along with their closest advisers.

What emerges is a larger picture of the war in the Pacific, with the British nations receiving much more attention than in previous studies. However, the material to which Sarantakes gives the most space is not new. The fact that Churchill was a very difficult man to work with—and for—is certainly not new, and Sarantakes brings no original evidence to bear upon the matter. Nor is it new, for example, that Admiral Ernest King believed that the United States should focus its war effort in the Pacific, that the US navy should have the primary job of winning the conflict, and that the British should be excluded from participation as much as possible. Douglas MacArthur's desire to control all the land forces in the region is equally well established.

What will be new for most scholars who are not familiar with Australian, Canadian, and New Zealand history is the extent to which the dominions affected (or attempted to affect) policy. Shaped by unique economic, geographic, and historical conditions, the policies of each of these countries differed. New Zealand and Australia worried about the Japanese threat and so looked to the United States for succour, but they also wanted to retain ties to Britain. The challenge of reconciling the need for protection with a sense of Britishness predated the war. Sarantakes would have been well advised to consider what conclusions the antipodean dominions had drawn from the Washington naval conference of 1922 in order to explain their ambivalence. Canada's position was equally complicated. The Japanese posed a far more immediate threat to the southern hemisphere than to Canada, but for economic reasons Ottawa needed to ensure that its policy did not stray too far from Washington's.

The best parts of the book, to my mind, are those in which Sarantakes draws most heavily on primary research. His accounts of actual meetings between the various countries are solid, and his emphasis on personalities makes for interesting and informative reading. But many will differ with

some of Sarantakes' conclusions. His belief that Canada, Australia, and New Zealand "basically spoke with one voice when explaining their reasons for wanting to play a role in the defeat of Japan" seems unlikely to me, given the differing concerns of the three countries (358). On the other hand, his contention that political factors, more so than purely military issues, shaped the functioning of the Allied coalition in the Pacific is quite sound, although unexceptional. This book is a good summary of the existing literature that adds an interesting aspect in its consideration of the British Commonwealth's contribution to the Pacific War.

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ICAO

*A History of the International Civil Aviation Organization*

David Mackenzie

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Alain de Botton, who recently spent a week at London's Heathrow airport as a writer-in-residence, points out that the huge technical, organizational, and legal system of air travel becomes a topic for popular discussion only when something goes wrong with it. Planes get delayed or cancelled; small and large planes crash, though rarely; terrorists make occasional attempts to blow up a plane; ever-increasing security measures annoy casual travellers. Still, air travel remains the safest mode of public transportation, and it is a remarkable achievement that this whole system works well most of the time. Few of us, however, have the chance—or the desire—to look into what goes on behind the check-in counters, security gates, immigration booths, or cockpit doors. One of the most important entities that coordinate these interconnected systems is the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a specialized United Nations agency that has been located in Montreal since its founding in 1947. It is the subject of David Mackenzie's new book, *ICAO*. Based on thorough research in official ICAO documents as well as numerous archives and published materials, the book fills a sizable gap in the historical scholarship on aviation, international relations, and the connection between the two.