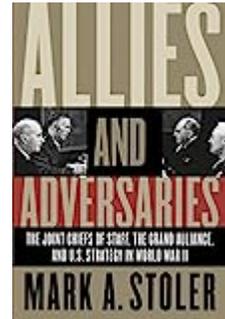




Mark A. Stoler. *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy during World War II.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. 380 pp. \$37.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2557-0.



Reviewed by David Kaiser ()

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Mark Stoler has written a dense, very clear account of the origins of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that lays out the development of American foreign policy and strategy in the most crucial years of the twentieth century, from the mid-1930s to 1945. Many previous books have treated some aspects of this story, but the passage of time, which enables him to shed some wartime myths, and from a great deal of relatively new documentation, has enabled Stoler to give interesting new emphases to some of the most critical events of the Second World War.

Thus, it is rather remarkable to discover how deeply disillusioned the American Army (although not the American Navy) had been by the First World War, and how hostile the Army in the mid-thirties had become to any major war outside of the Western Hemisphere. The Great War, Army leaders believed, had served British rather than American interests, and they were determined not to be hoodwinked again. Even after the fall of France in 1940 the Army hesitated to commit itself in Europe, but plans laid by General Alfred Wedemeyer and many others eventually called for a huge American effort to defeat Germany. After June 1941 American military leaders initially doubted that the Soviet Union would survive Hitler's attack, and Stoler confirms that President Roosevelt was relatively optimistic on this point, and about the prospects of a possible Grand Alliance, and

that his military leaders followed in his wake. They were less happy with his confrontational posture in the Pacific, however, and senior officers in the War and Navy Departments actually called the war with Japan "Hornbeck's War"—after Stanley Hornbeck of the Far Eastern desk—well into 1942. In sum, Stoler's account of the origins of American involvement in the war shows above all what an extraordinary change in both thought and action took place in Washington in just a few critical years, leaving us to wonder whether our much larger military establishment would be capable of a similar shift.

Stoler's account of the Anglo-American alliance in 1942-43 sometimes leaves the reader wondering how the allies managed to agree on anything at all. He shows that General Marshall, as well as Admiral King, became so frustrated with the British emphasis on the Mediterranean—a strategy they regarded as entirely selfish—that they thought seriously about making the major American effort in the Pacific. Confronted with the argument that the Soviet Union needed a second front in Europe to keep it in the war, some Americans argued in parallel fashion during 1942 that only a major Pacific effort would prevent Japan from attacking the Soviet Far East! Feeling outmaneuvered by the British at successive inter-allied conferences in 1942-3, the American Joint Chiefs tried to copy some of their procedures. President

Roosevelt sometimes refused to cooperate—most notably by refusing to have minutes taken when he met with the Chiefs—but this concerted effort helped the Americans prevail, with Soviet support, at the Cairo, Moscow and Teheran conferences that committed Churchill to a Second Front in 1944. In the Far East, the Soviet Union supplanted China as the United States' major postwar partner in the last year or so of the war, as Chiang Kai-Shek's failings became more and more apparent and

Some of Stoler's most interesting findings relate to planning for the postwar period. In July 1944, in an extraordinarily acute paper (which has actually been published in *Foreign Relations of the United States* for some time, but of which I was unaware), the Joint Strategic Studies Committee argued frankly that the war would leave the United States and the Soviet Union as "the only military powers of the first magnitude," and that their strength and geographic positions would "preclude the military defeat of one of these powers by the other, even if that power were allied with the British Empire." Older officers, like their civilian counterpart Secretary of War Stimson, continued to believe during the next year that the United States and the Soviets had to adjust their differences, but a slightly younger contingent—joined by the new President, Harry Truman, and Secretary of the Navy

James Forrestal—took a much more alarmist view towards the Soviets in 1945. Within another year, the American military was planning for total victory over the Soviet Union through a strategic atomic offensive of which the United States was not yet remotely capable. Some will doubtless believe that American military planning might have been more realistic all through the Cold War had the 1944 view remained policy.

With its useful balance between high-level policy makers and senior military bureaucrats, this book may become the standard work on wartime American planning. It is perhaps somewhat more detailed than many undergraduates will appreciate—and, with its rather small typeface, somewhat longer than its 270 pages of text would suggest—but it is one of the more informative works on American policy and strategy to appear in recent years.

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