

Review essay

Douglas MacArthur: American warrior

Arthur Herman
Random House: New York, 2016, 937 pages
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US\$40.00

Reviewed by Emeritus Professor
David Horner, AM,
Australian National University



When General Douglas MacArthur arrived in Melbourne on 21 March 1942, Australia was at its lowest ebb. On 23 January, Japanese forces had seized Rabaul in New Britain and a thousand Australians had been captured. On 15 February, the Japanese had captured Singapore and a further 15,000 Australian troops had become prisoners-of-war. The Japanese advance seemed relentless. On 19 February, Japanese aircraft bombed Darwin and, over the following month, Australian forces in Java, Timor and Ambon surrendered. The Japanese landed on mainland New Guinea on 8 March. With the three divisions of the Australian Imperial Force still overseas, and with its small, weak navy and air force, Australia seemed open to Japanese invasion.

And then MacArthur arrived, to be welcomed by an excited crowd of between 4000 and 6000 Australians as his train pulled into Melbourne. A few days earlier, the US and Australian Governments had announced that MacArthur would be

supreme commander of an Allied command, the Southwest Pacific Area, which would encompass Australia and the islands to the north. The *Brisbane Courier* observed that MacArthur's arrival 'was stirring news, the best news Australians have had for many a day'. Frank Forde, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Army, who met MacArthur on the railway platform, commented that faced by the 'greatest catastrophe that could have happened', the country looked to America.

Five days later, MacArthur flew to Canberra to attend a dinner hosted by Prime Minister John Curtin and to meet the bipartisan Advisory War Council. As they left the meeting, MacArthur threw his arm over the Prime Minister's shoulder, promising him that 'we two, you and I, will see this thing through together... You take care of the rear and I will handle the front'. From then, through to 1945, MacArthur became the dominant figure in Australia's conduct of the Second World War. Indeed, few figures who have spent



less than three years in this country have had such an impact on Australian life.

The publication of this latest biography of MacArthur by the American popular historian Arthur Herman provides an opportunity to reflect on the enduring importance of MacArthur to the defence of Australia in the Second World and to Australia's approach to the American alliance and to coalition warfare over the subsequent 70 years. Before considering these issues, however, one might reasonably ask whether there is anything more to say about MacArthur that has not already been said in the more than 50 biographies that have already appeared.

Herman argues that most of them fall into two categories: those by 'unrelenting critics' and those of 'unashamed adulation'. There are also general biographies, such as those by William Manchester (1978) and Geoffrey Perret (1996), as well as scholarly biographies such as the three-volume series by D. Clayton James. But Herman claims that 'it is time for a biography of MacArthur that gives this larger-than-life figure his full due by peeling back the layers of myth, both pro and con, and revealing the marrow of the man and his career'. Herman's sympathetic biography largely achieves its aim. Drawing on a large range of sources and recent scholarship, he provides an engaging and nicely paced account of MacArthur's life, examining both his personality and his military achievements.

One of the most interesting themes is MacArthur's interest in Pacific affairs and the way this was shaped by his father Arthur, a hero of the US Civil War and a long-serving officer in the US Army. As early as 1883, when Douglas was just three, Captain Arthur MacArthur had written a 44-page memorandum in which he argued that the US should seek to establish a vast commercial network in Asia. He thought it was inevitable that Russia and the US would meet in Asia. As Herman suggests, it was as if Arthur MacArthur 'could see in a crystal ball his son's and his army's agonies on the Korean Peninsula almost seventy years later'.

Commanding US forces in the Philippines at the beginning of the 20th century, Arthur MacArthur developed attitudes to Asian independence which were to colour his son's views. These were reinforced when, as a young officer, Douglas

(who had already served in the Philippines himself) accompanied his father on an eight-month tour of the key Asian countries and colonies. In all, Douglas MacArthur was to live for almost 13 years in the Philippines during war and peace. Then, from 1945 to 1951, he commanded the allied forces in Japan, during which he laid the foundation for a democratic Japan. With this background, as Herman reminds us, MacArthur warned John F. Kennedy not to get involved in Vietnam, adding that '[a]nyone who starts a land war in Asia ought to have his head examined'.

