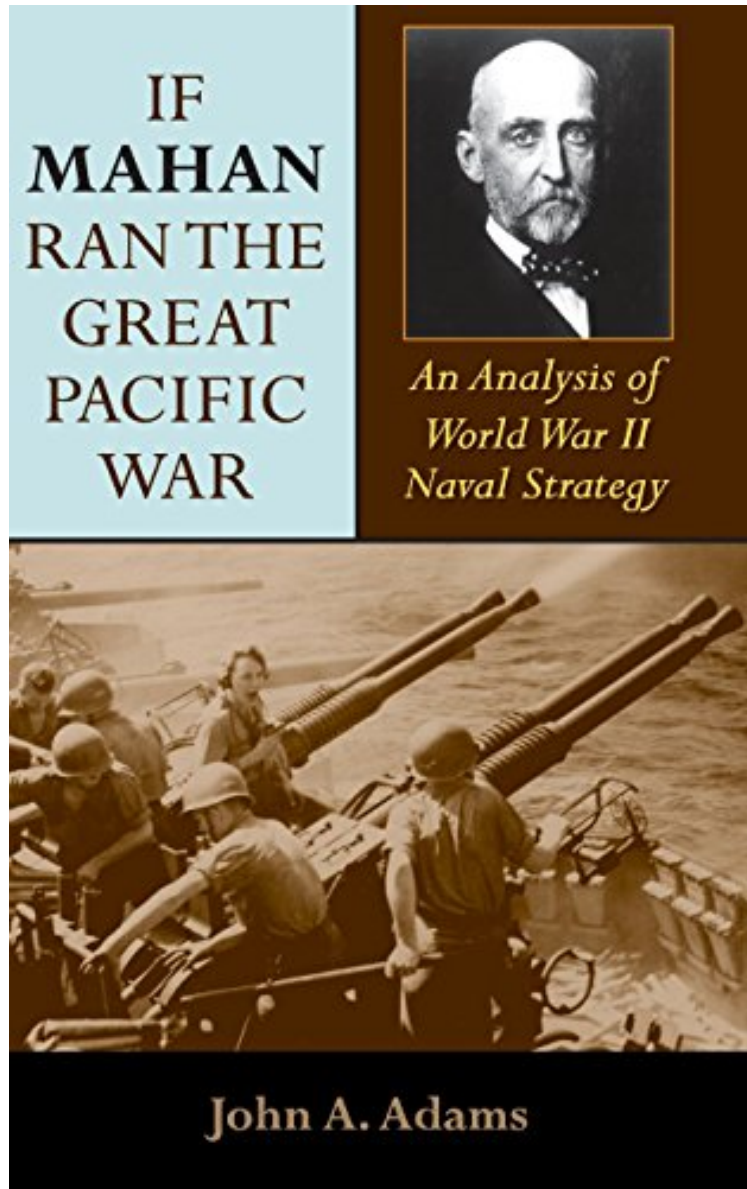


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If Mahan Ran the Great Pacific War: An Analysis of World War II Naval Strategy

