

***Allies in War:
Britain and America against the Axis Powers, 1940-1945***
Roundtable Review



Reviewed Works:

Mark Stoler. *Allies in War: Britain and America against the Axis Powers, 1940-1945.* New York: Oxford University Press, February 2006. 318 pp. \$39.95. ISBN-13: 978-0-3407-2026-4 (hardcover); 978-0-3407-2027-1 (paperback).

Roundtable Editor: Thomas Maddux

Reviewers: Kathleen Burk, Alex Danchev, Theodore Wilson, Jonathan Winkler

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ROUNDTABLE *Review*

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Contents

Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge	2
Review by Kathleen Burk, University College London.....	5
Review by Alex Danchev, University of Nottingham.....	8
Review by Theodore A. Wilson, University of Kansas.....	11
Review by Jonathan Reed Winkler, Wright State University.....	15
Author's Response by Mark Stoler, Professor Emeritus, University of Vermont.....	19

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Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge

Mark Stoler brings extensive teaching, research, and previous publications to his *Allies in War: Britain and America against the Axis Powers, 1940-1945*. Since 1970, he has taught diplomatic and military history at the University of Vermont. He has three previous studies that deal with U.S. diplomatic and military history of World War II and a “problems” book that also focuses on the war. His successful integration of diplomacy and warfare is also evident in his service as President of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (2004) and as a trustee for the Society for Military History.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Stoler’s latest book is his ability to cover all theatres of WWII with the exception of the German-Russian front and to address not only major diplomatic issues but also the ebb and flow of wartime strategy and major engagements in little more than 200 pages. In a concluding chapter, Stoler explores the consequences of WWII and takes the story into decolonization, the Cold War, and postwar Anglo American relations. Gerhard Weinberg’s *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* devotes 1,200 pages to this subject with the inclusion of the Nazi-Soviet war. The reviewers agree that Stoler makes almost every word count, follows very few tangents from the main story in each theatre, and discusses quickly almost every pertinent historiographical question that has been raised in the past thirty years on WWII.

Stoler’s study provides an opportunity for the specialist in U.S. diplomacy to revisit a field that has received considerably less recent scholarly attention than its successor, the Cold War, and offers a very good introduction for the graduate student entering this field and looking for an introduction and a comprehensive bibliography. The book could also serve well as a core text for an upper division lecture course on WWII.

So is there anything new and controversial in Stoler’s succinct synthesis? Stoler suggests that he has relied on major secondary works to update earlier assessments such as the impact of Ultra intelligence on allied strategy and to incorporate major challenges to Winston Churchill’s version of the war. The reviewers also note the author’s emphasis on the Anglo-American wartime alliance, its origins, nature, and shifts during the war as well as the integration of the European and Pacific wars in one study. Stoler definitely raises issues that merit further discussion, such as

1. Does Stoler successfully offer a story of the war on both major theatres including the Mediterranean and India/Burma/Southeast Asia with his focus on Anglo-American relations? Stoler does give considerable attention to the role of Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt in the formation of the Anglo-American alliance in 1940-41 through the ARCADIA conference in Washington and the maintenance of the alliance to victory in the Atlantic, Europe, and the Pacific. Within the constraints of space and scope, the reviewers would like to have had more development of the

personalities involved on both sides, their views of each other, and how the relationship worked at different levels.

2. How does the Anglo-American alliance shift during the war with respect to the relative influence of each side on strategic decisions such as priorities with respect to Europe and the Pacific, the timing of the allied invasion of Europe, the importance of the Mediterranean as an alternative route into Central Europe, and appropriate tactics in dealing with Josef Stalin and the Soviet Union? Stoler devotes more attention to this than previous studies by noting the gradual strengthening of the U.S. role after Pearl Harbor as Washington provided more and more of the war materials through Lend-Lease, as the American naval, air and troop commitment intensified in both major theatres, and as FDR shifted to back the American Joint Chiefs of Staff versus Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff. For example, FDR joined Churchill in supporting a North African invasion in 1942 versus the Joint Chiefs of Staff (64-70), and at the Casablanca Conference FDR again agreed to an invasion of Sicily in 1943 whereas American commanders wanted to put more resources into the Pacific and the return to Western Europe. (86-89). However, by the QUADRANT conference in August 1943 and the Teheran Conference in November, the U.S. role had increased vis-à-vis the British and FDR sided with the JCS against Churchill on making a major effort in Italy or the Balkans as opposed to Overlord in Normandy and the multiple offensives against Japan. (123-137, 139-142)
3. Historiographical debate on WWII issues used to focus on questions such as FDR and the “back door” to war thesis on Pearl Harbor; the impact of the allied policy of unconditional surrender on Axis resistance; the realism and wisdom of FDR’s assumptions and diplomacy in dealing with Stalin; the alleged betrayal of Eastern Europe to communism at the Yalta Conference; the British-U.S. dispute over whether to invade Germany with a broad advance by all armies versus a single thrust for Berlin; and the decision to use atomic bombs to end the war in the Pacific. Stoler masterfully discusses each of these issues and takes most of the air left out of all of them with the exception of the a-bomb issue. In Chapter VI “Aspects and Impact of Total War” Stoler also judiciously reviews conflicting views on the role of the European resistance, the intelligence revolution and impact on the Atlantic war, the nature of the strategic bombing campaign against Germany, and debate on its tactical versus strategic impact.
4. One classic issue that Stoler develops throughout the book is Churchill’s quest to reinvade Europe through the alleged “soft underbelly” of Italy and the Balkans. Stoler highlights Churchill’s stubborn persistence to redirect allied forces from Overlord or the Pacific to the Mediterranean and Balkans at the QUADRANT conference (123-125), to gain FDR’s backing for a move on the island of Rhodes in September 1943 (128-129), at Teheran (141-142), and throughout 1944 over the plans for the ANVIL invasion to support Normandy (147-149). Churchill’s quest to

the extent that he even lost the support of the British Chiefs of Staff in 1944 is a fascinating example, one of many, that Stoler provides on major disagreements within the alliance from European vs. Pacific priorities to growing disagreements on postwar concerns such as colonialism and economic relations.

