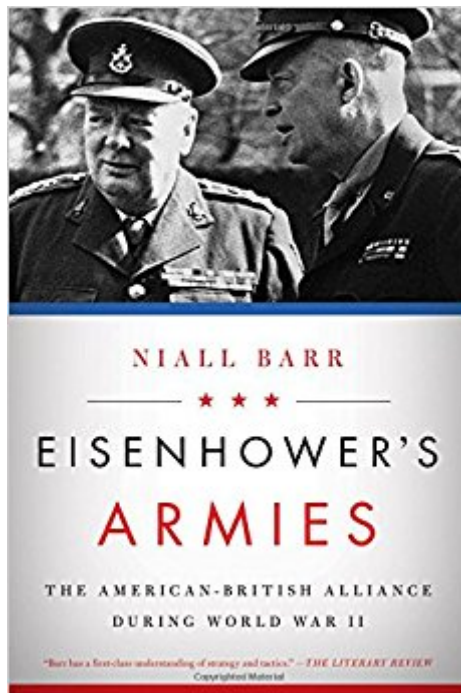




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Eisenhower's Armies: The American-British Alliance During World War II



Synopsis

An authoritative and dramatic behind-the-scenes history of 'the Atlantic Alliance' during World War II. 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. 16 pages of B&W photographs

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Customer Reviews

“An astute, always engrossing account of how civilian leaders and their army chiefs recruited, trained, and deployed two immense armies. A detailed, entertaining history of a successful, if bumpy, military alliance.” - Kirkus Reviews (starred review)

“An authoritative and highly readable account.” - The Economist

In Eisenhower’s Armies, British military historian Niall Barr shows how two very different military structures were welded into a single military force. His long view, along with his ability to appreciate the perspectives of both bulldog and tomcat, is instructive to readers interested in the military side of the Anglo-American alliance. An admirable study of the bayonet’s edge of the “Special Relationship.” - Wall Street Journal

In a splendid new book, Niall Barr provides us with an engrossing account.” - BBC History Magazine

“An astute and engrossing history of how two separate nations deployed two immense armies in a war of freedom.” - Bookreporter

Barr becomes the current standard for a comprehensive history of the campaign.” - Booklist (starred review)

“A riveting, knowledgeable account. A fresh perspective into this “special relationship” between Britain and the United States at a pivotal point in time. This dramatic work isn’t just for military historians or World War II scholars. Highly recommended for students of World War II and of the Atlantic Alliance of the mid-20th century and is a great read for anyone interested in leadership, decision making, international relations and diplomacy, and 20th-century history.” - Library Journal

“Offers an in-depth and engrossing study of the relationship between Britain and the U.S. from 1941 to 1945. Where many other studies adopt a singular approach in the process, this wider-reaching examination delves into the relationship between British and American armies themselves throughout the conflict. The result is a powerful survey that succeeds where others fail: in pinpointing the underlying influences, controversies, and struggles made on both sides during World War II. No military history collection should be without this.” - Midwest Book Review

“A detailed yet accessible military history. Relying on sound scholarship and writing for a general audience, Barr guides readers through the numerous ups and downs of the fraught relationship and highlights dramatic moments of both crisis and success.” - Publishers Weekly

“Excellent and engaging. This is a fascinating and dramatic tale and Barr tells it very well. Recommended.” - The Journal of Military History

“A very considerable achievement by one of the best of the younger generation of British military historians.” - Gary Sheffield, Military Illustrated

Barr makes his specific focus the army: as a military historian, he is strong on strategy, tactics, consequences, and the manifold

frustrations and disasters that could be caused by simple accidents of weather or geography. Barr is keen to demonstrate that the troops on the ground usually â• after initial wariness Â- â• found a great deal of mutual admiration. The shared respect between these servicemen from different nations who fought for a free world is an inspirational story.â• - The Telegraph (London)â œNiall Barr's prose is lean and his narrative moves quickly. He has produced a masterful, impressively researched history detailing the machinery of wartime decision-making, as well as the military alliance, led by Eisenhower, that defeated Hitler's Germany.â• - The Weekly Standard

