



Eisenhower's Armies: The American-British Alliance during World War II

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The Anglo-American relationship from 1941-1945 proved to be the most effective military alliance in history. Yet there were also constant tensions and disagreements that threatened to pull the alliance apart. This book highlights why the unprecedented level of cooperation between the very different American and British forces eventually led to victory but also emphasizes the tensions and controversies which inevitably arose. Based on considerable archival research on both sides of the Atlantic, this work considers the breadth and depth of the relationship from high-level strategic decisions, the rivalries and personalities of the commanders to the ordinary British and American soldiers who fought alongside one another. The book also looks back and demonstrates how the legacy of previous experience shaped the decisions of the war. *Eisenhower's Armies* is the story of two very different armies learning to live, work, and fight together even in the face of serious strategic disagreements. The book is also a very human story about the efforts of many individuals—famous or otherwise—who worked and argued together to defeat Hitler's Germany. In highlighting the cooperation, tensions, and disagreements inherent in this military alliance, this work shows that Allied victory was far from pre-ordained and proves that the business of making this alliance work was vital for eventual success. Thus this dynamic new history provides a fresh perspective on many of the controversies and critical strategic decisions of World War II. As such, this book provides expert analysis of the Anglo-American military alliance as well as new insights into the 'special relationship' of the mid-twentieth century.

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From Reader Review Eisenhower's Armies: The American-British Alliance during World War II for online ebook

Reed Galen says

Excellent new history of the personalities and circumstances that made the United States' and United Kingdom's World War II alliance like nothing warfare had seen before. A very worth addition to the library of excellent WWII histories out recently.

Joan Mitchell says

This book gives an intimate knowledge of how the Allies of WWII worked with each other. The different generals with their differing opinions and training had to come together in very unfavorable circumstances to win on all fronts. I am not into war history but this was very interesting. The different personalities and viewpoints came together in impossible circumstances. What we are taught in our school history does not include all the implications that this book offers. I received this book from Goodreads for free.

Harley says

I picked up this book after reading a biography of Eisenhower hoping to gain a better understanding of Eisenhower's role in World War II. Unfortunately, the title is misleading. Niall Barr attempts to document the relationship between the British military and the American military beginning with the interactions prior to the American Revolution. The last 2/3 of the book focused on World War II.

Niall Barr has spent a lot of time obviously researching the relationship between the two militaries but he puts too much of his research into the book. At times I found it boring and too detailed. He could have left out half the material and still drove his message home. I felt there was too much coverage of the various battles. (Then again, this is the first book of history about a war that I have read. If they are all like this, I won't be reading another.)

Given what I have read in this book and in the Eisenhower biography, I am amazed that the Allies even won the war. The Allies made a number of key blunders, but still managed to overcome the Germans.

The message I take from the book is that building a working relationship between two very different organizations is very difficult but it can be done. Victory came as a result of the Allies being able to work together despite their differences and their mistakes.

Business leaders who acquire or merge with other businesses should read this book to understand how difficult it is to blend different cultures.

Niall Barr is British and I think he has read more British history than American, but he is fair in his analysis. He shares both the negative and positive on both sides.

happy says

With this book, Prof. Barr looks at the sometimes contentious relationship of the two great allies of World War II, Great Britain and the United States. Not only does the author look at the relationship of the two armies in World War II, in the first chapter of the book he traces the military relationship between the two countries from the very beginnings – Braddock's Defeat in 1755 up to the beginning of the Second World War.

As the author gets into the main focus of the narrative, the World War II relationship, he brings to light the very different cultures of the two armies. Everything from pay and uniforms, staff structure and just plain personality conflicts are well drawn. He also looks at the effect the various missions the British sent to Washington DC had on the relationship. He shows an especially bright light on the British Tank mission and how it helped the US in the layout of US armor.

In looking at the problems Eisenhower had in putting together the Allied command in the Med, Prof Barr looks at everything from the differences in how the staff responsibilities were defined in the two armies, the problems of supply, British disdain and distrust of American troops and commanders. One example of the supply problems was small arms ammunition. The British used a .303 cartridge and the Americans the 30-06. He cites an instance early in the war when the US gave Britain thousands of Enfield rifles that were chambered for US ammo and were unable to be issued to the British home guard because of the lack of appropriate ammo. As a result of problems like this, the supply situation was never really solved and the two armies maintained separate supply chains throughout the war. The staff issues were eventually resolved, but British disdain for the American way of war was never really overcome. The Americans also had problems with the way Britain ran the war.