There was much more to the MacArthur story than his involvement with Asia. By the time he arrived in Australia in March 1942, he already had a long and distinguished military career. In the First World War, he was chief of staff of a division and commanded a brigade in action, winning many decorations for bravery. He was then Superintendent of the US Military Academy. By 1930, he was Chief of Staff of the US Army, serving under Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt, with whom he had significant differences. Later, he became military adviser to the Philippines government, during which time he retired from the American Army. He was recalled in July 1941 to command the US Army Forces in the Far East.

His command in the Philippines, once Japan entered the war in December 1941, was not successful. His air force was destroyed on the ground by Japanese air attacks, and his troops, who withdrew to the Bataan peninsula, were shortly to face a disaster exceeded only by that of the British at Singapore. He should have been relieved of his command, and it was perhaps only for political reasons that Roosevelt ordered him to Australia. His defeat in the Philippines rankled deeply within him.

MacArthur believed that it was his destiny to lead the Allies to victory in the Pacific, having vowed to the people of the Philippines, 'I shall return'. His US air commander in Australia in 1942, Lieutenant General George Brett, described him as 'a brilliant, temperamental egoist; a handsome man, who can be as charming as anyone who ever lived, or harshly indifferent to the needs and desires of those around him'.

MacArthur was a man of personal contradictions. As US Army Chief of Staff, he had kept a Eurasian mistress, while his mother, ignorant

of this arrangement, helped him with official entertainment. MacArthur bribed the mistress to leave town, for fear of his mother's wrath. He married for the second time while in the Philippines, and arrived in Australia with his wife, young son and amah. In January 1942, in the midst of his defensive campaign in the Philippines, the Filipino President Quezon secretly awarded him \$500,000 (probably about \$8 million today) as 'recompense and reward' from the Philippines people. Herman argues that MacArthur accepted the payment only because he never expected to live to spend it.

Yet for all his faults, MacArthur gained the confidence of the Australian Government, which hoped that his appointment would ensure American support. He harassed Washington for more troops and slowly put together his new command. General Sir Thomas Blamey was the sole Australian to be appointed as one of MacArthur's three immediate subordinates—he was given command of the Allied Land Forces. Australia provided most of the ground troops while the US provided the majority of the ships and aircraft, although the numbers were still relatively small. This was the time of the Battle of the Coral Sea. We need to remember that the US helped defend Australia in 1942 when Britain was unable to do so and Australia's forces were too weak by themselves to stop the Japanese advance.

Herman's account of MacArthur in Australia and his role in the New Guinea campaigns of 1942–43—the period of most interest to Australian readers—is the weakest part of his book. While living in Australia, first in Melbourne and then in Brisbane, MacArthur became the focus of public attention. His demands were fulfilled, his press communiqués provided the main source of military information, and Australian and American forces responded to his directions.

The campaign in Papua between July 1942 and January 1943 did not show MacArthur at his best. Questioning the fighting qualities of the poorly supplied Australian troops fighting on the Kokoda Trail, he asked Curtin to send Blamey to Port Moresby to take personal command. The Australians had in fact fought well but Blamey felt obliged to relieve the local Australian commander and, faced with MacArthur's demands for more speed, Blamey relieved two other

senior officers. For the final stages of the campaign, MacArthur moved to Port Moresby and, in dramatic fashion, told his American corps commander Lieutenant General Robert Eichelberger: 'If you don't take Buna, I want to hear that you are buried there!'. Eichelberger survived but many Australian and American soldiers died because of the need for a rapid victory.

By contrast with the Papuan campaign, the New Guinea offensives of 1943 were a brilliant orchestration of Australian and American sea, land and air forces. Australia provided the bulk of the ground forces until April 1944, after which the Americans bore the brunt of the fighting. As the Americans approached the Philippines, MacArthur promised Curtin that Australians would take part in the islands' recapture but that never came to pass. MacArthur was unwilling to allow the Australians to play a major role in the recovery of American territory.

In late 1944, MacArthur directed Blamey to use more forces to garrison the Japanese-held areas of New Britain, Bougainville and New Guinea than the Australian commander thought necessary. He also ordered Australian troops to land at Tarakan and at Brunei Bay, Borneo, in May and June 1945. Blamey opposed the final landing at Balikpapan in July but MacArthur insisted and the Australian Government acquiesced. In the emergency of 1942, Australia had little alternative but to accept MacArthur's leadership. But, by 1944, Australia should have realised that America's, or perhaps MacArthur's policies, were not necessarily the best for Australia.