Niall Barr is a Senior Lecturer in Defence Studies at the Defence Studies Department, King's College, London. He has previously taught at St Andrews and the Royal Military Academy. His main research focus concerns twentieth century military history. He has published numerous military histories including *Amiens to the Armistice*; *Flodden 1513*; *Pendulum of War: The Three Battles of El Alamein*; and *The Lion and the Poppy*. He lives in Oxfordshire with his family.

A British military historian gives his informed take on how two allies--the U.S. and Great Britain--worked together as armies in the European theater of World War II. This is not a book to learn about the Russian contribution to the war, the German perspective, or the war in the Pacific. Niall Barr starts with some interesting background to the special relationship that reaches back to the days of George Washington. He then focuses on the practical difficulties encountered in coming to a functioning unified command structure given the many differences between the two major allies, Differences in battle experience at the beginning, with the U.S. green and untested; differences in equipment; differences in culture; and so forth. Dr. Barr views General Eisenhower as the person, who in the end, should be given credit for making the military alliance in Europe work in spite of the many headstrong and nationalistic battle commanders, including the difficult Field Marshal Montgomery. And he reminds us of what an unusual thing it was to have two countries work together so closely at time of war. For those wanting a more complete treatment of the war in Europe from an American's perspective, I suggest reading Rick Atkinson's trilogy.

This is an amazing book. Mr. Barr has written what I believe to be the definitive work dealing with the SHAEF and army commander's decisions during WWII. It deals with the difficulties associated with bringing an alliance together starting with the very early problems of England before the US entered the war (lend lease, US isolationism, etc) and runs clear through the end of the war and a bit of it's aftermath. He takes no sides but deals with factual information. He identifies with the major

decisions and gives background associated with those decisions. Arguments, agreements, suspicions, distrust, trust, etc. are all discussed from the facts associated with them. He also writes of the soldiers and their views of what happened. It is by no means a "dry" read but he pulls you into the SHAEF meetings and into the army Commander's rolls and the movement of armies and divisions as if you were there. I highly recommend this book to anyone who has a desire to learn about the difficulties of making an alliance work and its impact on those who are responsible to fight a war.

Barr's book was a very good read -- informative, well-balanced and contained perhaps the most accurate account of the complex relationship between the British and American armies at all levels in WWII....which ultimately resulted in victory on the Western front. While I believe his characterization of Eisenhower and Montgomery was generally accurate, I think he missed the boat on high command responsibilities for the infamous Falaise Gap incident. In this regard, I would like to repeat my commentary on a 2010 book by William Weidner, which I believe accurately portrays the situation, as follows:

"EISENHOWER & MONTGOMERY at the Falaise Gap
Synopsis and Commentary by David J. Cade
By William Weidner, Xlibris, 2010

In recent years as new source material on World War II became available, a number of books have attempted to detail and characterize the complex interrelationships among U.S. and British senior commanders. However, *Eisenhower & Montgomery At the Falaise Gap* by William Weidner breaks new ground in terms of Anglo-American command disconnects and animosities. Weidner's research and conclusions embody the most comprehensive, extensive, and revealing account of how the British national command authority - from Prime Minister & Defense Minister Winston Churchill to Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery - calculatingly and generally successfully maneuvered and manipulated the Supreme Allied Commander, General of the Army Dwight Eisenhower, in furtherance of British national interests and objectives.....although when all was said and done, the British ended up with the short end of the stick at the end of the war by losing their great power status. The book clearly illuminates the many facets of Montgomery which were instrumental in how he acted and reacted as he did during the war. First and foremost was his Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder which made him inflexible and indeed rigid in his beliefs and practices in interaction with other senior commanders. This personality disorder manifested itself in many ways. He was wedded to "old school" solutions emanating from the disastrous British experience and manpower losses in World War I. Most notably, he was never able to fully grasp or implement the "combined arms" approach, in which armor and infantry are carefully integrated and orchestrated at the Division level to conduct