While looking at the higher command issues, Prof Barr illustrates the differences between how Britain wanted to fight the war and the US. This can be summed up with the US wanting a direct assault on France while Britain wanted to nibble at the edges. The story of how the US gained control of the strategy is a fascinating one. The author looks at the reluctance Churchill and Brooke had at giving up their control and finally their acceptance.

Finally no book on the British/American alliance can be complete without discussing Bernard Montgomery. Prof Barr does a very good job of showing Eisenhower's brilliance in how he handled Montgomery and finally put him in his place. This discussion includes the strategic differences between the British who wanted a narrow front drive to Berlin and Eisenhower and his broad front approach. In looking at the pros and cons of each, the author surprisingly comes down on Eisenhower's side. He basically says that the broad front enabled the alliance to withstand the Ardennes Offensive.

While not a whole lot new, esp in discussing Monty and the US commanders' relationships, I found this a very solid 4 star read.

Richard says

4.5 stars. Excellent and engaging account of the World War II alliance between the US and the UK, while at the same time describing vividly battles, strategies and personalities. The author has been very even-handed in his approach and does not pull any punches when discussing key events.

Jeff Brateman says

Loved it loved it loved it! As time goes by, I think we forget and immortalize the WW2 struggle, forgetting that all the players involved were engrossed in their local and regional struggles as well. This book really plays home the importance of various levels of cooperation in large organizational merges. This was my first intro into how Montgomery and Eisenhower had to deal with their own struggles, and pressures from their respective countries.

Also, this makes a great companion book to *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, which essentially shows the power struggle from the opposite side.

Nooilforpacifists says

Excellent rebuttal to recently read bio of Alanbrooke. The Anglo-American alliance succeeded because of its joint planning ability, says author Niall Barr, and although Brooke and Marshall share credit for that, virtually all of the cooperative spirit came from Ike. In only his second week at Allied Planning Headquarters in London, Ike addressed the staff,

"reminding his mixed audience that the Americans regarded the British as 'standoffish conceited snobs' whereas the British looked on the Americans as 'loud-mouth braggarts.' He pointed out that if we held these views and did not realize [it], it would not be possible for a Britisher and an American to work in the same office."

American GIs staying in Britain quickly got the message: "a Yank was asked how he liked England, and he said 'Sir, we like you and you like us and that's our orders, sir.'"

Barr posits a widespread, long-lasting unfamiliarity among Allied armies with battles of "encirclement." Although the Germans and Russians learned this years before on the eastern front, Clark, Bradley and Monty were slow to realize that "once enemy forces had been encircled, their destruction was a matter of time, at which point the glittering prizes of captured towns, cities and territories would be within easy reach."

Barr faults Ike for his failure in Torch to move from the shelter of Gibraltar -- cut off from both bosses and battles -- until too late. But after that, he convincingly refutes Alanbrooke's and Montgomery's claim that Ike was at most a political, not a battlefield general. That charge largely was based on Ike's failure to allow Monty's 8th Army to be the Allied Schwerpunkt for a north based-attack, across Belgium, Holland, and North Germany--in other words, much of the ground the English (and particularly the French) had battled through for 70 years. Instead, Ike adopted a "broad front" approach, probing for weakness at least three

different avenues.

Though Monty thought the Nazi counter-attack of the "Bulge" demonstrated his approach would have been better, the truth is (1) Monty's failure to capture the port of Antwerp made that impractical from a supply perspective; (2) Ike never was better than during the first few days after the Bulge, calmly reshuffling units from one side of France (and one commander) to the other; and (3) an Allied Schwerpunkt somewhere would have exposed a weakness elsewhere--which the Germans were sure to have spotted, making their counter attack more likely to succeed.

It is astonishing that Montgomery never visited Ike during the European campaign; the haughty Brit forced Ike to come to him. In addition to evidence of overweening pride, it meant that -- unlike other Army and Corps commanders -- Monty didn't have a clue about Ike's strategy. No wonder he, and Brooke, kept complaining--yet, it was their own fault. According to Barr, Ike not only was the excellent political General known to history, but "the Supreme Commander" in the field, the only man capable of quickly responding to fluid tactical situations while balancing the flaws of his subordinates.

THOMAS WHALEN says

Good history book

I enjoyed this book. It is very well researched and written, and provides good insight into the Anglo-American partnership that produced victory in WWII in Europe.