Australia drew two important lessons from this experience. First, at the strategic level, there is no certainty that US and Australian interests are the same. In the future, Australia would need to work hard to have any influence over alliance strategy and, even then, would be unlikely to succeed. Whether that lesson was fully heeded with regard to the Vietnam War or the 2003 invasion of Iraq is open to debate. The second lesson was to ensure that in coalition operations, Australian commanders had the capacity to withdraw Australian forces if proposed operations might unnecessarily endanger Australian lives or were not in accord with Australian government policy. Such command arrangements have been in place in all of Australia's subsequent coalition wars, from Korea to Afghanistan and Iraq.



Herman could not be expected to deal with these specific issues but he fails to come to grips with the shortcomings of MacArthur's military campaign in 1942-43. The Australian official historian, Gavin Long, made considered judgments about MacArthur's performance in his book *MacArthur as military commander*. Herman dismisses Long's arguments simply on the basis that Long was an 'unrelenting critic' of MacArthur.

There is, of course much more to Herman's book than the New Guinea campaign, a testimony to the length of MacArthur's career, which in a military sense reached its high point with the amphibious landing at Inchon in Korea in September 1950. The following April, MacArthur was relieved of his command by President Truman, bringing to an end a military career of almost 52 years in uniform.

For a book that generally provides a well-rounded, modern and thought-provoking account of arguably America's greatest soldier, it is unfortunate that it is marred by numerous mistakes, ranging from the slipshod to the laughable. I can only mention a few. George Marshall was not Secretary of Defense when the Inchon landing was being planned but was appointed soon after the landing in September 1950 (page 4). The Emperor Franz Josef was the uncle not the father of Franz Ferdinand, whose assassination triggered the First World War (p. 75). Arthur MacArthur died almost 50 not 60 years after the battle of Missionary Ridge (p. 75). Japan joined the First World War in 1914 not 1915 (p. 149). France capitulated in June not July 1940 (p. 286). The US Army general in the Philippines was Jonathan Wainwright not James (p. 296) or even Joseph (p. 329). MacArthur's B17 bombers could fly 2000 not 200 miles (p. 298). The 'veteran salt' Commander Bulkeley, who commanded the PT boats which spirited MacArthur away from Corregidor, was actually 30-year-old Lieutenant Bulkeley in 1941 (p. 305).

The errors become more numerous once MacArthur reached Australia. MacArthur made his renowned statement 'I shall return' at the South Australian town of Terowie not Adelaide (p. 419). Blamey commanded the Australian corps not a division in the Western Desert (p. 428). Admiral Grace was actually Admiral Crace (p. 434). MacArthur's naval commander in May

1942, Admiral Leary, was an American not an Australian (p. 435). MacArthur fired Leary in September 1942, not Hart as the book claims (p. 463), so Leary's successor, Carpenter, was not present for the Battle of the Coral Sea in May as the book states (p. 439). The Central Bureau, MacArthur's crucial signals intelligence unit, was in Henry Street, Brisbane not Melbourne (p. 436). Laughably, Wau is not an island but a town some 50 kilometres inland in New Guinea and the Japanese never captured it as the book claims (p. 465). New Georgia is a thousand miles from Salamaua, New Guinea not one hundred (p. 483). The Japanese base at Wewak was 500 miles north-west not south of Dobodura (p. 484). Australians will be infuriated to learn that, according to the book, it was American not Australian troops who landed east (not north-east) of Lae and captured the New Guinea town in September 1943. Returning to my earlier theme, if an American author cannot get Australian military operations right, then Australians need to be wary of American strategic decision-makers.

The errors continue in the later chapters. General Yamashita did not 'mastermind' the capture of Manila in 1942, he was in Malaya (p. 530). Inchon is west not east of Seoul, the Korean capital (pages 4 and 728); but don't bother checking on the map because it does not appear on it. For that matter, the maps are particularly weak. The map of Australia (p. 424) shows the towns of Onslow and Albany but not the capital, Canberra, nor Melbourne, where MacArthur had his headquarters. The battle map of New Guinea (p. 443), including the Lae landing I referred to earlier, bears no relationship to what actually happened. The British brigade in Korea, which included an Australian battalion, was not part of the US X Corps on the east coast of the peninsula (p. 773). The fighting in Korea ended in July not March 1953 (p. 837). Finally, my good friend the distinguished American historian Ed Drea would be surprised to learn that he is now called Kenneth (pages 612 and 852).

