

2002 volume *The Battle for Normandy*, where he aimed at a thorough rehabilitation of Montgomery's strategic genius. Beevor's contribution to the ongoing debates and controversy surrounding the campaign (which finally seems to have subsided now) is limited to nuance and re-emphasis. He accentuates in particular the intensity of the battle in which the German and Allied losses per division exceeded those of the Eastern Front (p.113); the suffering of the French civil population and destruction wrought by heavy bombers (the 'martyrdom of Caen', p.519); and clears up a few persistent myths/errors, such as the overestimation of the efficacy of the dreaded rocket-firing RAF Typhoon (p.412). None of this will drastically alter people's perceptions of the campaign. The contrast between the punctilious conduct of the Germans stationed in northwest France (p.453) and the licentious misbehaviour of the Allied, particularly American, armies is also worth mention (p.517), but has already been highlighted in Norman Davies' *Europe at War*. As one intimately familiar with the campaign, the archives, and the debates, this led me to mild disappointment, after such invigorating recent chronicles of World War II from Hastings himself, Niall Ferguson (*War of the World*), and Davies.

Thus, I would fully endorse *D-Day* as being one of the standard texts for this campaign now, next to Carlo D'Este, Max Hastings, and John Keegan. Like his earlier *Stalingrad*, this is a quality oeuvre, but I would caution specialists or those hungry for deep strategic insights, or a recasting of the historiography, not too get too excited!

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Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Allies against the Rising Sun: The United States, the British Nations, and the Defeat of Imperial Japan*. Lawrence, KS: *University Press of Kansas*, 2009. Pp.480. \$39.95, HB. ISBN 978-0-7006-1669-5.

This book provides an overdue and welcome addition to the existing literature on the relationship between Britain, its Commonwealth and the United States during the final stages of the war in the Pacific. Since the late 1970s, Christopher Thorne's pioneering work *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the War against Japan, 1941-45* has played a central role in shaping the way we assess the mechanics of the Anglo-American alliance in the Far East. That assessment has often been one of strained relations, leading Professor Michael Dockrill once

to remark that the ‘so-called “special relationship” hardly seemed to work at all in this vast area’. The bulk of academic research has been set against the regional backdrop of British India, Southeast Asia and China, areas where Britain’s long-standing imperial presence clashed with widely-held American feelings of anti-imperialism. It left many Americans unsure about whether the British were really interested in beating the Japanese or more concerned with recovering lost colonial possessions and imperial influence.

In his impressively researched book, Sarantakes looks at British attempts to dispose of this accusation. He eloquently describes the various twists and turns of how Britain and interested Commonwealth countries (essentially Canada, Australia and New Zealand) sought to form a coalition of powers with the United States for the final attack on Japan’s home islands. Interwoven within the text are vivid descriptions of some of the central characters in the story. By adopting a transnational approach, Sarantakes debunks once and for all the myth that the war in the Pacific was a purely American enterprise. He could, however, have strengthened his international framework a little further by making more of the potential and actual Soviet role, which loomed large in British-American calculations.

What Sarantakes depicts well is the tortuous road to a British Commonwealth contribution for the Pacific. He brings to life the extremely destructive rows over Far Eastern strategy between Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his chiefs of staff, who threatened to resign *en masse* at one point. As Churchill searched for ways to recover Britain’s lost colonial possessions, the chiefs of staff, while appreciating the need to recover prize assets such as Malaya and Singapore, wanted British Commonwealth forces to fight alongside the Americans in the main battles, thus hoping to extend their close military relationship into the post-war world. When at Quebec in September 1944 the British formally pitched for a role in Pacific operations, General George Marshall, the US army chief of staff, conceded it was ‘unthinkable’ for the United States to refuse such an approach (p.108). Both Churchill, who offered the services of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, and Franklin Roosevelt, the US president who accepted the offer, were politically astute enough to recognise the importance of brokering such an agreement.

The military necessity for such forces was open to question, and US commanders often voiced concerns about the practicalities of accommodating their British and Commonwealth allies in the Pacific theatre. These concerns, however, never caused the Americans to table an outright refusal, and the British Pacific Fleet made a ‘credible showing’ in actions off the coast of Okinawa and in subsequent

operations (p.302). For this reason, Sarantakes claims, historians have 'exaggerated the importance' of the many Anglo-American differences in this region, which were merely 'honest disagreements' about the best way to proceed (p.10). This is a bold statement, because suspicion of British imperialism and doubts about Britain's effort as a whole in the war against Japan remained deep-rooted amongst popular US opinion, Congress and senior US political and military figures.