5. Stoler also provides sufficient ammunition for pro and con assessments of the major British and American military leaders. Lt. General Bernard L. Montgomery would seem to rank the highest on Stoler's list of candidates for most inflated reputation and most impossible to deal with in the allied coalition. He merits a separate entry in the index for "ego and arrogance." If General Douglas MacArthur had served in Europe he might have been a close contestant. Stoler also notes how each side retained a degree of prejudice and suspicion toward the other, such as the repeated suggestions of British diplomats and military leaders that American generals and soldiers were pretty second rate and needed a lot of British guidance. This was matched on the American side by excessive suspicions that the British just wanted to restore their colonies and let the Red Army take care of Germany and for the U.S. to keep Japan preoccupied.
6. The Pacific war receives appropriate attention from Stoler, although the Anglo-U.S. relationship is more limited. Initially, the British role was mainly one of resisting the U.S. Chief's desire to step up the offensive against Japan with the British mainly engaged in Burma and then Southeast Asia. What is most striking from Stoler's assessment on the Pacific are the difficulties and costs in casualties that the U.S. and its allies incurred to destroy the Japanese navy and drive the Japanese out of many outposts on so many islands. Stoler makes clear that this experience heightens the importance of a Soviet entry into the war in order to keep Japanese troops in China and to deal with the anticipated costs of invading the Japanese home islands if the Japanese resisted the way they did on almost every island from Guadalcanal to Okinawa.

Review by Kathleen Burk, University College London

The Anglo-American “special relationship”, whatever that might mean, is of current as well as of historic interest, at least in the U.K. Does it exist? If so, is it desirable? If it does exist, it has its origins in the Second World War. Amongst the non-cognoscenti, the Second World War is seen as an episode during which the two democracies stood together against murderous dictatorships, fighting for the right and for justice. This is not, of course, untrue, but it does not follow that the outcome of the war was the only issue between the two allies. Traditionally, the perceptions of the general public have been of unity; increasingly, the perceptions of historians have been of conflict. Look at it in a clear-eyed manner. What were the strengths of Great Britain which made her a desirable ally? The strength of sterling, a diplomatic service of rare quality, the Royal Navy, and the Empire. What did the US government try to do during the war? The US Treasury tried to destroy sterling so that it would not be a competitor with the dollar, and Roosevelt and many others wanted to strip Britain of her empire. (The war itself took care of a good part of the Royal Navy; the Diplomatic Service remained.) At the end of 1943, Roosevelt consciously humiliated Churchill in front of Stalin in order to publicise, and reinforce, the American decision that the U.K. was of little further use or importance to the U.S. At the end of the war with Germany, the U.S., with virtually no notice, ended Lend-Lease, and left their ally nearly bankrupt. And then, when she very reluctantly loaned Britain \$3.75 billion (Canada loaned her \$1.25 billion at the same time), she forced her to open her currency and her economy to the onslaught of the dollar and American business. Not surprisingly, many British were driven to conclude that, if this is an ally, who needs an enemy?

Kathleen Burk is the Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at University College London. She was educated at Berkeley and at Oxford, where she was supervised by A.J.P. Taylor, and where she was subsequently a Rhodes Fellow. She has been a Visiting Professor in Germany, Norway, and Korea, and a Visiting Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. She is primarily an international historian of the twentieth century, with a special interest in Anglo-American relations, on which she has published three books and a number of articles. She also works on the history of merchant banks, on which she has also published three books and some articles, and on international history generally, on which she has published an edited book and a number of articles. She recently completed a large book on Anglo-American relations from 1497 to the present, entitled Old World, New World: the Story of Britain and America, which will be published in the U.K. in the autumn of 2007 and in the U.S. in 2008. Her current research is on the Marshall Plan from the European perspective. Selected publications include Britain, America and the Sinews of War 1914-1918 (1985); Morgan Grenfell 1838-1988: The Biography of a Merchant Bank (1989); with Alec Cairncross, 'Goodbye, Great Britain': the 1976 IMF Crisis (1991); Troublemaker: the Life and History of A. J. P. Taylor (2000); and 'The Marshall Plan: Filling in Some of the Blanks', Contemporary European History, 10, 2, (July 2001) 267-294.

But from the other direction: what did the U.S. see in front of her in the form of her ally? A country which, for the previous two centuries, had been the supreme global power and the supreme financial power, an empire on which the sun never set - comprising 20% of the world's surface and 25% of the world's population - and whose currency, the pound, was the equivalent

Allies in War Roundtable

28 September 2007

of gold. Wherever the U.S. turned, the U.K. was there before her. The U.S. was a regional hegemon, but the U.K. with her Empire was the only international power on the globe. If the U.S. was to expand economically, at the least the informal British Empire had to contract. In any case, the U.S. had not entered the war to save the British Empire, as she made clear time and again: it was part of the destiny of the U.S. to bring freedom to enslaved peoples around the globe, including those enslaved by their ally.

One of the strengths of this excellent book is that the author does not ignore the sometimes ferocious nature of the conflict between the two countries. Indeed, he reports one rather nice episode when the American Admiral King nearly leapt across the table to punch the British General Brooke, silently egged on by the American General Stilwell. This must not have happened often, or readers would have been regaled by the stories in dozens of memoirs. Nevertheless, it stands as a symbol both of the conflict and of the good sense and fundamental recognition by both sides of the need to stand together: King may have detested the British - and he did - but presumably he detested the Japanese even more. Nevertheless, the strategic conflicts, especially from 1943 on, were hugely threatening to the fabric of the alliance, and in these cases, Stoler highlights the importance of personalities in resolving or at least containing them. His heroes include General Dwight Eisenhower, General of the Armies, who had to control two towering egos, the British General Bernard Montgomery and the American General George Patton, and, in general, to ensure that all of the allied armies worked together; Field Marshall Sir John Dill, Head of the Joint Staff Mission in Washington, whose whole being was devoted to fostering a strong Anglo-American alliance; and General George C. Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff, whose close relationship with Dill meant that the alliance worked as smoothly as was humanly possible - at least until Dill's death in 1944. Marshall was also of historical importance because he proposed that whichever of the two had the larger force in the field in any of the theatres of war would provide the commander of all of the forces: the sheer common sense of the idea was striking, but the fact that both Roosevelt and Churchill accepted it was even more so. Stoler's treatment of the episode underlines its importance without hammering it at the reader.