Book reviews



The war at home: the centenary history of Australia and the Great War, Volume 4

John Connor, Peter Stanley and Peter Yule
Oxford University Press: South Melbourne,
2015, 320 pages
ISBN: 978-0-1955-7678-8
\$59.95

Reviewed by Colonel Gavin
Keating, DSC, CSC,
Australian Army

The war at home is part of Oxford University Press' recent *Centenary history of Australia and the Great War* series. Now is a timely opportunity, during a period when Australia remembers its participation in the Great War, for the current generation of historians to raise fresh questions and perspectives about this experience. As the late Jeffrey Grey, series editor, noted in his foreword, '[w]e are not telling a different story, but hopefully have told the story differently'.

The intent of this particular volume is to interpret the economic, political and social experiences of the Australians who remained at home during the conflict. In doing so, it seeks to address themes left untouched by Ernest Scott, who wrote *Australia during the war* as part of C.E.W. Beans' official history of the Great War. As Peter

Stanley highlights, the people who remained home (and the events and activities they participated in) 'have been largely overlooked in the war's historiography, which remains seriously skewed towards the drama of conflict'. While perhaps not as captivating as the chronology of past battles popular with some current writers, the book covers themes that arguably remain more relevant to modern Australia and its future.

Peter Yule's section on Australia's wartime economy notes that it was particularly vulnerable to the disruptions of global conflict. As a large resource exporter, with only an emerging industrial base, the country's economy was almost immediately influenced by disruptions to shipping commerce and the resulting shortages as Britain concentrated on maintaining its supply routes with closer parts of the Commonwealth. However, Australia's 'critically dangerous' export position was significantly stabilised in 1916, after Prime Minister W.M. (Billy) Hughes' visit to Britain, where he achieved spectacular success in negotiating a series of favourable trade deals with the British Government, particularly covering wheat and zinc.

In addressing the related shipping shortages, Hughes was able to apply pressure to the British allocation system by the secret purchase of 15 steamships, the existence of which was only revealed to his Imperial colleagues during a critical stage in his negotiations. Ironically, this success only served to reinforce Australia's role as a primary resource supplier to Britain, increasing the economy's vulnerability to the conditions that would later spark the Great Depression. Manufacturing stagnated during the war, in sharp contrast to Australia's experience during the Second World War. Australian industry provided only a small amount of the weapons and equipment required by the Australian Imperial Force. The weakness of the industrial base was best illustrated in the manufacture of artillery munitions. Despite concerted efforts early in the war, Australia produced only 15,000 shells of acceptable quality during the conflict—scarcely enough to supply more than a brief bombardment by Western Front standards.

Billy Hughes looms large in John Connor's section on Australian politics during the war. His relentless energy and iron will achieved considerable successes on the international stage but



divided his colleagues and substantially contributed to the split of the Australian Labor Party during the first of two conscription referendums. Connor describes these referendums as ‘the most divisive events in Australian political history’. Both votes for conscription were narrowly defeated, with voter turnout for both higher than the 1917 federal election held in between. The causes of the defeats were complex but it is generally believed that voter class played a significant factor.

Hughes’ machinations before the first vote, where he used the *War Precautions Act* to restrict anti-conscription coverage and attempted to use the same act to authorise polling officials to disqualify male voters who had not attended a compulsory call-up for military training just prior to the vote, showed him at his political worst. As Connor highlights, in light of the civil disturbances experienced in Canada and New Zealand after the successful introduction of conscription in those countries, it was perhaps best that Australia did not follow suit, regardless of the efficiency of such a system. Hughes’ political manoeuvrings to remain Prime Minister in the face of considerable opposition after both referendums demonstrated the strength of his political cunning and ruthlessness. More positively, some of these same strengths helped Hughes to ensure Australia’s strategic interests were addressed during his tenure on the Imperial War Cabinet in 1918 and subsequent participation in post-war peace negotiations.