Was the British Commonwealth contribution to the Pacific War enough to change that perception? Some evidence suggests not. During the 18 June 1945 meeting in which President Harry Truman signed up for an invasion of Japan, Marshall told him that he was 'glad to have any real help or any assistance that would result in striking a real blow' (an allusion to Soviet help), but British participation in any land force 'in some ways would constitute an embarrassment'. Sarantakes does not refer to Marshall's remarks in his book, which tends to undermine his argument that the American general wanted to use his British allies 'as a lever' at this meeting to influence those who remained unsure about an invasion (p.247). The reactions of US commanders to the deployment of British long-range bombers in the Pacific, Sarantakes informs us, was also 'in the negative' but at the time of the Japanese surrender plans still remained in place for their use (p.345). In addition, Sarantakes points out that the new Labour government was 'blunt in describing it mainly as a diplomatic gesture' (p.346), which suggests that the British themselves were never sure that they had won over their American allies. Labour ministers also worried about sending a small Commonwealth Corps to Japan, equipped with US resources, fearing that the force might completely lose its identity. This was cause for great concern, given their belief that the magnitude of the British effort in the Far East had never been recognised by the United States. Despite its exploits, for example, the British Pacific Fleet was receiving poor exposure in the press. Not for nothing was it dubbed the 'Forgotten Fleet'.

Throughout his book, Sarantakes strives to draw out the benefits of allied efforts to achieve 'a co-operative effort' in the final battles against the Japanese homeland, arguing that each power sought to secure 'long-term interests' (p.359). Sarantakes does not, though, look beyond the end of the war against Japan, which is entirely understandable given that his book is essentially a wartime account. Yet, the immediate story of the post-war period in this region is not an altogether happy one. The Americans rarely consulted with their wartime allies, much to the fury of London, Canberra and Wellington. In fact, senior British diplomatic figures in London and the Far East had long been warning that Britain should not expect to gain much from taking part in the invasion of Japan (one despatch of which Sarantakes refers to on

p.346), especially with forces that would be dwarfed by those of the Americans.

That the British Commonwealth decision to send forces to the Pacific was carried out for noble reasons and kinship is not in doubt, and the United States clearly recognised the political penalties for refusing such an offer. What is more difficult to measure is whether these decisions really made a difference to the very fractious Anglo-American relationship in the Far East. However we answer this question, Sarantakes has unquestionably provided a fresh perspective at the way we look at that story in what remains a beautifully researched and well-argued book.

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Evan Mawdsley, **World War II: A New History**. *Cambridge: Cambridge University Press*, 2009. Pp.483. £55, HB. ISBN 0-521-84592-0.

In this volume, Evan Mawdsley has produced a first-rate history of the Second World War, combining narrative analysis and comment in admirable proportions. The style is clear, the judgements measured, and the coverage extensive. The author makes good the claim of his sub-title (*A New History*) by being up to date in his scholarship and by opening up new approaches to his subject. For example, he argues that the Second World War began in 1937, with the outbreak of undeclared war between Japan and China, rather than the more conventional and Euro-centric date of 1939. Indeed, he asserts that the conflicts in Asia and the Pacific were as important as those in Europe, though sometimes he seems less than fully convinced by his own argument. In Chapter 10, on 'the European periphery', he draws together the campaigns in the North Africa, the Mediterranean, Italy and the Balkans, and opens up new perspectives on familiar events. Throughout the book, he draws on his earlier work on Stalin's Russia and the Soviet-German war to make sure that the eastern front receives full recognition in the history of the conflict.

Mawdsley sets the scene in his opening chapter by surveying the main belligerent powers, bringing at least this reader up sharply by including China among the 'giants'. He goes out of his way to emphasise the importance of ideology for all the belligerents and in the history of the war as a whole. In a striking passage, he shows how the various countries all looked back on the experience of the Great War and learned different lessons from it. Germany wanted to reclaim the victory it thought it had unfairly lost in 1918. Britain and France hoped