John A. Adams

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John A. Adams : If Mahan Ran the Great Pacific War: An Analysis of World War II Naval Strategy before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised If Mahan Ran the Great Pacific War: An Analysis of World War II Naval Strategy:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Thought provoking and worth reading, but needs some work
By ErinOverall I enjoyed reading this book and it's focus on big-picture strategy, and I'd like to give it a good score, however there were several issues that lead me to lowering my rating:1) This book badly needs an editor. There were numerous small errors that were clearly the result of poor editing; for instance west vs. east got mixed up once and in another place the author mentions how the "Japanese airforce liked the Marianas as a location to launch B-29 attacks against Tokyo from" (think he meant US Army Airforce based on context).2) Adams needs to update the book in light of recent research. In particular the work of Parshall and Tully in "Shattered Sword" would benefit the Midway chapter. Also Adams' excessive criticism of Vice Admiral Fletcher at Guadalcanal is badly out of date after Lundstrom's "Black Shoe Carrier Admiral" unearthed new information about the situation that goes a long way to justify Fletcher's actions. I think Adams was unduly influenced against Fletcher by his (out-of-date) sources and it seemed to me that the chapter was much more focused on attacking Fletcher than providing unbiased judgement on his actions. Hindsight also comes into play here, as the author trusts completely the radio intelligence regarding locations of Japanese carriers - something Fletcher couldn't afford to do.3) This book is too long. Mainly because the author repeats himself and his arguments multiple times. Several times I caught myself feeling *deja vu* and wondering if I'd flipped the pages backwards somehow.Ok, that's most of the negative. As for the positive, this book has a great premise: analyze naval strategy by the USN and IJN since both looked to the same man's ideas (Mahan) as part of their doctrine. Adams goes on to highlight certain admirals as being great strategists while others are found lacking, and he shows that several of the Pacific invasions of WWII were completely unnecessary. I also enjoyed the chapters on submarines and strategic bombing at the end, they were good additions to fully flesh out the concepts of Mahan in a new technological era. Furthermore the comments on Japanese strategy in the early chapters were fantastic; the recommendation to invade part of Hawaii, interdict the Guadalcanal - Espiritu Santo shipping lanes, etc. were all enlightening and make for a fascinating "what-if" scenario: if the Japanese had better strategic leadership in 1941-1942 that was willing to take more risks to hit the US Navy harder, what might the war have looked like?To conclude: this is a good book that I am glad I got, but it needs more work to be a great book.40 of 40 people found the following review helpful. Good analysis, slightly flawed by overuse of hindsight
By Tony ZbaraschukThere are many books telling what happened in individual battles or to particular ships. This book tries to grade the thinking of those who determined where forces went into battle and why.Mostly it succeeds at describing the strategic goals and thinking (or lack thereof!) of the admirals in charge of the Pacific War on both sides. Yamamoto gets failing grades for not ensuring that his brilliant and risky gambles were sufficiently followed through; King gets consistently fairly high grades; a number of characters on both sides are criticized for various flaws.One flaw in this book is the over-use of hindsight; the author judges various strategic ideas as if everyone should have understood at the time things that did not become clear until much later; for instance, the total dominance of the aircraft carrier over the battleship, or the inability of high-altitude bombers to hit anything in motion. He several times criticizes admirals for not understanding that their cherished goal should only have been the means to an end (e.g., Ugaki's desire to take Guadalcanal) but does not realize that his somewhat repetitive chanting of "Never divide the fleet" or "Sink the carriers" are both ends toward maintaining control of the sea. (He probably should at least have looked at some of Sir Julian Corbett's criticisms of Mahan's work.)That said, there are many excellent gems of observation, and quite a lot of good analysis, in the book. To experienced naval strategists, they will come as no surprise; to the vast majority of the human race and Pacific War buffs who are not, this will be a very useful learning course. Readers will probably want some previous acquaintance with the history of World War II in the Pacific, but given such acquaintance this is a challenging and rewarding analysis.Highly recommended.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. interesting read
By historyreaderThere are several detailed reviews already, so I'll get to my main points:1. I think it could have used better editing: it's a bit slow getting started, there is some repetition, and his "Mahan would have approved" (and variations thereof) gets irritating. 2. While the author does slip a bit into hindsight, most of his analysis is based on strategy. For example Adams disapproves of the invasions of Tarawa and Iwo Jima not because they were not worth the cost (hindsight) but because they were not necessary: The mobility of the US fleet made invading Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands needless (go straight to the Marianas). Okinawa would have been just as good a B-29 emergency field and was strategically important for other reasons, too; go to Okinawa, skip Iwo Jima. Agree with him or not, he made me think.

Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power upon History (1660–1783)* was one of the most influential books on military strategy in the first half of the 20th century. A core text in the naval war colleges of the United States, Britain, and Japan, Mahan's book shaped doctrine for the conduct of war at sea. Adams uses Mahan's ideas to discuss the great Pacific sea battles of World War II and to consider how well they withstood the test of actual combat. Reexamining the conduct of war in the Pacific from a single analytic viewpoint leads to some surprising conclusions about the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the Doolittle Raid, the Battle of the Coral Sea, the recapture of the Philippines, and the submarine war. Naval historians and armchair strategists alike will find much food for thought in these engrossing pages.

Students of naval history will find much to agree with in this volume, and a good deal about which to disagree, but either way they will find it worth reading. Fall 2011 (NYMAS)There is no doubt that Mahan and his writings had an enormous effect on the US Navy's admirals during the Pacific War. This fine book shows very clearly how. December 2010 (Work Boat World)[A] must read for students of World War II in the Pacific and all those interested in naval and military strategy. March-April 2010 (Military)This book will be enjoyed by anyone who is interested in World War II history. Vol. 55, No. 2, Summer 2010 (Nautical Research Journal)This is truly an outstanding book. Although Adams indicates it is an analysis of naval strategy of World War II in the Pacific, the lessons he presents apply to more than purely naval warfare.Spring 2010 (Air Power History)If Mahan Ran the Great Pacific War provides one of the best analyses of World War II I have read. Clear and incisive, it presents the reader with both the factual material and a solid discussion of how and why the decisions of the commanders resulted in a strategic or just a tactical success or failure. March 29, 2009 (Daily News, Bowling Green, KY) John Adams is one of the most remarkable individuals I have met in the course of my long academic career. His knowledge of recent military doctrine, strategy, and operations, logistics, and tactics is as deep as any of my academic colleagues. (Malcolm Muir author of Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945–1975)A very interesting, well-researched, well-written work with fine and fresh analysis of the Pacific War. (Eric Osborne author of The Battle of Heligoland Bight)From the Publisher"John Adams is one of the most remarkable individuals I have met in the course of my long academic career. His knowledge of recent military doctrine, strategy, and operations, logistics, and tactics is as deep as any of my academic colleagues." --Malcolm Muir, author of Black Shoes and Blue Water: Surface Warfare in the United States Navy, 1945-1975 "A very interesting, well-researched, well-written work with fine and fresh analysis of the Pacific War." --Eric Osborne, author of The Battle of Heligoland Bight