It was need that kept the alliance together. The U.S. and the U.K. are, and always have been, commercial rivals. The fact that they share democratic values and more-or-less liberal political systems, and the English language, did not make them allies; rather they facilitated the military alliance during both World Wars (and the Cold War). What kept them together during the Second World War was not warm fellowship, but sheer unbridled need. Great Britain was forced into both wars from the beginning; it took years, in both cases, for the US to become a belligerent, having to be torpedoed into the First and torpedoed and bombed into the Second. In essence, the two countries were brought together three times during the last century by a common enemy: the warm fellowship was the icing on the cake.

A primary quality of this book is the quiet confidence of Stoler as he presents to the reader a book of clarity and lucidity. The battles are easy and enjoyable to follow, not least because of the clarity of the maps. Indeed, consulting a map became such a reflex that the lack of one for the Eastern front came as something of a shock. The footnotes are spare but sufficient, but even without knowing the author's publication record, it should be clear to anyone reading the book

Allies in War Roundtable

28 September 2007

that it rests on a huge effort of research. A person of less resource would be fearful of leaving anything out lest it should prove important. It is not that the argument is not complicated, but that it has been pared to its essentials. This means that the specialist can enjoy it, because s/he can supply the supporting tendrils; the non-specialist can also enjoy it, because it appears to be close to the reader's Holy Grail: the short book which will tell you all you really need to know about a subject; and the student will enjoy it because it is short enough to read in a week.

And his overall conclusion? Although the relationship was not, and could never have been, "special" in the cloying Churchillian sense, with its hymns to hands-across-the-sea, the fact that it survived the repeated threats to rend it asunder during the war underlines that, in some sense, it was. Indeed, he ends the book with his own paean: "Never before had two nations fused their military high commands and forces to such an extent and so successfully, or so collaborated in economic mobilization, the sharing of intelligence secrets, and the establishment of so many combined boards and committees to coordinate multiple aspects of their combined war effort. Nor had two heads of government ever before created such an extensive correspondence and strong personal friendship, a friendship duplicated by many of their subordinates and citizens. In those and numerous other ways the Anglo-American wartime relationship was "special" compared to any other alliance in history." (230) It was fit for purpose, as is this book.

The Second World War has a habit of defeating historians. Paul Fussell's attempt at a sequel to *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975) ends with a tacit admission of that painful experience, for which he offers a kind of lamentation-explanation:

The Great War brought forth the stark, depressing *Journey's End*; the Second, ... the tuneful *South Pacific*. The real war was tragic and ironic, beyond the power of any literary or philosophical analysis to suggest, but in unbombed America especially, the meaning of the war seemed inaccessible. ... America has not yet understood what the Second World War was like, and has thus been unable to use such understanding to re-interpret and re-define the national reality and to arrive at something like public maturity. ... What time seems to have shown our later selves is that perhaps there was less coherent meaning in the events of wartime than we had hoped. Deprived of a satisfying final focus by both the enormosity of the war and the unmanageable copiousness of its verbal and visual residue, all the revisitor of this imagery can do, turning now this way, now that, is to indicate a few components of the scene.¹

Alex Danchev is Professor of International Relations at the University of Nottingham in the U.K. He has held fellowships at King's College, London; St Antony's College, Oxford; and the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington D.C. Together with Mark Stoler, Theodore Wilson and others, he participated in the first combined Anglo-American-Russian investigation of the Grand Alliance, published as *Allies at War* (1994). He has written extensively on the strategy and diplomacy of the Second World War, and the nature and purpose of the Anglo-American 'special relationship'. Some of this work is collected in a volume of essays, *On Specialness* (1998). His other works in this area include a study of Field Marshal Sir John Dill, *Very Special Relationship* (1986), and, with Daniel Todman, the unexpurgated diaries of Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, *War Diaries* (2001). His essay, 'Tony Blair's Vietnam: the Iraq War and the Special Relationship in Historical Perspective', *Review of International Studies* (July 2007), investigates the legacy of that relationship in British politics today.

More recently, Niall Ferguson's attempt at a sequel to his tightly plotted history of 1914-18, *The Pity of War* (1999), turned into *The War of the World* (2006) – a great title but an empty vessel – a book of parts, curiously disarticulated.² Niall Ferguson is not one to admit defeat, but it seems that the book he originally planned somehow escaped his grasp, mutating Frankenstein-fashion into a fifty-year "war of the world", c.1903-53, less a global war than an agglomeration, and a factitious one at that. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Ferguson, too, was confounded by the enormosity of the Second World War, and that the satisfying final focus eluded him, just as it eluded Paul Fussell.

Perhaps only Gerhard Weinberg in *A World at Arms* (first published in 1994) has succeeded in imposing his will on this gargantuan conflict, sufficient to craft a magisterial, integral

¹ Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 268, 296.

² If this seems too dismissive, perhaps I can refer readers to my review of the book in *The Times Higher Education Supplement*, 30 June 2006.

