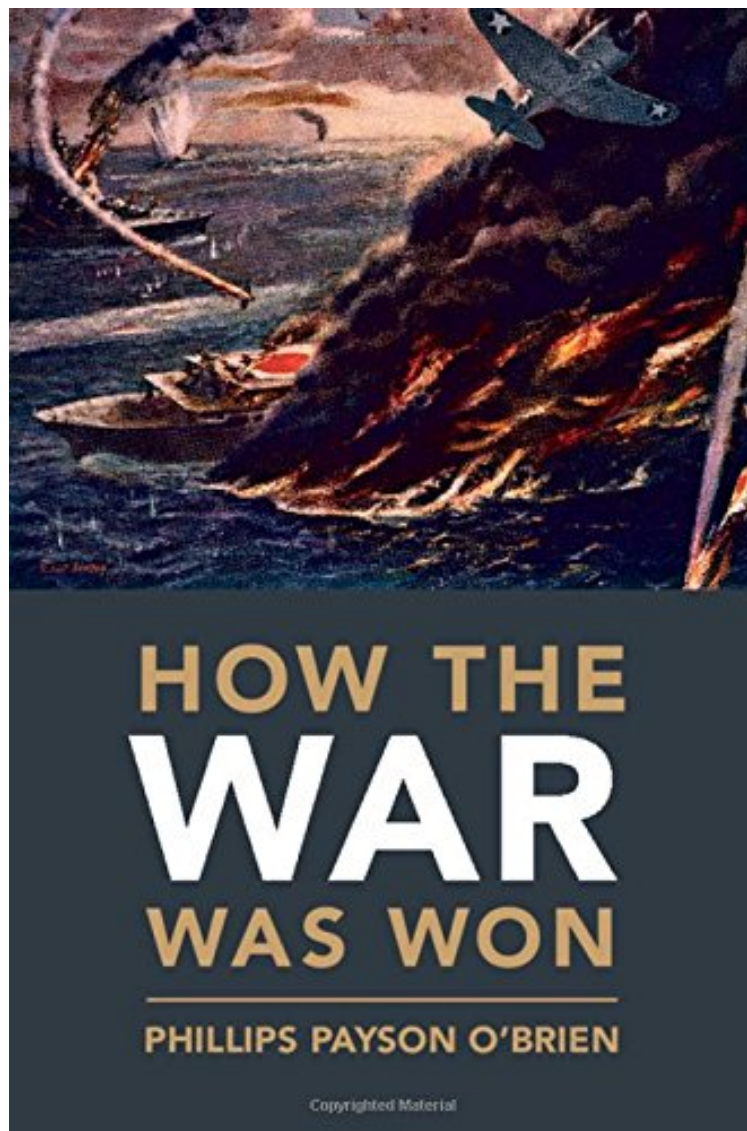


(Download) How the War Was Won: Air-Sea Power and Allied Victory in World War II (Cambridge Military Histories)

How the War Was Won: Air-Sea Power and Allied Victory in World War II (Cambridge Military Histories)

Dr Phillips Payson O'Brien
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Dr Phillips Payson O'Brien : How the War Was Won: Air-Sea Power and Allied Victory in World War II (Cambridge Military Histories) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised How the War Was Won: Air-Sea Power and Allied Victory in World War II (Cambridge Military Histories):

