

ALLIES AGAINST THE RISING SUN, THE UNITED STATES, THE BRITISH NATIONS, AND THE DEFEAT OF IMPERIAL JAPAN, NICHOLAS E. SARANTAKES. Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-7006-1669-5, 480 pp., 28 photos, 6 maps, \$39.95

A thoroughly-researched monograph, *Allies Against the Rising Sun* offers new insights into the diplomatic dimension of the Second World War in the Asia-Pacific theatre. Sarantakes not only explains the complex set of relations that existed between the United States and Great Britain, but he has also succeeded in demonstrating how the Dominions of the British Empire, including Australia, New Zealand and Canada, were often treated as crucial players in the fight against Imperial Japan. The analysis is based on a comprehensive array of documentary evidence that has been collected from the national archives of the US and UK, as well as those located in the major Commonwealth capitals, such as Canberra, Ottawa and Wellington. If that was not meticulous enough, the author has diligently consulted a couple of dozen collections of private papers of senior American and British politicians, scattered across various university libraries and archives on both sides of the Atlantic.

Sarantakes contends that the power relationship within the Anglo-American alliance was far more complicated than it has been portrayed as being in previous works on the subject. The traditional view states that in the Asia-Pacific theatre, the British and their dominions were most often relegated to the role of junior partners to the United States. This was largely because the American contribution to the campaign against the Imperial Japanese forces, both in terms of manpower and materiel, dwarfed those of its coalition partners. Washington's clout over matters related to policy and strategic planning was such that the British Empire could not significantly influence any decisions that the US put forward. In short, statesmen in London resigned to the fact that Britain no longer had the political, economic and military prowess to remain a major power in Asia, and consequently, they tended to allow the US to dictate the conduct of the war against Japan. However, such explanations provide a somewhat limited perspective regarding the mechanics of the Anglo-American relationship.

Although the United States was certainly the dominant member of the partnership, its leaders were fully aware that they could not formulate their policies and war plans without taking into account the opinions of their allies. A number of factors made it vital for America to co-operate with the British and their Dominions. For a start, Great Britain had considerably more experience in conducting political affairs on the global stage. Washington thus could not afford to alienate London, since such actions were likely to create circumstances in which the US would have had to work alone to attain its wartime objective of completely dismantling the Japanese Empire, as well as creating a post-war order based on the principles of national self-determination, as stated in the 1941 Atlantic Charter. The US also needed the support of Australia, New Zealand and Canada, all of whom provided bases that were essential for American forces to carry out their operations in the Pacific. The Dominions were also expected to play a key role maintaining regional peace and security after the termination of hostilities against Japan. Respecting the sensibilities of Great Britain and the Dominions was therefore essential if the US was to avoid fighting its crusade without the help of reliable friends.

More significantly, inter-Allied collaboration provided a key instrument for legitimizing US policies towards Japan. If US forces exclusively had fought in the Pacific theatre, the local populace, along with the nations of the British Empire would have been likely to raise questions as to why America was battling the Japanese single-handedly, in which case support for maintaining the alliance in the post-war era might have been jeopardized. Conversely, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his advisors realized that if Great Britain wished to reconstitute her empire in Southeast Asia, and regain her lost colonies, such as Malaya and Hong Kong, she had to play an active role helping the US defeat the Imperial Japanese forces in the Pacific, which was the primary theatre of operations. If, on the other hand, Britain's military activities had been confined to sideshows, such as the India-Burma front, Washington could have become even more reluctant to allow Britain to re-establish its influence in Asia. The recognition of the need for mutual support, in turn led Churchill and his Chiefs of Staff to agree to contribute naval, air and ground forces for the Allied assault on Japan's home territory in 1945, while at the same time convincing US leaders to accept the offer.

The narrative is elegantly written, and is accompanied by an interesting account of the main events that shaped the campaigns in the Asia-Pacific theatre, in order to highlight the strategic settings

in which the alliance between the United States and the British Empire developed during the course of the conflict. *Allies Against the Rising Sun* provides a long-awaited re-examination of the intricacies which underpinned the key component of the Allied coalition in the fight against Imperial Japan, and clearly demonstrated how the British Empire played a key role in the campaign at all levels, including policy, strategy, and operational planning. The book is essential reading not only for historians of the Pacific War, but also makes a profound contribution to the literature on Anglo-American relations in the twentieth century.

DOUGLAS FORD
University of Birmingham