28 September 2007

whole – a history that is unchallengeably global and unmistakably his – coherent and complete, so far as any single voice or volume can reach.³

Weinberg's is in every sense an epic work, running to some 1,200 pages. Mark Stoler squeezes the Anglo-American war against the Axis into hardly more than 200 pages. The first thing to be said about his account is that it is an amazing feat of compression. It is sliced differently to its predecessors. According to custom (and culture), this unwieldy war is disaggregated into "the war in the west" and "the war in the east", the war against Germany and the war against Japan. *Allies in War*, by contrast, is global but sectoral. It embraces Anglo-American strategy and diplomacy in both theatres, leaving the Nazi-Soviet war to a separate volume in the same series.⁴ It might grudgingly be said that it treats only part of the whole. To this, the appropriate response is a Churchillian one – some whole! some part!

In fact it is not so much a compression as a distillation: a distillation of the current state of the art in Second World War studies, and in particular a distillation of Mark Stoler's own investigation of the subject over the last thirty years or more, beginning with his path-breaking work on the politics of the Second Front and culminating in a deeply-pondered and justly-celebrated study of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.⁵ *Allies in War* is built on this. It is a little like a semi-official history, in the best sense, authoritative, equable, international: at the same time panoramic and well-grounded. Stoler is sure-footed and skilful in gauging the level of detail required to make sense of the story and also keep it moving; judicious, in places perhaps a little cautious, in his assessment of men and measures; yet unambiguous in his insistence on some fundamental truths – that victory was not inevitable, certainly not to those who were doing the fighting; that chance and contingency played their part, just as Clausewitz had taught; that for three long years, 1941-44, the application of the Anglo-American war effort was as nothing compared to the Soviet, an inconvenient truth somehow suppressed in Anglo-American cultural consciousness until very recently.

It is in the first instance a kind of grand strategy of the war as fought by Britain and America, rather than a study of Anglo-American relations. In this it seems to me to be remarkably successful. Inevitably, with such a brisk and business-like account, it is tempting to ask for more – more coverage or more colour – but rarely more clarity or more coherence. The naval and air wars are not as well integrated into the big story as they might be, while the concluding remarks on the strategic bombing campaign may strike some readers as either too sweeping or too equivocal (and also cause some muttering in the ranks of grammatical puritans):

³ Gerhard Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* revised edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴ Evan Mawdsley, *Thunder in the East: The Nazi-Soviet War 1941-1945* (London: Arnold, 2005).

⁵ Mark A. Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977); *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Grand Alliance and US Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Allies in War Roundtable

28 September 2007

By the standards airpower theorists had themselves established before the war, the campaign was a failure. It did not result in a brief war, lower overall casualties, break enemy morale, destroy the enemy economy, or make irrelevant massive ground forces. It did help those ground forces enormously, however, and it played a major, perhaps a decisive role in their eventual victory. Whether that was worth the cost in lives lost and moral opprobrium incurred remains an open question (116).

My own sense of loss – or greed for more – centres on “the special relationship” itself. *Allies in War* is packaged and framed and titled in such a way as to lead one to expect a heavy emphasis on the dynamics of the Anglo-American affair, a relationship or set of relationships which has of course been the subject of endless interpretation down the decades, starting with the evangelist-in-chief of the English-speaking peoples, Winston Churchill himself – and indeed this book is touted as challenging “the standard Churchillian view” of the alliance in action. And yet, there is rather little analysis of the special relationship as such. A good deal of the strategic and diplomatic narrative is naturally (and persuasively) taken up with Anglo-American debates and disagreements. But the way the relationship actually worked is not much explored. The susurrus of specialness, the deeply personal business of a relationship that was at once institutionalized and personalized – in a word, the informal alliance – all that is almost a missing dimension. Churchill and Roosevelt “truly established their close personal relationship” at the ARCADIA conference in the wake of Pearl Harbor, says Stoler (37), but neither the trueness nor the closeness is substantiated here. The intimate friendship between Field Marshal Sir John Dill and General George C. Marshall is very properly underlined (51), but not explained. A brief summation has a nice line in “commonalities and personalities” (229) – and perceived need – but this is too late: these threads are not woven into the fabric of the work. Characterization, especially, is not the author’s strong suit. Together with constraints of space, the result is that the leading actors are long on strategic calculation, but short on flesh and blood. Likewise the special relationship. It was special, he concludes, and is still. A bridge too far?

However that may be, as a history of the Anglo-Americans against the Axis, *Allies in War* is a small miracle of achievement, possibly the most convincing encapsulation of that ticklish subject yet written. A generation of students will stand in his debt. So do we all. Hail Mark Stoler, the undefeated!

First a disclaimer. I have known Mark Stoler for some thirty years. He is both an old and dear friend, a colleague from whom I have learned much and with whom I have shared enjoyable, episodically fascinating, and occasionally enervating and/or frustrating adventures in such locales as Moscow, Minsk, Heathrow Airport, and Hyde Park, N.Y. On various occasions, we have shared the podium at conferences and contributed essays to commissioned works on aspects of World War II. And, currently, we are joined at the hip in an effort to complete and shepherd to publication a major study of the Combined Chiefs of Staff in World War II that our mutual friend, Alan Wilt, had undertaken for Cambridge University Press prior to his untimely death. I am persuaded, however, that neither the tug of loyalty owed an old friend nor the intellectual debts I willingly acknowledge rule out a “fair and balanced” assessment of this overview of Anglo-American diplomacy and strategy in World War II. Indeed, if Stoler has read this far, he will be prepared both for the positive comments and the nitpicks, having heard me voice them so often—even perhaps tediously—over the years.