In his section on society, Peter Stanley covers a range of different issues, many of which support the view of some commentators that the impact of the Great War on Australian society was ‘essentially negative, reactionary and destructive of tolerance’. German Australians ‘found that they swiftly became the subjects of a campaign of vilification unseen in Australian history, before or since’. The pressures of war hardened religious sectarianism, particularly given the prevailing majority Protestant view that Irish Australians were disloyal and did not support the war effort. The pressures of the conscription campaigns, and the rise of the Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix as a prominent opponent of conscription, only inflamed sectarian prejudices and moved them from purely religious matters into everyday life.

The *War Precautions Act*, passed without dissent in October 1914, gave the Government virtually unlimited powers over the Australian people, some of which were not always used wisely. The burden of sacrifice was not evenly spread across the country, creating new divisions in society and reinforcing older ones. While over 400,000 Australians volunteered to serve in the AIF, it is notable that two-thirds of eligible men did not enlist. Stanley notes that, contrary to popular belief, Australia’s 60,000 war dead did not represent a higher proportion of the population than other nations (Australia’s war dead represented 1.22% of the population, New Zealand 1.51%, Britain 1.6% and France 3.4%).

However, the grief associated with such casualties, the financial and psychological costs associated with caring for the 150,000 who were wounded (physically and mentally) and the lost human potential that these combined figures represented all impacted on the country in ways that were undoubtedly substantial but remain difficult to quantify. The arrival of Spanish influenza, brought into Australia by troops returning from the war, only heralded more suffering, with 12,000, mostly civilians, dying in 1919.

The authors generally conclude that the war severely damaged Australian society. Its impact on the economy left it ‘anaemic and vulnerable’; politics became more bitter and ‘torn by class rivalry, religious bigotry and the echoing taunts of the conscription campaigns’; and the ‘optimistic, unified [and] progressive Australia that the world had so admired before’ was arguably dead. Jeffrey Grey was somewhat more optimistic when assessing that ‘[t]he nation that emerged from [the war] was a more mature and aware entity, but that development came at a heavy human and social cost’. *The war at home* is a sobering reminder that the costs of world wars are borne by more than just their uniformed combatants, and last much longer than just the duration of hostilities—an important reminder as we remember those momentous events from over a century ago.



The AIF in battle: how the Australian Imperial Force fought 1914-1918

Jean Bou (ed.)
 Melbourne University Press: Carlton, 2016,
 328 pages
 ISBN: 978-0-5228-6865-4
 \$49.99

Reviewed by Justin Chadwick

Jean Bou is one of Australia's eminent military historians, currently working at the Australian War Memorial. In *The AIF in battle*, he has brought together other military historians to contribute to this timely and important book that discusses and analyses key aspects of how the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) fought during World War 1.

Bou's introduction discusses the historiography of Australian military history and argues the need for a different approach. He notes that although much has been written on the actions of Australian troops during World War 1, particularly as part of centenary commemorations, most concentrate on specific battles, commanders or a particular Service. As Bou asserts, this 'amounts to a considerable edifice, but one that is somewhat fractured and spread out, in both space and time'.

This book attempts to investigate the AIF's evolution as a fighting force over the period of the war, demonstrating that the AIF that landed and

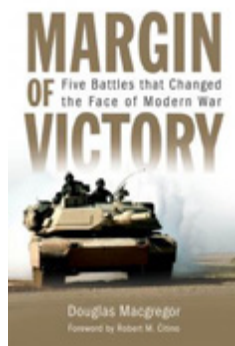
fought at Gallipoli was a very different fighting force, with different equipment, tactics and command arrangements, from the one that was fighting at the end of 1918.

Each chapter of *The AIF in battle* looks at different aspects of the AIF. These include the infantry battalion, mounted warfare in Palestine, artillery on the Western Front, command, air power, mining operations, trench raiding, and concludes with three chapters on the AIF and its battles from 1916 to the hundred days of 1918.

What becomes apparent from these essays is that each explores the changes that the AIF went through. Some of these are well known, such as the difficult transitions in tactics that were costly in lives, particularly for the infantry. Less known are others such as the development of the Flying Corps, where many pilots and crew were killed by enemy fire or equipment failure.

Of particular interest is David Horner's discussion of higher command of the AIF and the degree to which Australian officers had to 'learn on the job'. Although some of the officers had experience commanding during the South African War, and some permanent officers had staff college qualifications, the majority had little higher-level command knowledge as Australia had never fielded a divisional command structure. This higher command discussion is lacking in many histories which tend to maintain the 'Bean tradition' where the Digger is the centrepiece of any conversation.