Paul says

Yanks and Limeys – An Excellent Narrative

Yanks and Limeys is the latest book from the excellent Military Historian Professor Niall Barr, who gives us a well written, well researched account of the relationship between Britain and the United States during the Second World War. Barr has written many excellent books over the years and has once again risen to the test and passed with flying colours.

Since the war in books, periodicals, journalistic pieces the Anglo-American Alliance has been examined in minute detail. Barr has decided to take a far longer look at the foundations, the missed opportunities as well as the actual Wartime Alliance. By taking it back to the eighteenth century we get a far deeper understanding because the actions of both country's during the course of various conflicts has been examined and how it coloured the various political thought and responses. This is probably one of the areas that with Barr's help will bring a wider context rather than the usual narrow view of Alliances. He also shows us that there was more mutual contempt than usually acknowledged, but overall in spite a War of Independence, a general respect for each other.

The examination in this book of the relationship while the theme of the book sometimes seems to be forgotten, but its core of the alliance between 1941 and 1945 is examined in the theatres of war where the alliance had to work, both in necessity and financially. Barr also reminds us that by 1941 Britain like its erstwhile Prime Minister were teetering close to financial collapse.

While Barr sees that the alliance was the most complete of any Allied country, he tends to forget about the Commonwealth, Polish; Czech soldiers were part of that common alliance. While one is able to forgive that lapse, he does investigate how the differences, tensions were allowed to colour the positives, which are often forgotten.

I was especially interested in the period between the wars when we see that neither country actually learnt anything from its alliance then. One must not forget how both countries allowed the alliance and friendship to wither on the vine, and took their collective eye off the ball politically and military thinking stunted. One example Barr gives is that of tank production and development, something Britain did not really grasp until 1936, whereas Germany had already grasped the nettle and developed their own tanks.

Something Barr does examine is the British reaction to the growing acceptance that their star and empire is on the wane and will be overshadowed by the spectacular rise of the United States, and this would be the overall price for beating Nazi Germany. Too many this was unpalatable, as the two nations passed each other, one in to debt and the breakup of its empire, while the other became the banker and the world's policeman.

Barr also expounds the theory that Britain and her Generals did not exactly help in the relationship as the war came to a close and the race to Berlin began. I have to admit like most of Polish descent to see Montgomery being blamed for the worsening relationship between the allied Generals does not surprise me. It is about time someone pointed out that he was a prickly prima donna who passed on his failures but claimed all the success, remember he blames the Poles for Arnhem and had their commander removed and demoted. He also points out how Monty made sure that he was front and centre for the German surrender rather than the Americans.

Yanks and Limeys is an excellent examination of the relationship of the two wartime allies that comes from a difference and more nuanced position. This is so well written it was a complete pleasure to read, and lessons learnt in every chapter.

Scott Fasnacht says

An interesting approach to studying the complex relationships behind America's alliance with Great Britain in WWII. The author adeptly blends the powerful personalities of Eisenhower's contemporaries with a highly readable historical context dating back to the French and Indian Wars. A good read for anyone interested in Eisenhower or the politics behind this important alliance.

M Tucker says

The depth and breadth of the Anglo-American alliance during the Second World War was unprecedented in history and Niall Barr does an outstanding job of bringing that to light. This is a very well researched and well written story that examines the development and evolution of that alliance looking at both the successes and the problems that had to be overcome. The author examines relationships between the troops and the commanders and presents it all in a very entertaining manner. He is exclusively looking at the military

alliance between the US Army and the British Army that began before the US became involved in the war and after the fighting began but that is not where the book begins. He begins with the French and Indian War and proceeds to investigate the evolution of the two armies up to their close working relationship during the Second World War. It is a very interesting narrative.

Mr Barr does not focus exclusively on the problems that arose at the higher echelons of command beginning in N Africa and that continued throughout the war. He goes well beyond that. However, he does illustrate how Eisenhower's genius and ability to remain even-tempered kept the alliance together through the toughest moments. I think he does a very good job of presenting a well-balanced examination of Eisenhower's conduct of the war. He covers Montgomery's considerable shortcomings without completely overlooking his considerable talents. And he covers Simpson's Ninth Army, Simpson's cooperation with the British 21st Army Group and the snag that finally put a sour taste for the Brits in Simpson's mouth; something that is hard to find in a World War II book. But, as I think back on his story, I think Mr Barr demonstrates that there was much more cooperation than acrimony. I did enjoy his emphasis of the importance General Sir John Dill (I believe he was posthumously promoted to Field Marshal) to the success of the alliance and the winning of the war. I have read a lot about him and he really was an extraordinarily great man.