In one sense, *Allies in War: Britain and America Against the Axis Powers, 1940-1945*, represents a culmination of Stoler’s distinguished career as a scholar of high politics in the era of World War II. His first major work, an expansion of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Wisconsin and subsequently published as *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977) boldly challenged the generally-held view, as the apt synopsis in *Choice* observed, that “American policy makers during World War II were naively and narrowly preoccupied with the purely military side of the conflict to the neglect of the long-range political implications of their

Theodore Wilson is Professor and Assoc. Chair at the University of Kansas (Ph.D. Indiana, 1966). He specializes in 20th-century U.S. political, military, and diplomatic history. Having trained with Robert H. Ferrell at Indiana University, Wilson joined the Department of History faculty in 1965. For some years his research dealt primarily with the history of American foreign relations. That focus yielded such works as The First Summit: Roosevelt and Churchill at Placentia Bay 1941 (1969, 1991), for which he was awarded the Society of American Historians’ Parkman Prize; a co-edited volume, Makers of American Diplomacy (1974); and The Marshall Plan, 1947-1951 (1977). He also co-authored Three Generations in Twentieth Century America: Family, Community, and Nation (1976, 1981). Beginning in the 1980s, he shifted focus to the World War II Allied coalition and to military history more generally. That research program, supported by stays at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and the U.S. Army Center for Military History, has yielded WW2: Critical Issues (1974, 1994, 1998); D-Day, June 6 1944 (1994); Victory in Europe 1945: From World War to Cold War (2000); assorted articles; and Building Warriors: Selection and Training of U.S. Ground Combat Troops in World War II (forthcoming). Wilson serves as General Editor of the University Press of Kansas series, Modern War Studies, which has published some 130 original titles on military history and related subjects. Wilson’s current research embraces Anglo-American cultural interaction during World War II, the U.S. Army and the early Cold War, and a long-gestating biography of Henry A. Wallace.

military decisions.” Through a steady stream of books and articles crowned by his magisterial study, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), Stoler has documented the pervasive interaction of military and civilian policymakers in shaping of America’s policies regarding the conduct of World War II and planning for the postwar world. *Allies in War* represents both a synthetic depiction of, in Stoler’s words, “a combined diplomatic-military history of the Anglo-American alliance and war against the Axis powers,” (xxii), and an ambitious effort to view the strategy and politics of the Pacific War through the lens of discussions and decisions taken among British and American civilian wartime leaders. Indeed, his succinct analysis of Anglo-American policymaking and prosecution of the war in the Pacific is a signal contribution to the literature.

Tackling a project such as a narrative history of the Anglo-American conduct of World War II demands that the author confront a multitude of difficult choices. In the instance of the work currently under review, *Allies in War*, certain of these decisions had been already made when Stoler undertook the project. As one volume in Hodder and Arnold’s series on the Second World War, the book was to be written for a general readership and with the particular goal of adoption as a supplementary text for undergraduate and graduate courses on 20th century political, diplomatic, and military history. The work certainly fulfills these requirements. Stoler offers the reader a masterful overview of wartime diplomacy and strategy in, remarkably, less than 300 pages—eleven chapters totaling 230 pages, exceptionally useful endnotes, and a “select” but comprehensive bibliography of American and British works. While packed with informative insights and well-chosen illustrative examples, the narrative reads smoothly. The prose style is confident, straightforward, and sometimes rises to a level more typical of historians who write for a general public. Stoler’s aim was to offer a synthesis of the conduct of World War II by Britain and the United States that is both comprehensive and readable. As noted, he has worked through most if not all the relevant secondary literature on aspects of the so-called “special relationship” between the United States and the United Kingdom. The book deserves a wide readership and serious consideration for adoption in university courses on 20th century international relations, advanced surveys of military history, and the history of World War II.

We appear to have reached that point in our observation of the merry-go-round of scholarly writing about World War II in general and the Anglo-American conduct of the war in particular when the momentum generated by release of new documentation about the war has slowed sufficiently to permit the sort of confident general syntheses of previously-fraught subjects represented by studies such as this one. Immediately after the war, there occurred a flood of biographies, autobiographies and memoirs of which several, such as Winston Churchill’s six-volume “history,” served to define scholarly assessments for a generation. Also appearing in the first two decades after war’s end were assorted interpretive works, speculative in nature, though based on close reading of the war memoirs and the official histories being published on both sides of the Atlantic. Next came a surge of carefully-drawn monographs when U.S. and then British records became widely

28 September 2007

available, making possible both filling of gaps and direct challenge to the Churchillian paradigm. Those studies were mined to produce assorted general works, many reflecting post-Vietnam interpretive perspectives. In the 1990s, a significant if smaller second wave of monographs based upon what approximates the totality of the historical record as seen from London and Washington and limited access to Russian sources hit the bookstores. Stoler's welcome synthesis of the Anglo-American conduct of the World War II is thus timely and most welcome.

Inevitably, a synthesis generates quibbles about point of view and depth of analysis. The author's approach is avowedly top-down; that is, he is concerned chiefly with decision-making within the Grand Alliance at the level of President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill, and their principal advisers. Focusing on what was decided (or not decided) in the rarefied atmosphere of summit conferences makes possible a clearly-developed exposition, one that yields an easily comprehended narrative and sustains focus on the tensions and limits of Anglo-American wartime cooperation. However, it scants to some degree the enormous effort to sustain the alliance done at second and third levels—by, for example, the assorted individuals and groups of Americans associated with OLLA (the Lend-Lease organization), the U.S. Embassy, OWI, FEA, the Army Service Forces, and other acronymic organizations operating in Britain. Even less attention is given their less numerous but still very important British counterparts in Washington (for example, the British Military Mission) and elsewhere in the U.S. Thus, we get less attention to economic relations, the daily round of intelligence sharing, Anglo-American discussions about differing approaches to governing, than one might expect. Some attention to their views of the nation in which they were residing and of working with their counterparts would have reinforced Stoler's argument regarding the constraints within which the so-called "special relationship" operated. I would also have liked to have seen something more than acknowledgement of the experiences (and possible short and longer term effects) of the presence of all those American soldiers in Britain from 1942-1945. This is a fascinating story, one that has been skillfully told by David Reynolds in *Rich Relations: The American Occupation of Britain, 1942-1945*, as Stoler notes, and the policy implications (such questions, for example, as the unique status of forces agreement extorted by the Americans from Churchill's government) merit some discussion in any narrative of wartime Anglo-American relations.