The AIF in battle is a timely and important book to add to the ever-expanding work on the AIF and its role during World War 1. Each chapter is well-written and informative, albeit a smattering of spelling errors detract from the reading. This book is important, given that so many of the centenary-related publications have been a reinforcement of existing narratives. *The AIF in battle* should serve as a touchstone for other historians to further progress a longitudinal approach to Australian military history by identifying the development of ideas and techniques over time.



Margin of victory: five battles that changed the face of modern war

Douglas MacGregor
Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 2016,
270 pages
ISBN: 978-1-6125-1996-8
US\$34.95

Reviewed by John Donovan

Reading a book by retired US Army Colonel Douglas MacGregor is a challenging experience. It is not necessary, however, to agree fully with MacGregor to gain valuable insights from the research and analysis behind his proposals.

In this book, MacGregor studies five battles to glean lessons relevant to army reform in the 21st century. He differentiates between wars of decision, choice and observation, focusing particularly on wars of decision, and seeks reforms to ensure that the US is victorious in the first battle in such wars.

The first battle studied is Mons in 1914. MacGregor attributes British success during the retreat from Mons through Le Cateau largely to reforms implemented before 1912 by Richard Haldane, Secretary of State for War. Despite budget constraints, where priority was given to the Royal Navy, these reforms prepared the British Army (just) enough for a continental war. Resistance within the Army diminished the effect

of the reforms but MacGregor notes that sufficient remained to provide a margin of victory when needed, despite deficiencies in British leadership.

The next study is on the Japanese capture of Shanghai in 1937. MacGregor introduces General Ugaki Kazushige, who in the 1920s attempted to move the Japanese Army from a focus on infantry numbers towards greater mobility and firepower. Reaction to Ugaki's proposals arose, however, and opposition was more successful, delaying many reforms until the 1940s. Shanghai was a battle between masses of infantry, with limited mobility and fire support. While Haldane had given the British Army a margin of victory in 1914, opposition to Ugaki's changes left the Japanese Army strong enough to prevail in individual battles but not able to win against China.

These first two case studies emphasise the need to implement reform before a war, as more immediate priorities might constrain implementation during one. In his next two case studies, MacGregor introduces command arrangements.

The third study, on the destruction of Germany's Army Group Centre in 1944, differentiates between German military reforms between the wars, which 'focused on marginal, tactical changes to ... [a] ... World War 1 army', and Soviet reforms implemented during the war, which focused on 'integrating and concentrating combat power ... for strategic effect'. MacGregor also compares the polyglot German command system unfavourably with the integrated, joint Soviet system. The Soviet reforms were based on theoretical concepts developed in the 1930s but temporarily abandoned after Stalin's purge of the Red Army. They became the basis of the reconnaissance-strike complex of the 1980s.

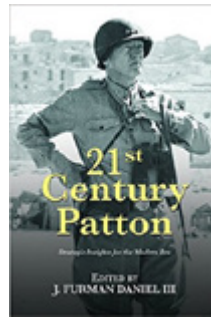
The fourth study is on the Egyptian crossing of the Suez Canal during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. MacGregor compares Egyptian military reforms, implemented with deep understanding of Egyptian culture, with Israel, which learned incorrect lessons from earlier wars. The Egyptians specifically planned to counter known Israeli tactics. While the Israelis eventually prevailed by using manoeuvre, the victory was

costly, in part because Israeli supporting fire-power and infantry were not closely integrated with tanks. MacGregor considers that Israel's unified military command structure provided the necessary margin of victory.

MacGregor's final case study is the US Battle of 73 Easting, against Iraq in 1991. He sees the 1991 conflict as perhaps the ultimate expression of World War 1 tactics. He considers this war a lost opportunity to move 'beyond industrial-age warfare to ... highly mobile, joint, integrated, aerospace and sensor dominated forces'. Instead, the US Services each fought their own wars, in their preferred manner. MacGregor notes that airpower was not able to defeat the Iraqi army in the field but did prepare the way for the ground attack. He criticises the failure to combine the air and ground efforts in an early joint operation, which might have produced a clear victory.

