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The Official History of the UK Strategic Nuclear Deterrent, vol. 1, From the V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris, 1945–1964, and vol. 2, The Labour Government and the Polaris Programme, 1964–1970

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In telling the fascinating story of DesRon 21 and its crew, Wukovits demonstrates without a doubt that, as a scholar and historian, he rivals such naval historians of the Pacific theater as James Hornfischer and Samuel Eliot Morison. The book might have included more maps to ensure correct and continued orientation to the events, places, movements, and battles it describes. Nonetheless, Wukovits has compiled an excellent study of DesRon 21, one that is demonstrably the product of lengthy research into wartime naval records; academic research; and personal oral interviews with those DesRon 21 crewmembers still living, which bring an intimate and personal quality to this historical study. In sum, *Tin Can Titans* unquestionably is a must-have addition for any armchair World War II history buff or student of naval history.

BLAKE I. CAMPBELL



The Official History of the UK Strategic Nuclear Deterrent, by Matthew Jones. Vol. 1, *From the V-Bomber Era to the Arrival of Polaris, 1945–1964*. London: Routledge, 2017. 547 pages. \$155.

The Official History of the UK Strategic Nuclear Deterrent, by Matthew Jones. Vol. 2, *The Labour Government and the Polaris Programme, 1964–1970*. London: Routledge, 2017. 559 pages. \$155.

No inquiry into British nuclear history can be undertaken in isolation from the presence of an intimate U.S. involvement. It therefore is worth taking notice of the publication of the two-volume *Official History of the UK Strategic Nuclear Deterrent*. Matthew Jones, professor of international history at the London School of Economics, was granted unprecedented access

to hitherto unavailable materials to produce this official history.

At the beginning of both volumes, Professor Jones graciously pays tribute to the pioneers of British nuclear historiography, Professor Margaret Gowing and her associate Lorna Arnold. Gowing, official historian of the United Kingdom (U.K.) Atomic Energy Authority and professor of the history of science at Oxford, authored the studies that set the scholarly standard: *Britain and Atomic Energy, 1939–1945* and, a decade later, her two-volume *Independence and Deterrence: Britain and Atomic Energy, 1945–1952*. Arnold assisted Gowing, then in 2001 published her own book, *Britain and the H-bomb*. Jones's two new volumes are worthy sequels.

America's initial monopoly over the atomic bomb fed the British sense of technological exclusion. Determined then to "go it alone," Britain asserted an initial nuclear doctrine of sovereign and independent control over its nuclear weapons. It was only *after* Britain had demonstrated a unilateral mastery of thermonuclear weapons development in May 1957 that the United Kingdom was granted access to specific U.S. nuclear weapons technologies. For Jones, the ensuing 1958 U.S.-U.K. mutual-defense agreement remains "one of the most remarkable examples of pooling of sensitive national security information by two sovereign states, and has rightly been seen as one of the fundamental pillars of the post-war Anglo-American relationship."

The United Kingdom's capacity to inflict assured nuclear destruction, independent of the United States, allowed it to behave as a "second centre of decision." In this position, Britain

secured the ability not only to “leverage” the United States politically but also to command a seat at the geostrategic “top table.” Jones presents the Skybolt missile crisis of 1962 as an example of this nuclear-based political leverage over the United States. Aiming at updating Britain’s nuclear deterrent, the United States promised delivery of the Skybolt system. A nuclear, standoff, air-to-ground missile, Skybolt was designed to penetrate Soviet airspace in the face of an increasing Soviet antiballistic-missile (ABM) capability. When President Kennedy abruptly canceled the agreement in November 1962, he did so ostensibly on *technical* grounds. In truth, the United States opposed, on *political* grounds, *any* extension to the life of the U.K. nuclear deterrent. Seeing through this ruse, Prime Minister Macmillan was instrumental in resolving the crisis at the Nassau conference in December 1962—by hoisting Kennedy’s policy on its own petard. The United States was forced to concede the nature of its opposition to sharing Skybolt, and instead to offer a replacement—which paradoxically became Britain’s second-generation nuclear deterrent: the Polaris missile system. Not only had Britain’s first-generation deterrent *not* been curbed, but the United States in fact had become father to a second generation.

Volume 2 brings with it the advent of a new ministry in 1964, led by Harold Wilson and the Labour Party. The necessity for a Polaris Improvement Program takes center stage in this volume, since the Polaris A-3 missile was becoming obsolescent, just as the second-generation Polaris system was coming on line. There is a fascinating portrayal of the Whitehall bureaucracy at work in the constant race to maintain

a semblance of *qualitative* nuclear parity with the United States.

In the wake of the U.S. shift to the Poseidon’s advanced technology of the multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle (MIRV), Britain under Wilson’s aegis set off alone to begin exploitation of an intermediate technology, Antelope, that the United States had developed but later abandoned in favor of MIRVs. The climax of the U.K. Polaris Improvement Program was reached with Chevaline, a unique configurational change to alter the front end of the Polaris missile, thereby rendering it all but invulnerable to interception by deployed Soviet ABMs. But the history of that program will have to await the projected third volume in this series.

Meantime, Professor Jones has written an excellent description of Britain’s quest for a sovereign and independent strategic nuclear deterrent. Completely mastering his sources, Jones has produced a compelling work of lasting significance. He has come full circle, following in the footsteps of his larger-than-life role models, Margaret Gowing and Lorna Arnold.

MYRON A. GREENBERG



Team of Teams: New Rules of Engagement for a Complex World, by Stanley McChrystal, with Tantum Collins, David Silverman, and Chris Fussell. New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2015. 290 pages. \$29.95.

During the years he spent hunting Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and battling the forces of Al Qaeda in the streets and deserts of Iraq, General Stanley McChrystal turned the Joint Special