More serious in terms of criticism is what I perceived as an imbalance between American and British perspectives on the relationship. By and large, we get Washington's perspective on issues and, in general, the vantage from which the story is told is the United States, Washington, and the White House. For a work of this sort, ideally, there should be more fully developed discussion of the British perspectives on wartime policies, of the context of British politics for understanding Britain's and Churchill's strategic concerns (for example, the string of military disasters in spring, 1942 that culminated with the fall of Tobruk are discussed chiefly from an American perspective), and of the organizational mechanisms by which British policymaking was accomplished. Stoler has demonstrably reviewed extant British secondary sources, but—as I have often observed to him—

Allies in War Roundtable

28 September 2007

immersion in FO and WO records and comparing what one finds in those elaborately minuted files against the inchoate documentation one finds when opening any box at NARA offers invaluable insights for the deep differences between British and American systems of governing. But, then, we are considering a work of 300 pages!

My final quibble relates to what appear to be the somewhat hurried concluding chapters. The reader confronts a thicket of postwar questions, and, indeed, perhaps too many topics and issues. Stoler gives emphasis appropriately to the theme of the transfer of power from Britain to the United States over the course of the war and culminating in the rapid British withdrawal from global leadership and its postwar financial crisis. Again, the story is told chiefly from the American perspective, and we obtain only limited understanding of the frantic efforts by British officials to keep in place such manifestations of equality as the Combined Boards and the Hyde Park Agreement. London's fallback position was, of course, soliciting acknowledgment of Britain as elder statesman or wise uncle, using the callow Americans to achieve London's longterm aims. But that is, in fact, another story and one properly beyond the scope of this remarkable work of historical synthesis.

My students are often surprised to learn that in all its major conflicts since 1900, the United States fought alongside allies or as part of a coalition. This means that, to be accurate and meaningful, any serious written work (or lecture) on U.S. military or diplomatic history covering one of these major conflicts cannot simply be the bilateral tale of the U.S. and its principal opponent. Instead, it must be an account that factors in the allies, the enemies, and the neutrals (as well as the internal, domestic affairs of course). But herein lies a paradox. To incorporate all of the parts, even in a relatively narrow, focused work, requires mastery of an ever growing amount of primary source material and secondary literature, not all of it in English. No single scholar can seriously hope to master all of this material and produce an entirely complete work. The historian must balance objectives against resources, ends against means. Tradeoffs, sacrifices, and compromises must occur. There must be, in effect, a grand strategy for conducting research and producing sophisticated scholarship.

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Mark Stoler's *Allies in War* is an excellent example of this balancing. It is not the definitive account of World War Two in its entirety. It is far shorter, for instance, than Gerhard Weinberg's monumental tome *A World at Arms*, another important and encompassing work. Yet is more ambitious than Christopher Thorne's *Allies of a Kind*. Thorne's work focuses on Anglo-American relations only in East Asia and the Pacific. Instead, it is more like the larger cousin of Waldo Heinrichs's *Threshold of War*.¹ At once short and ambitious, *Allies in War* is certainly no less important. Stoler has synthesized a career's worth of research and reading, and the accumulated work of two generations worth of scholars, to craft a smooth narrative account of World War Two from the perspective of the cooperation between the United States and Great Britain, two of the major allies in the war,

¹ Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: the United States, Britain and the war against Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978); Waldo H. Heinrichs, *Threshold of War: Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Entry into World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

in all theaters of combat.² Proliferating superlatives aside, this actually is a major accomplishment.

The resulting book is a simultaneous military and diplomatic account of the war that gently embraces Stoler's embedded coalition story. In 230 pages, he succeeds in explaining to the reader the general evolution of military technology as well as the nature of combat at sea, in the air and on land, in a crisp way. The story is, of course, a familiar one, and those who have followed the recent and standard literature will see that he has incorporated from both primary sources as well as synthetic, analytic accounts such as Richard Overy's *Why the Allies Won*.³ While there are few surprises, there are some eyebrow-raising details that moves the narrative along and rewards the reader (the story of the sawdust-ice combination known as Pykrete and a service pistol in one Combined Chiefs of Staff conference comes to mind). What makes Stoler's account stand out is how well he has blended a phenomenal quantity of material together without losing sight of his coalition tale. He does this through a top-level account. Stoler rarely mentions units or commanders below the corps level. He clearly lays out the major operational and strategic level developments, so that even novice readers will come away with an understanding of just where and how the war occurred. When talking about the evolution of the combined Anglo-American forces in the European theater, he pays close attention to who was in command and when. Some might denigrate this as particularism, but it significantly strengthens the larger argument. The fact that the United States and the United Kingdom came to share command in Europe in innovative ways—ultimately trusting their soldiers to one another—is important to Stoler, who by describing the evolution of command arrangements illustrates just how tightly the coalition came together at the very highest levels. It was, to borrow from the World War I controversy about injecting U.S. soldiers into British and French divisions, amalgamation of a very different sort. General Dwight D. Eisenhower is the hero here, pursuing, as Stoler describes it, the “creation of an unprecedented headquarters whose members acted as if they belonged to a single nation.” [p. 76] So as a military overview the work is excellent, particularly for nonspecialists.

At the same time, the work is a diplomatic analysis of how the alliance rose and fell. Stoler starts with the pre-war relationships and, echoing Waldo Heinrichs, shows in the first chapters how growing simultaneous concerns about Europe and Asia brought the two countries together in 1940 and 1941. From the beginning the U.S. was very much the junior partner, militarily inexperienced and not yet mobilized fully for war. But through the careful explanation of the successive wartime conferences, Stoler crafts a parallel narrative to the larger war story that illustrates how the alliance transformed. Slowly the U.S. gained strength over the British. Steadily the military commanders learned how to

² Mark A. Stoler's previous works on the subject include, *inter alia*, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941-1943* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), *George C. Marshall: Soldier-Statesman of the American Century* (Twayne, 1989), and *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance and U.S. Strategy in World War II*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

³ Richard J. Overy, *Why the Allies Won* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996).