The author packs a lot into 470 pages and I found something I was not aware of: the British Tank Mission to the US and its contribution to the development of the Sherman tank. Another surprise: a mention of the SCR-584 and its importance in shooting down the V-1's. Mr Barr does not spend much time on technology cooperation between the Brits and Yanks but it is another example of the unprecedented cooperation that began in 1940 and produced war winning results.

Mr Barr ends his tale with the telling of how the memoirs written just after the war began the controversies surrounding the major players in the conflict (Eisenhower, Montgomery, Bradley, Patton) that still continue to this day. The Eisenhower quote at the end of the book really says it all in that regard.

"While it is true that during the war we had the compelling motive of a common fear to stick together, the fact is that we had present in early 1942 and during most of that year, all of the ingredients for a profound pessimism and for mutual recrimination. In spite of the black outlook we buckled down and did the job. Extremists on both sides of the water can indulge in all the backbiting and name-calling that they please – they can never get away from the historical truth that the United States and the British Empire, working together, did a job that looked almost impossible at the time it was undertaken."

I really did have a tremendous time with Mr Barr's book and I recommend it highly.

Mike Kershaw says

Michael Hastings recently opined in the New York Review of Books that books on World War II are second only to cookbooks on the list of most written about subjects. In fact, he reviewed about 8 titles on World War II recently in the NYROB, including this one -- not all, apparently particularly insightful. While Niall Barr certainly treads on familiar territory with "Eisenhower's Armies", he does so in a fashion that covers what is undoubtedly a broad topic with enough specificity to make it interesting. He focuses primarily on ground forces (and the European theater) and weaves strategic, operational, tactical and technical aspects of this alliance into his story. He shows that, in an historical sense, British-American cooperation leading up to World War II was sporadic and inconsistent; American forces in World War I cooperated more closely with

the French than the British and in the interwar years in particular, an American Army officer had a much better chance of attending a French or German military school than one in England. Although much of his narrative will be familiar to students of these two armies and their campaigns in Europe -- the strategic differences, the various conferences, the personality clashes, etc..., he looks beyond the most well-known aspects of the story. He explores tactical and technical cooperation within the alliance that are generally familiar only to specialists -- the British "Tank" mission to the US; tactical cooperation at Anzio and defending Antwerp from German rocket attacks, for example. By avoiding the tendency to make this solely about the great personalities that we so often focus on, he examines the many minor players -- Liaison Officers, technical specialists, commanders at the operational and tactical level -- upon whom much of the success of the alliance depended. In doing this, he highlights some of the real differences in both the objectives and the resources that both allies viewed the conflict -- making the alliance's success even more remarkable. In the end, he concludes that this most successful alliance was mostly 'born on the battlefield', had to be constantly maintained and began dissipating even before the end of hostilities. In summary, a valuable contribution to history which gives a more critical look at an alliance that many take for granted.

Martin says

Certainly one of the three best books I have read this year(30). Taking a wonderful higher view, this book takes on the Alliance between the US and Great Britain in World War II. My only regret is that there is little mention of the Pacific war and the alliance there. But these are Eisenhower's Armies, so we get to see how the two armies intertwined and cooperated throughout the European War. I found this to be a fair look, examining the struggle between the allies as well. The classic arguments are there, Torch vs. Crossing the Channel in 1942, Sicily versus the Balkans, Northern European Thrust versus multi-front advance in 1944/45. But in each this British author gives you the reasoned background for each, the players who did the arguing, and the timeline and results... I like his thesis that Eisenhower's genius for keeping the Alliance solid and totally enmeshed was in the end more important than any one decision he made. Together, the two allies could have fulfilled any plan in a way that neither might be able to do alone... Well worth reading

Fausto Betances says

Good reading in general. A bit biased toward British influence in WWII outcome. (I didn't know it was written by a British author until pro Britain claims started to pile up). Not a bad book. Good pace.

?Takeaways

Birth of a super power, change of guard.

Balance of forces at the gates of Berlin before the war was over:

61 American divisions, 13 British, 11 French, 5 Canadian and 1 Polish.

Information about the war in the east only started to become available in the 60's and 70's. That caused most of history books about WWII to focus on the allied campaigns in Western Europe as opposed to the more important East front.

Nishant Pappireddi says

Good book about the Anglo-American alliance between the respective armies during WW2.