25 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Should be read by every student of World War II By M TuckerWell researched, meticulously analyzed and entertainingly written, Dr O'Brien has produced a very valuable and much needed evaluation of the importance of air and sea power to the outcome of the Second World War, how victory was actually achieved, and that it was not all on the battlefield. He produces the numbers and examines the implications in a very detailed manner that clearly demonstrates the overwhelming influence air and sea power had on the war effort. Covering the strategic bombing campaign in Europe, the battle against the U-boats in the Atlantic and the air and sea campaign against Japan, Dr O'Brien establishes that the vast majority of the war effort went into the production of the most technologically advanced and expensive weapons systems and the "best-trained warriors" who destroyed the vast majority of the war making ability of the Axis powers. The most important overall contribution this book makes is to clearly demonstrate that the air and sea effort, of the US and Great Britain, dwarfed the effort of the land battles of all combatants and led directly to the defeat of the Axis powers. Dr O'Brien does not say the land battles were unnecessary but shows how the success of the air and sea war contributed to the success of the Allies on land. He shows how the inability of Germany and Japan to compete in the air and sea war left them vulnerable to the systematic destruction of their ability to wage war. What was new for me was learning that half as many Luftwaffe planes were available for Barbarossa as were available for the invasion of France. A clear indication of how difficult it was for Germany to replace losses sustained prior to June 1941 and how the added need to defend the conquered territories in the west was already overtaxing Germany's ability to achieve its goals. Dr O'Brien also demonstrates the importance of taking the Marianas abundantly clear, and not just for the strategic bombing of Japan. With the Marianas in hand the fast carrier task force could attack merchant shipping and add to the pressure put on the Japanese war economy by the US submarine offensive. Another surprise is that the aerial mining of Japanese harbors late in the war sank as many or perhaps more merchant shipping than submarines. For me the most enjoyable parts of the book were the discussions of Allied Grand Strategy; the relationship between Roosevelt, Churchill and the members of their military staffs; Admiral Leahy's importance to Roosevelt, the operation of the JCS and grand strategy. The author analyzes the Lend Lease commitments to the Soviets, Great Britain and China and how they were vitally necessary for victory. I also enjoyed his examination of several controversial issues that persist to this day, especially the massive effort to establish and maintain B-29s in China, whether it was really necessary to invade the Philippines prior to Iwo Jima and the targeting of cities in the strategic bombing campaign of both Germany and Japan. I am very enthusiastic about Dr O'Brien's book and that is why I gave it 5 stars. I think it should be read by every student of World War II. Just an outstanding piece of work. I do have a quibble, a troubling disagreement with a very small part of the story Dr O'Brien is telling. Dr O'Brien writes, "When Roosevelt began pushing for money for the USN to construct new vessels, the navy continued to opt for a battleship-centric fleet until Pearl Harbor... Once the war in Europe started and before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the USN was given authorization to build a further eleven battleships, six of the Iowa Class and five of the mammoth Montana Class [the note he lists here does not give a source for this and only describes the Montana class] As it was, only four of the Iowa Class were ever completed and the rest cancelled when it became clear during the war that the aircraft carrier was now the decisive weapon. If only the USN had known this before it would have started more than the two aircraft carriers it laid down between 1937 and November 1941, the Hornet in 1939 and the Essex in April 1941. It was still thinking in terms of a capital ship duel in the Pacific." (p 111) In the summer of 1940 the chairman of the House Naval Affairs Committee, Carl Vinson, gave a press conference. The House had just passed a massive spending bill to expand the Navy and he had been asked why so much of the bill was devoted to carriers and naval aircraft. Carl Vinson said, "The modern development of aircraft has demonstrated conclusively that the backbone of the Navy today is the aircraft carrier. The carrier, with destroyers, cruisers and submarines grouped around it[,] is the spearhead of all modern naval task forces." Carl Vinson was the force behind the construction of the North Carolina class and the South Dakota class battleships that Dr O'Brien mentions just prior to the above quote, as Vinson tried to modernize the navy, but in 1940 he got a bill through Congress that called for 18 Essex class aircraft carriers along with the 6 or 7 Iowa and Montana class battleships. This happened in 1940. It was not something that happened after Pearl Harbor. It happened a year earlier and Congress called for not just one carrier but 18. Actually 5 Essex class hulls were laid down in 1941, all before Pearl Harbor. I don't think that House Representative Carl Vinson, Democrat from Georgia, came up with the notion that the fast carrier task force would be the "backbone of the Navy" all by himself. The bill came about from a request from Admiral Stark, CNO, and his staff. It would have been nice if Dr O'Brien could have researched that development. I am a little disappointed that he took the standard line of many historians that it was after Pearl Harbor that the navy came to the conclusion that carriers would be the primary combat ship in a modern navy. Seven of those carriers would be commissioned by the end of 1943 with the commissioning of USS Essex on 31 December 1942. Only 4 Iowa class battleships would be completed and none of the massive Montana class ships ordered in the bill, passed by the House on 18 June 1940 and signed into law in July 1940, would be built. Those developments and the eventual construction of 14 Essex class aircraft carriers, that would see action in the war, I do think are the result of the navy's experience in the first year of the war but the notion that the aircraft carrier would "spearhead" modern naval warfare had to have been envisioned by top navy brass sometime earlier than the summer of 1940, way before the dynamic operations of the Kido Butai. Stark asked for 4 billion dollars to increase