28 September 2007

compromise not only with one another but with the political leadership. Eventually all become confident—too confident at times—that the war was going their way and so had to balance postwar desires against wartime requirements. This is the real meat of the work, and it shows clearly the extent to which historians examining wars must understand how tightly interrelated coalition politics, diplomacy, and wartime strategy really are.

Stoler does not leave out the enemies, the other allies, or the lesser theaters. He explicitly points out at the beginning that readers should understand both the significance of the German-Soviet struggle on the Eastern Front (something so important that Evan Mawdsley has written a separate volume in the same series) and the overriding fact that the U.S. and Great Britain did not by themselves win either the war in Europe or Asia. He goes on to explain other significant elements, such as the role of the Chinese in tying down more than half of the Japanese army on the mainland, at least until 1944, and spends considerable time explaining the particulars of the Chinese theater and the KMT-Communist rivalry. The French, the Poles, the Australians, and the Italians all receive their mention, however brief, where it best fit into the narrative. The account of the China-Burma-India theater, something often set aside in other works, reminds the reader that while it was a secondary concern, it was nonetheless there and placed its own constant demand for resources and attention. Neither in Europe nor the Pacific, the CBI still mattered.

But it is this parallel attention to both the war story and the coalition story that raised what seemed to me to be a fundamental problem with the work, one that plagues all such ambitious encompassing works. In the race to mention everything of significance, what must be left out? Where are the holes in the story, the parts that we still do not understand correctly? Was it worth, for example, including extensive discussions on the internal Chinese politics during the war when that would necessarily allow less attention to the coalition story? As I read the work, I began to make notations in the margin whenever I thought Stoler omitted a part of the narrative that should have been there. Most of these details he came to eventually, deftly and several pages later, but I began to wonder whether his concision reflected such a deep understanding of the subject that he could control the story all the way to the end, or whether there were elisions over unclear subjects that scholars still do not fully understand.

Let me offer several specific examples. First, the spectacular story of the 1944 landing craft shortage allows Stoler to illustrate how the U.S. used this to gain leverage over the British both in the Mediterranean and in the Far East (and how everyone used it to rein in Prime Minister Winston Churchill's Rhodesian fantasies). But we see little specific discussion of how the evolving industrial, financial and manpower limitations of both the U.S. and Great Britain shaped these grand strategic choices. It is clear Britain faced constraints, but the U.S. comes across as this unstoppable force with an ever growing army. The Germans were sinking massive quantities of shipping in the North Atlantic, but we do not have a sense of what Britain's real breaking point could have been or how close they really were. Second, and relatedly, we have little discussion beyond a chapter on the naval war about the logistics and resourcing of the war. How well did the two cooperate on this front? Beyond

28 September 2007

the Atlantic convoys, what compromises did the two work out if shipping was scarce? Did the British worry about U.S. air corridors across Africa or shipping lines into the Middle East possibly leading to postwar economic relationships at British expense? Third, we are told relatively little (beyond the Darlan affair or the early Pacific operations, for example) about the limitations that domestic politics placed on either ally over coalition matters. Was this because it rarely affected things, or because there simply was no room in the work to discuss this? Finally, what is there that we do not still understand? If the pre-1970s accounts of the war are now fundamentally flawed because of the ULTRA revelation, what else is out there that could be wrong? Stoler concedes that as he went along in the project he learned just how much he did not know about the conflict--but what is there that we do not know to look for? He could not have put everything into this account, so these questions could well be unfair ones to ask, but we should ask them nonetheless.

In the end, though, such quibbles should not overshadow the fact that this is an important book. Stoler is fair and judicious when dealing with controversial subjects (the Yalta accords or the decision to use the atomic bombs, for instance) and manifests no noticeable slant (aside from increasingly sharp illustrations of Winston Churchill's fervent imagination that eventually wore out even President Franklin D. Roosevelt's patience) that would impede the book's use in the classroom even to the War College level. As an updated narrative account of World War II, it certainly reflects the remarkable strides that the field has made in recent years. As an analysis of the intricacies of the Anglo-American relationship during the war, it is eminently useful. One comes away with precisely what Stoler set out to do create -- a clear sense of just how immensely difficult this entire effort at coalition warfare really was. Indeed, we should wonder not why the Axis lost or the Allies won, but rather how on earth the major actors in this ever kept their stamina up for the duration of this exhausting conflict.

Author's Response by Mark Stoler, Professor Emeritus, University of Vermont

First, many thanks to Thomas Maddux for organizing this roundtable, and to Kathleen Burk, Alex Danchev, Theodore Wilson, and Jonathan Winkler for participating in it. Let me also add my own disclaimer to the one Ted Wilson provided: in addition to knowing and working with Ted for more than three decades now, I have also known Alex Danchev for many years, participated in numerous conferences with him, and relied extensively upon his excellent scholarship and criticisms as well as Ted's for my own work. More recently I have come to know Jonathan Winkler and to value him as an excellent younger scholar in the field.

Luckily I do not know Kathleen Burk or Thomas Maddux, lest I be accused of manipulating the membership of this roundtable in order to receive such rave reviews! In truth, I had no idea

the reviewers would be so positive, and I find it difficult to respond to their praise. Indeed, what can one say given the words they use to describe and assess my work? I am tempted to limit my comments to sincere thanks to all of them and, as a humorous aside, to repeat one of my late father's favorite quips: "flattery will get you everywhere!"

Seriously, I am deeply grateful to the reviewers—and not simply for their praise. I am also grateful to them for seeing so clearly what I was trying to do in this volume—and for pointing out so accurately my weaknesses. Yes, I concur in their criticisms. The volume is weak on "flesh and blood" characterization, as Alex Danchev correctly notes; on logistics, resources, finances and domestic politics as Jonathan Winkler notes; and on the lower levels of the Anglo-American alliance as well as the end of the war and the British perspective as Ted Wilson correctly notes. And the primary reason for such weaknesses is indeed a factor that was largely beyond my control: the limited number of pages within which I had to work by the terms of my contract with the publisher.