The final chapter is the core of the book. In it, MacGregor proposes a way forward for the US in the 21st century. He sees little use for light infantry (or even special forces) in conflicts with a peer or near-peer opponent, dismissing them as '[a]thleticism in uniform'. Rather, MacGregor favours fully mechanised ground forces, operating with air support as a strike/manoeuvre force under a joint and integrated command structure. Whether such a force is affordable by any nation other than an economic giant is a question for non-American readers to ponder.

One element of MacGregor's thesis that is relevant to Australia is defining the nation's 'core, existential interests'. MacGregor does not see nation-building/counterinsurgency in the Third World as a core interest for the US. Without US support, there also can be little realistic belief that these could be core functions for Australia.



21st century Patton: strategic insights for the modern era

J. Furman Daniel III (ed.)
 Naval Institute Press: Annapolis, 2016,
 159 pages
 ISBN: 978-1-6824-7063-3
 US\$24.95

Reviewed by Wing Commander Jo
 Brick, Royal Australian Air Force

Francis Ford Coppola's film, *Patton*, and George C. Scott's portrayal is so iconic that it is likely to cast a shadow over any discussion about General George Smith Patton, Jr—'old blood and guts'. Arguably, the film emphasises the eccentricities of the man—his intemperance and pomposity—and remains silent about the General's unwavering dedication to study, reflection and writing. Admittedly, these activities are not amenable to drawing the interest of a film audience, particularly where military action and drama are more viable alternatives.

Confining our understanding of the man to his depiction in Coppola's movie does a significant disservice to the study of leadership and professional military education. Patton's life and his dedication to the study of warfare provide many lessons for contemporary military professionals. There are myriad books on Patton, including Carlo D'Este's comprehensive biography, *Patton: a genius for war*. However, *21st century Patton* offers something more than a biographic account of the man. This book is part of the 21st Century Foundation series from the Naval

Institute Press, which aims to give ‘modern perspective to the great strategists and military philosophers of the past, placing their writings, principles, and theories within modern discussions and debates’.

The study of Patton in this book demonstrates the futility of schism in leadership studies between those who believe that leaders are born and those who believe that leaders can be made. Patton’s example makes clear that effective military leaders have certain traits that can be honed through education and training. He was unrelenting in his pursuit of excellence through his disciplined approach to physical fitness (he competed in the modern pentathlon in the Stockholm Olympics) and his dedicated study of military history. His focus and discipline contributed to the effectiveness of his self-education.

Patton was also able to take his extensive knowledge of military history, and his own personal experiences in training and warfare, to write persuasive articles that more than likely contributed to the development of military capability at the time. Patton’s article on ‘The form and use of the saber’ distilled his thoughts on the utility of the straight-edged sword over the curved sword in cavalry charges. This ultimately led to the US Army’s development of a straight-edged sword and Patton’s appointment as ‘Master of the Sword’ and an instructor in swordsmanship at Fort Riley, Kansas in 1913. His other articles, ‘Technology and war’, and ‘Refining the concept of mechanized war’, demonstrated Patton’s fascination with new technology and his ability to contextualise the relevance of new capabilities using lessons from history and through an appreciation of the current military environment.

Daniel has focused on Patton’s intellect and character through a selection of his works as a demonstration of Patton’s enduring relevance to discussions about military affairs and strategy. Daniel has selected a number of Patton’s papers that highlight the main themes that underlie his writing—the importance of ‘the warrior mindset’ and leadership to military success; the intersection between history, culture, politics, technology and the military profession; the continuities in war and the impact of technology on the conduct of war; and the importance of critical thinking, education and training to complex problem solving.

While the book considers the evolution of Patton’s writing and his thoughts on warfare and military capability, it was his consistent and enduring study of war that is the key lesson from this book. Patton’s wife, Beatrice, wrote about his method of study and listed the key works that he annotated. Beatrice’s essay, ‘A soldier’s reading’, is the concluding chapter in the book but is perhaps best read first as an introduction to Patton’s intellectual pursuits, his mindset and his writing.

Although Patton died 70 years ago, his story and his writings set an example for contemporary members of armed forces who want to call themselves truly ‘professional’. Complexity is a central facet of all warfare, and demands that military professionals continuously learn through historical study or review of contemporary security issues to understand the political and cultural backdrop against which modern military operations may be conducted. Modern military institutions are replete with discussions about technology and platforms but, as Patton rightly highlighted, humans win wars—but only if they take the time to reflect and study the amorphous field that is ‘war’.