the existing fleet by 70%. The House Naval Affairs Committee increased it to more than 8 billion dollars emphasizing aircraft and called for 15,000 aircraft for the navy. The bill also called for 27 cruisers and an additional 6 Alaska class cruisers that mounted 12" guns. The Alaska class was the US Navy's answer to the battlecruiser. The Navy did still want big guns. Only 2 Alaska class cruisers would see service in WW II. It seems clear that the navy wanted a powerful surface force that included battleships, battlecruisers and cruisers as well as a very powerful fleet of carriers. It is clear that Dr O'Brien's statement of the preference for battleships and the laying down of a single Essex class carrier prior to November 1941 is not accurate. Actually three Essex class carriers were laid down before November 1941 and two more before 7 December 1941. I'm not sure if Admiral Stark would have agreed exactly with Vinson's statement but Vinson and Stark made it possible for 4 fleet carriers to join operations by the end of 1943. It is clear that the US Navy did not have a detailed doctrine of carrier operations developed before the US entered the war and they surely did still envision battleship duels but the 1940 bill shows they wanted a preponderance of carriers. Is this misrepresentation a fatal flaw in Dr O'Brien's narrative? No, I don't think so. It is a wide miss of the actual history of the US Navy, the development of the US war effort and how it was possible for 7 new Essex class carriers to be commissioned by the end of 1943. It makes me wonder what happened in his research to make such an error and why November 1941 is his cut off for carrier construction and not 7 December, but it is not a fatal flaw and does not influence the rest of his narrative. Actually 1940 was the important year for the Essex class. Only 2 that were ordered after 1940 saw action in the war. Vinson's bill made it possible for 4 replacement carriers to be ready for operations by the end of 1943 and another 3 before the middle of 1944. What did happen after Pearl Harbor was the acceleration of the construction of the Essex class ships and the conversion of 9 Cleveland class cruisers to Independence class light carriers. I just think that overlooking the importance of the Vinson-Walsh Act is a very curious mistake but does not take away from what is obviously Dr O'Brien's main line of research and the narrative he wanted to present. In most histories Carl Vinson is never mentioned, unless they are examining why Admiral Spruance did not get promoted to Fleet Admiral. I think it is a great shame to ignore Vinson's important work to modernize the US Navy prior to Pearl Harbor and how it was possible for the Navy to lead the way to victory in the Pacific. Vinson served in Congress from 1914 until 1965 and is known as the Father of the Two Ocean Navy. The Nimitz class carrier Carl Vinson, CVN-70, was named in his honor while he was still alive. 12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Its the production, Stupid! By Duckie Doc This is actually a significant work and a new look at World War 2 through a wide lens and a lens with a different filter. O'Brien emphasizes the primacy of material or production over manpower losses in contributing to the Allied victory. He de-emphasizes the importance or contribution of the large land battles like those occurring on the Eastern Front but also the famous battles in the campaigns the Allies waged and won on the ground in the Mediterranean and in Northwest Europe after the invasion of France. O'Brien contends that air and naval power (to paraphrase Napoleon) is to land (army) power as 3 is to 1. For example, he shows that the German AFV losses during the Kursk battle (or campaign really) were miniscule when compared to monthly production and could be easily made up. Ditto for their cumulative AFV losses through out the war. Oil and gas to run the things is another and more interesting story. Another example: he identifies one key factor in Germany's and Japan's defeat was the death spiral of losses of inadequately trained aviators in the late phase of the war due to the Allied transport/ oil bombing campaign over German occupied territory and the Fatherland and the US Navy's crippling submarine campaign against Japan's oil shipping coming to the home islands. Both Germany and Japan were left defenseless to the massive air campaigns waged against them. He uses a number of graphs and tables to illustrate his argument and although there are a lot of these they do not slow the reader in a muddy slog through a raputitsa of statistics. There are myriad books describing land and air and naval battles and many books telling the story of WW2 as a whole but few take O'Brien's approach in understanding the primacy of sea and air power in achieving victory in modern total war between industrialized powers with draft-fed military services. He makes a good argument. Although the prose is pedantic and mildly dry and the pace lags some as a result (think of this more as a reference work) reading to the end is well worth the effort. Highly recommended for serious WW2 students; a must-have for sure. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An amazing work, will force you to rethink warfare By Newt Gingrich This is a remarkable analysis of warfare at its most strategic levels. Every officer working on strategy should be required to study this and ask what the parallels are today. It is forcing me to rethink our strategic planning for the next generation.

