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## A Military History of Japan: From the Age of the Samurai to the 21st Century, by John T. Kuehn

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War by revisionist historians who placed an increased emphasis on the role of Soviet ground and air forces in the defeat of Germany. The Russian front, it was argued, was where the bulk of Germany's forces was engaged and, as far as the revisionist narrative went, defeated by the Soviet Union. Dr. O'Brien, a reader at the University of Glasgow, challenges that argument with a wealth of data and looks at the war in more global terms. He argues that the air and sea forces of the United States and the British Empire played the decisive role by preventing "the Germans and Japanese from moving" (p. 16).

*How the War Was Won* provides a broad array of detailed information discussing the enormous industrial contribution of all sides. Indeed, the author's analysis of all this information makes a compelling case for his argument. Yet there is something missing: it is difficult to see the link between cause and effect. One can see such a link better regarding the war against Japan, but in the case of the war in Europe the author does not show clearly the link he claims between air and sea power causing immense damage to Germany's war economy and Soviet troops wandering around Berlin in 1945. I suspect that the Soviet forces' killing and wounding of millions of German combat troops might have something to do with this, for without the physical removal of German soldiers from the Soviet Union's route to Berlin Hitler might not have felt the need to commit suicide.

Now, there is no denying that Allied air and sea power contributed to Allied victory in Europe; the argument seems to be to what extent they did so. Thus, this book is welcome for the depth of detail it provides as fodder for such a

debate. That this reviewer is not entirely convinced of the author's arguments does not make this a bad book; it is in fact a very good book, and an extremely welcome addition to the literature on World War II. It provides an enormous amount of information and analysis about the role of air and sea power, which furthers our understanding of the reasons for Allied success. That it causes the questioning of the current orthodoxy is to be applauded, as greater understanding often results from challenges to the status quo.

This book should prove of great benefit to advanced students of World War II, and it is particularly pertinent for specialists interested in current U.S. national security needs. Given the friction that exists among the United States, China, and Russia, the book provides an opportunity to think about how the U.S. armed services should structure their forces for any future conflict with these potential adversaries. Dr. O'Brien's book should be read by any sailor, marine, or airman invested in a budget fight, because "the only way to 'win' a war is to stop your enemy from moving" (p. 488). That argument seems a particularly pertinent one when looking at the problems of Southeast Asia or the Baltic or Black Sea regions.

NICHOLAS MURRAY



*A Military History of Japan: From the Age of the Samurai to the 21st Century*, by John T. Kuehn. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2014. 299 pages. \$75.

Japan is at an inflection point. Depending on how particular peoples and nations view this enigmatic country, it

now either is turning away from rightly enforced demilitarization and back toward the more martial and expansionist policies of its past, or is working to become a security provider concomitant with its economic power. *A Military History of Japan* is therefore a timely work that will add studied moderation and critical analysis to the argument regarding the path on which the country is located now and down which it is likely to progress in the future.

This book goes well beyond a traditional historical narrative. The author follows Japan from its origin myths up to the present time, adding elements of geographic determinism and cultural anthropology as well as his own experiences. The military and warfare aspects obviously receive the most focus, but they are not, and perhaps cannot be, separated from the overall history of the country and culture.

In the first chapter, "From Sun Goddess to Samurai," the author helps explain Japan's nature by telling its creation story and examining how landscape, climate, outside influences, and internal competition shaped Japanese development and societal worldview. Around the eighth century CE, when that first chapter concludes, the seminal samurai culture, and an overall Japanese culture distinct from those of neighboring Korea and China, is in place, one the author argues still manifests itself in Japanese society. The following chapters chronicle the subsequent maturation of Japan's political and military power structure. The many accounts of royal machinations and specific battles may confuse or lose those not well versed in Japanese geography or language, but those the author includes do add to the story of

how and why Japan's military evolved as it did. These middle chapters also shed light on the Japanese military's actions during the first half of the twentieth century, and on the still-tense relationship between Japan and its neighbors, much of that distrust predating World War II. The Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars get ample attention and analysis, as does the very calculated, top-down manner in which Japan's post-samurai military attempted to imitate the best militaries of contemporary Europe.

The "Great East Asian War" chapter may not cover much new ground for those readers with more-than-standard knowledge of World War II. But in "After the Samurai," the book's final pages tie in themes present in Japan for at least 1,200 years. They provide an excellent argument that Japan's future will be determined by the same geographic, cultural, and geostrategic influences that have shaped its past.

The author is a retired naval aviator and a professor at the Army Command and General Staff College. He spent time living in Japan both as a dependent child in the mid-twentieth century and later as a Navy officer. These experiences give him insights different from those expected from either a pure academic analyst or a strategist viewing the country simply as an unsinkable aircraft carrier. He effectively intersperses personal and family recollections with more-standard history to give better descriptions of cultural norms and practices, as when he writes about Japanese rioters sending teams ahead to warn citizens, including his parents, to stay indoors for their own safety.

For the casual reader, *A Military History of Japan* functions as a needed update

to Ruth Benedict's much-maligned yet still-influential 1946 work *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, a general primer on the seemingly contradictory forces driving this global power. For those with a professional interest in the country and its region, this book is a must-read, an enlightening facilitator in the current debate over Japan's place in Asia and the world.

J. OVERTON



*Flash Points: The Emerging Crisis in Europe*, by George Friedman. New York: Doubleday, 2015. 288 pages. \$28.95.

*Flash Points* is both an elegant and a disturbing book. Not simply elegant in its writing style, which is direct and clear, but also in its initial discussion of the age of discovery and enlightenment that propelled the European nations into becoming world powers—you rarely find a more cogent and concise explanation of the roots of European social, cultural, political, and economic development. Yet the book is also very disturbing because it details how the factors that allowed Europe to transform the world—faith, individualism, scientific inquiry, ideas of self-determination and legal rights, and nationalism—also contributed to the almost unfathomable destruction of the two world wars that tore it apart. George Friedman details the region's history, current events, and potential future in a way that makes an admonishment from his father, a Hungarian Jewish survivor of both the Nazis and the Soviets, seem very true: "Europe will never change. It will just act as if nothing happened" (p. 23).

Friedman, the well-known founder of Stratfor.com, one of the first private intelligence firms to be a major presence on the web, and an author of prescient books on the future security environment, begins with the personal history of how and why his family escaped Hungary in 1949. Having survived the horrors of World War II and the Communist takeover in a weak, dependent, and occupied nation, Friedman's father wanted his family to go to America and "live in a strong country with weak neighbors and, if possible, no Nazis, communists, or anyone else who believed in anything deeply enough to want to kill him and his family over it" (p. 17). His view—that a humane peace in Europe always would be a mere interlude—sets the scenario for the rest of the book.

This fear is, of course, what spurred the creation of the European Union (EU). Friedman analyzes the weaknesses of the EU and the sources of conflict throughout Europe, particularly in a situation in which NATO's perceived importance has diminished, and concludes that the centripetal forces of geopolitics are just too strong. It is not just the potential collapse of the euro; it is the fact that national identities cannot be supplanted by a European identity without destroying a cultural diversity established over millennia. The fact that the EU appeared to achieve some small success in cultivating a cosmopolitan Europeanness is, in Friedman's view, merely a veneer that a U.S. commitment to defending a cold peace under unique historical circumstances made possible.

Those circumstances have devolved. With the controlling pressures removed, Yugoslavia—perhaps the