successful mobile warfare - a practice which the Germans and the Americans mastered, but the British never did. In keeping with this outdated British doctrine (which he was instrumental in establishing after World War I), Montgomery kept armor organizationally separated from the infantry, and gave infantry and artillery the primary role in combat, particularly in the initial phases of a campaign, with armor in a supporting role. Another aspect of this disorder was his inability to improvise. Although he was an outstanding planner, when things did not go according to his plan (despite Montgomery's ridiculous assertion that all of his World War II campaigns went exactly according to plan) he could not quickly adjust to the new ground truth. This of course is in direct contrast to U.S. 3rd Army Commander General George Patton, of whom Montgomery was extremely jealous, and who himself despised the dogmatic little British field marshal and his sway over Eisenhower. One is reminded of Patton's famous saying: "A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed next week." Montgomery never understood this precept. Yet another telltale sign spotlighted by Weidner was Montgomery's discomfort discussing or entertaining alternative battlefield scenarios that differed from his carefully calculated "set piece" attack plans, which usually required lengthy preparations and an overwhelming numerical advantage prior to launching (the element of surprise was generally lost on Montgomery). He often "put down" senior subordinates who questioned his strategies or tactics.....he was far more comfortable with "yes men." Simply put, he was what we would today call a "control freak." Further, he was a publicity hound who had a reputation for overstating his role and taking unjustified personal credit for various allied successes, often at the expense of Americans, most notably in North Africa, Sicily, and at the Battle of the Bulge (his anti-American resentment was well known). This ploy served him well, however, from a publicity standpoint, since he became the darling of the British press and public, and was even lionized in the America press, to the point where he was virtually immune from being sacked. Weidner chronicles how Montgomery, in concert with Churchill and Chief of the Imperial General Staff Field Marshal Alan Brooke, pushed British Empire political interests ahead of allied military successes. The British national command authority was fearful that ever worsening British manpower shortages would compromise the perceived (and self-appointed) British role as an equal (if not superior) allied military partner, especially as U.S. Army numbers in Europe continued to grow as the war progressed. Montgomery went to great lengths to mask the British manpower shortfalls and battlefield shortcomings. His constant pressure on Eisenhower to augment the 21st Army Group with U.S. forces was calculated to cover up the British Army weaknesses. Moreover, he was determined to not to let the Americans be seen as achieving more battlefield successes than British forces. Weidner makes a convincing case that Montgomery's personality and performance served

to prolong the war and increase allied casualties - exactly opposite from what was intended by the British. Montgomery's campaign shortcomings which led to this result were manifested in his failure to capture Caen and the Port of Antwerp on the allied timetable, his failure to close the Falaise Gap until it was too late, and his carefully orchestrated "showcase" British 2nd Army crossing of the Rhine (when elements of Patton's 3rd Army and General Courtney Hodge's U.S. 1st Army were already across). Montgomery's crossing, which was augmented by U.S. Airborne troops, resulted in some 5,000 allied casualties. Weidner contends that the carefully placed lid on British-American military cooperation blew off at the Falaise Gap in August, 1944, when Montgomery's "halt order" prevented American forces from moving north across Montgomery's imposed inter-Army Group boundary to close the gap. This allowed a substantial number of Wehrmacht troops (Weidner estimates 150,000 while other sources say 40,000) to escape the pocket and move East - troops that would live to fight the allies again another day. This "halt order" by Montgomery is not well-publicized or well-known. Moreover, Weidner points out that Eisenhower and Bradley essentially covered up Montgomery's "halt order" by having Bradley as 12th Army Group Commander issue one of his own (which is well documented) so as not to give the British a black-eye and possibly rupture the alliance; this notion is not prominently featured in other accounts of the Falaise Gap debacle. But, as Weidner asserts, this event essentially brought an end to close military cooperation between the two allies, and from this point forward, the American armies, and Eisenhower as Supreme Commander, began to exert increasingly more direct influence on the conduct of the Western Front War in Europe. Many authors give accounts of how Ike kow-towed to the Brits and gave them preferential treatment and support vis-à-vis their American counterparts. Most of these versions address the resentment that this generated on the part of American senior commanders, most notably Generals Bradley and Patton; they and other senior American generals believed that Ike was excessively influenced by the British to the extent of being unwilling to assume command of the ground forces himself (despite continual prodding by his boss, Army Chief of Staff General of the Army George Marshall) and instead continuing to allow Montgomery to run the ground show. But only this account by Weidner provides compelling details on how the British intentionally "propped up" Ike as an allied "Chairman of the Board" so that they could perform the CEO and COO functions within the allied military establishment, and at the same time influence the course of the war to safeguard the post-war interests and posture of the British Empire. This relationship in fact existed until forty days before the end of the War in Europe, when Ike assumed direct control of ground operations and finally gave Montgomery a direct order. British authors tend to downplay or gloss over Montgomery's deficiencies, shortcomings, strategic/tactical errors, and