World War II is usually seen as a titanic land battle, decided by mass armies, most importantly those on the Eastern Front. Phillips Payson O'Brien shows us the war in a completely different light. In this compelling new history of the Allied path to victory, he argues that in terms of production, technology and economic power, the war was far more a contest of air and sea than land supremacy. He shows how the Allies developed a predominance of air and sea power which put unbearable pressure on Germany and Japan's entire war-fighting machine from Europe and the Mediterranean to the Pacific. Air and sea power dramatically expanded the area of battle and allowed the Allies to destroy over half the Axis' equipment before it had even reached the traditional 'battlefield'. Battles such as El Alamein, Stalingrad and Kursk did not win World War II; air and sea power did.

"It has become the conventional wisdom that the Soviet Union won the Second World War with only minor contributions from the United States and Great Britain. Phillips Payson O'Brien has written a superb rejoinder to such nonsense in a work that represents a major contribution to our understanding of that terrible conflict. It needs to be read by anyone interested in World War II." Williamson Murray, author of *A War To Be Won: Fighting the Second World War*"This is a book anyone interested in the Second World War will want to read. It refocuses the story of the war away from the battlefield, to the air and the sea, and also to the transit depot, the maintenance facility, the training base. This is an imaginative, cliché-busting work which lays bare exactly when, how and where the Axis lost the war." David Edgerton, author of *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* and *Warfare State: Britain, 1920-1970*"This extremely serious book attempts to re-evaluate World War II not in terms of great battles ... but in terms of production, mobility, and economics. O'Brien argues that victory or defeat in World War II must be seen during preproduction, production, and deployment ... The work focuses on equipment, mobility, and détente ... Especially for graduate students, professors of military history, and those generally interested in the history of Europe or the Far East. Summing up: essential." R. Higham, *Choice*"A novel, provocative, and well-written study based on extensive documentary sources on both sides of the Atlantic. Its author's conviction that 'the effectiveness of tactical air power over strategic ... was the most important lesson of the war, one that remains true to this day' makes the book worth careful reading. With his emphasis on degrading an enemy's 'mobility' (perhaps a nod to Basil H. Liddell Hart's 'indirect approach'?) Phillips Payson O'Brien offers a way forward for those working on 'AirSea Battle', area access, and area denial problems in modern warfare. His work will engage and instruct historians of World War II as well as current military officers, strategists, and decision-makers." Christopher Rein, *Michigan War Studies* About the AuthorPhillips Payson O'Brien gained a PhD in History after two years working on Wall Street. Since then, he has published a range of works on British and American strategic and political history during the first half of the twentieth century. More recently, he has taken a leading role as a commentator on defence issues and the debate over Scottish Independence. He has testified in front of UK parliamentary committees, and advised major European governments on the course of the campaign. Through this work he has gained media experience, appearing as a regular commentator for the BBC and STV, and publishing opinion pieces in the *Scotsman* and the *Scottish Herald*. He has received awards or research fellowships from the Carnegie Foundation, the US Naval History and Heritage Command, and the Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt Presidential libraries. He has also been invited to Japan twice to speak on World War II at the National Institute of Defence Studies (Tokyo).