The ministry of ungentlemanly warfare: Churchill's mavericks, plotting Hitler's defeat

Giles Milton
 Hodder and Stoughton: London, 2016,
 368 pages
 ISBN: 978-1-4447-9895-1
 \$45

Reviewed by Jim Truscott

Although the World War 2 Special Operations Executive (SOE) was created and dissolved in secrecy, new research into archives has enabled this book to be published. While it was officially called SOE, it operated under the cover name of the Inter Services Research Bureau. This book also puts its history in context with the role of Brigadier Gubbins, who initially established Section D (Destruction) and who ultimately led the organisation as its Chief of Destruction. It is as much a biography of Gubbins as it is a short history of SOE.

Churchill coined the colloquial 'Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare' expression with SOE's task to set Europe ablaze. It was also Churchill who decided to bypass the Ministry of Supply and approve the clandestine and illegal building of weapons. Such a 'work outside the law' organisation and freelance approach to warfare could never fit with the conventional military. It is little wonder that the Ministry of Economic Warfare was placed in overall charge of guerrilla warfare, as it was not constrained by military rules, command structures and centralised barracks.

Gubbins and Jefferis (an engineer), both of whom had won Military Crosses in World War 1, started the organisation by producing the first ever instructional manuals in the history of the British Army to teach men how to wreak havoc on civilian targets with a small bag of explosives. *The art of guerrilla warfare*, *The partisan leaders handbook* and *How to use high explosives* were all about killing, incapacitating or maiming the maximum number of people. Their first task was to build a 3000-person home guerrilla army in the UK. They selected people who were polar explorers, mountaineers and oil prospectors: men who knew how to survive in a tough environment. In this way, the fabled Fairbairn and Sykes duo, who were experts in 'gutter killing', set up a killing school in Scotland. The fundamental principle was that irregular soldiers armed with nothing but homespun weaponry could wreak havoc.

Women were also employed early on in SOE. Independent companies were formed to wage guerrilla warfare in Norway and the Commandos were later formed from the independent companies as specially trained hunter troops who could develop a reign of terror. Hundreds of saboteurs were trained and sent to multiple countries through use of Halifax and Lysander planes guaranteed by Churchill.

The book has strong focus on technology. The Limpet munition was initially designed in 1937 in a backyard workshop by a mechanic with parts from local shops, using condoms and aniseed balls as a timing device. The magnetic Limpet was a game changer in countering the German's naval expansion, and Hedgehog mortars were also later successful in destroying submarines. Churchill directly supported the development of the W-bomb (the Limpet was known as water bomb) and 1700 bombs were dropped to the Poles but it was all too late.

Limpet mines were subsequently used to destroy a power station in France supplying a submarine base. Another sticky bomb was developed to attack German tanks including by castrating the occupants. The attack on the Tirpitz dry dock was enabled by an L-delay fuse based on lead from Broken Hill. There were also exploding rats and self-detonating camel dung. The development of the hollow charge was another game changer leading to the PIAT and

beehive munition. The assassination of Heydrich in Czechoslovakia was enabled with a special grenade with biological agents.

Security and cover enabled SOE's country sections to dispatch agents and assassins into multiple countries. There were always months of intense training followed by radio silence when they were inserted. The issuing of death (cyanide) pills was a consistent theme. Not every operation was sophisticated, as 20 agents were actually sent to Poland prior to the invasion with consecutively numbered passports! The operation however did lead to the Enigma typewriter being obtained even before the war began.

Gubbins used pirate tactics with a raiding vessel in Spanish territory in West Africa and propaganda to deny British involvement. Blind parachuting was used to insert saboteurs and attack the railway line viaduct in Greece that supplied the Germans in North Africa. It was also timed to occur with Operation Torch. The destruction of the hydro plant in Norway was the greatest sabotage mission of World War 2. During the Normandy landings, the French Resistance cut some 1000 railway lines, more than the entire Air Force effort over the previous two months, and their hit-and-run tactics prevented a German tank division from counter attacking until after the beachhead had been established.

The book contains many themes that still resonate for the conduct of successful special operations today, including the need for a very senior person to be a sponsor to counter the antagonism of more conventional commanders, the need for funding channels outside normal appropriations and the leveraging of operatives with leading-edge technology. While SOE was not part of Australia's direct military history, this book is a useful compendium.