battlefield failures, while many American authors attempt to justify or condone Ike's preferential treatment of the British. The only concession Weidner makes in this regard is his revelation that Ike knowingly did this in order to keep the Brits in the alliance so that American soldiers would not have to shoulder the entire casualty burden on the Western Front. While the British initially were skeptical regarding Ike's ability to fill the role of Supreme Allied Commander based on a lack of command experience and inadequate "large formation" military skills, they came to realize that they could exploit Ike's indecisiveness and preference to stay above the fray as a "Chairman of the Board" to the benefit of the British Empire; hence, the British became Ike's biggest supporter - despite Montgomery's refusal to take direct orders from someone in whom he had no confidence and for whom he had little respect. Interestingly enough, while the British "propped up" Eisenhower, they also did the same with Montgomery, who was not well liked within senior British military circles. In fact, Weidner makes the case that Montgomery was specifically selected by Churchill and Brooke for his OVERLORD ground commander role precisely for his irascibility and ability to influence Eisenhower - which tended to keep Ike on the defensive and "boxed in." In all fairness, it must be noted that Eisenhower was selected by Roosevelt and Marshall for his rare political instincts as a military man, and his ability to get along with everyone. And despite all of the gnashing of teeth about his performance within American and British senior command circles throughout the war, Eisenhower successfully fulfilled the allied mission given to him.....albeit with the overwhelming support of the massive Soviet forces on the Eastern Front. But that is another story.

David J. Cade
Colonel, USAF (Ret.)
Merion Station, PA
April 26, 2012

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August 28, 2016

This book delves into the British-American alliance during WWII that was the most effective military alliance in history. However the author makes crystal clear that there were also constant tensions and disagreements that threatened to pull the alliance apart. The author's narrative highlights why the very different American and British forces eventually were led to victory while illustrating the tensions and controversies which inevitably arose. The book views these events from high-level strategic decisions, the rivalries and personalities of the commanders and the ordinary British and American soldiers who fought alongside one another. Included is an analysis of how previous experience between the two military cultures from the French and Indian war, the American Revolution and WWI shaped the strategic philosophies and decisions of the war. The author spins a vibrant tale of two very different armies learning to live, work, and fight together even in the face of serious strategic disagreements. The book focuses on the alliances' Indispensable Man,

Eisenhower, who molded the team that won the war. The author also provides significant details regarding well known personalities of the struggle; Montgomery, Patton, and Bradley, as well as other lesser known, but truly important individuals like Dill, Alexander and Wilson. The book is comprehensive and well written but not cluttered with extraneous detail. The author's narrative is balanced and objective which provides with perspective, context and insight. Overall, an excellent, informative book!

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