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28 September 2007

There is always choice involved in organizing and writing a brief volume, however, and I very consciously chose to organize and emphasize grand strategy at the highest levels—primarily because it is what I am most interested in studying and what I concluded would work best as an organizing principle for such a volume. I also decided not to emphasize the end of the war (only one of my eleven chapters deals exclusively with 1945, followed by one more on its aftermath and consequences) so as to make sure my focus remained on the war itself, not the origins of the ensuing Cold War as with so many volumes that deal with this time period. Furthermore, my American bias is, as Ted Wilson correctly notes, at least partially the result of greater immersion in the American than the British records. I have indeed spent much more time in the U.S. National Archives than the British Public Records Office—though that is a result more of time and funding constraints than of any preference for Washington and its viewpoint over Kew!

So what then is left to say in this response? First, let me credit the success my reviewers emphasize in distilling so much into so few pages to a previous experience: my 200-page 1989 biography of George C. Marshall. Graduate comprehensive exams aside, it was the Marshall project that first taught me how to synthesize large quantities of information into a brief volume. And in this learning process, I owed and still owe an enormous debt of gratitude to three historians: John Milton Cooper, the series editor who asked me to write the volume and guided me through the process; Edward “Mac” Coffman, who first taught me military history at the University of Wisconsin and who recommended me for this project; and the late Forrest C. Pogue, who wrote the 2,000 page, four volume official biography of Marshall without which my much briefer volume would not have been possible and who served as a constant source of inspiration, advice and encouragement.

Secondly, let me state here, as I did in my preface, that the idea for such a unique Anglo-American volume on World War II came from Hugh Strachan, the academic editor of the Hodder Arnold series in which this volume appears, and that I agreed to write it because I was intrigued with this novel approach to the war and because it provided me with another opportunity to fuse diplomatic with military history—a fusion I believe to be of critical importance and one I have emphasized throughout my academic career.¹ Equally important, as I also noted in my preface, was Warren Kimball’s comment to me that no one had previously written such a volume because it could not be done—a comment I interpreted more as a dare from one New York City kid to another than as a statement of fact!

¹ See in this regard my presidential address to the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, “War and Diplomacy: Or, Clausewitz for Diplomatic Historians,” *Diplomatic History* 29 (January 2005): 1-26. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-7709.2005.00457.x. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2005.00457.x>.

28 September 2007

Thirdly, let me try to expand on a question Jonathan Winkler asked in his review: “what is there that we do not still understand?” After all the document releases and thousands upon thousands of volumes on World War II, what still remains to study and explain?

In a word, plenty. For me, the most notable gap in our knowledge of Allied grand strategy remains the Soviet Union. Despite all that has been released and written in the last two decades about Stalin and Soviet wartime strategies and policies, I often feel that there is more about Moscow’s behavior that we do not know than what we do know. How serious, for example, were the Russo-German contacts and separate peace rumors of 1943? Did Stalin ever realize the difficulties involved in crossing the English Channel and that it was not similar, as Marshal Voroshilov once asserted, to crossing a river? Did he really view the refusal to cross in 1942 or in 1943 as deliberate, or did he and Molotov say so simply to score bargaining points? And why did Stalin react so moderately, and indeed positively, to the British push at the fall 1943 Moscow Foreign Ministers’ Conference for more Mediterranean operations and a consequent delay in launching OVERLORD, only to reverse his position very forcefully and decisively less than a month later at the Teheran summit conference?

Soviet policies and strategies are of course not our only gaps. Indeed, additional gaps have previously emerged and will continue to emerge as the issues that concern us and the questions we ask about the war evolve over time, for much of history is a search for the roots to contemporary problems. Furthermore, and related, we do not yet know the full consequences of the war. They are still spilling out and will continue to do so for many years. Sixty years may appear a long period of time within a single lifetime; but it is not in terms of the historical consequences of an event. I am reminded in this regard of a crack my University of Vermont colleague in Medieval History made to me many years ago: there is no U.S. history he maintained--or indeed any “real” history after 1500—just “current events” whose full consequences will remain incomplete for centuries.

That may be true. Nevertheless, World War II already has had enormous consequences that historians can and should analyze. As James Stokesbury has noted, “The years 1939-1945 may well have seen the most profound and concentrated upheaval of humanity since the Black Death. Not since the 14th century had so many people been killed or displaced, disturbed, uprooted, or had their lives completely transformed in such a short period of time.”² In the final chapter of *Allies in War*, I attempted to summarize briefly some of the most important consequences of this enormous upheaval as we see them today. Let me conclude here with a brief description of a vitally important consequence that I did not mention within that chapter, but that has long been a major concern of mine.

² James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War II* (New York: Morrow, 1980), 377.

28 September 2007

One of the most notable, durable and unfortunate consequences of the war has been a tendency since 1945 to view and justify U.S. foreign and military policies via analogies to the World War II era and its supposed “lessons.” I say “supposed” because these “lessons” and the ensuing analogies are usually simplistic, based more upon World War II mythology than fact, and dead-wrong. Obviously I am influenced by contemporary events in making such a statement. But I have been making that statement for decades now, and the rationalizations for invading and staying in Iraq constitute merely the most recent examples of such unfortunate behavior. Indeed, a few years ago I added a new essay study question to the list I give my U.S. foreign relations students every year before their final exam: discuss the uses and misuses every president since Harry Truman has made of World War II analogies to justify his behavior and defend it against critics.

More than thirty years ago Ernest May pointed out the dangerous consequences of such faulty analogies and misuse of history in the context of another tragic war.³ Unfortunately his warnings have not halted the process. But as an historian I continue to hope that an emphasis on exploding World War II myths will eventually do so—if not for contemporary policymakers then at least for future ones who are presently in our classes.

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³ Ernest R. May, *“Lessons” of the Past: The Use and Misuse of History in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).