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Turning the Tide: The Battles of Coral Sea and Midway

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to May 1942. After the war, he was the key figure who established the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, and ran it during its most effective and influential period. On his return to the United States from his periods abroad, he found himself out of sympathy and rather puzzled by American culture and politics. Yet, unlike many who live abroad for long periods, he did not become fully comfortable in another culture, although obviously enthralled by Central and Eastern Europe, particularly the Soviet Union and Russian culture. With his extensive credentials for the job, President Truman appointed him ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1952, yet he was the least successful of all, staying but five months before Stalin declared him *persona non grata*, the only American ambassador in Moscow ever to achieve that distinction. At the end of his Foreign Service career, he went on to become a professor at the National War College, and, from time to time, lectured in Newport at the Naval War College.

On leaving the Foreign Service, Kennan went to the Institute for Advanced Research at Princeton University, where he continued his quixotic career, writing history, but not fully accepted by the historical profession, winning numerous prizes for his writings, but still wondering why his thoughts were not acted on instantly by policy makers. Kennan was twice invited as a visiting professor at Oxford, but typically found the experience trivial, choosing to isolate himself as much as he could.

The extensive contradictions in Kennan's character make for a remarkable study of an individual, but they explain, too, why Kennan never became an effective senior leader in government, although remaining influential as a public intellectual.

John Gaddis's fine book can be read on several levels for several purposes. Readers of this journal may find it a fascinating case study of the successes and frustrations of an intellectual who is trying to educate serving officials as they put a grand strategy in place. At the same time, it is a case study that illustrates the problems and frustrations for a government in trying to employ such talented and sensitive individuals.

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Harrod, J. E., ed. *Turning the Tide: The Battles of Coral Sea and Midway*. Plymouth, Devon, U.K.: Univ. of Plymouth Press, 2013. 232pp. £35

The latest volume of the Britannia Naval Histories of World War II revisits the Royal Navy's official histories of two pivotal naval battles. Taken from the previously classified battle summaries, numbers 45 and 46, this newly printed edition is a valuable aid to the study of two groundbreaking carrier battles in the Pacific War.

Originally drafted and written between 1946 and 1951, these insightful summaries were meant to provide lessons learned for the Royal Navy officer corps studying maritime warfare in the first decade of the postwar era. As noted in Philip Grove's introduction, these official histories "cross-refer and blend the official publications more than published works of the same era." *Turning the Tide* enables twenty-first-century readers to revisit the myths of the battles and reconsider the decisions that the leaders of the U.S. Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy faced during those months of uncertainty in 1942. While we

may not necessarily find new information in these portrayals of the battles, we will find much to ponder in how the postwar generation studied these two pivotal fights in the Pacific theater from these richly constructed summaries.

As befits a British publication, the front-matter data, the Allied orders of battle (the battle summaries specifically), include United Kingdom contributions to the Allies' efforts in the Pacific War. In his foreword, John Rodgaard punctuates the special Anglo-American relationship, writing that these histories are "a testament to the high degree of cooperation and interaction that existed between the Royal and United States Navies" and that "continues to the present." By combining the two summaries, the publishers logically follow the sequence of events that occurred in May and June 1942, as well as highlight the importance of securing the Allied sea lines of communication between the United States and Australia prior to decisive engagement with the Japanese navy. The spirit of Anglo-American relations permeates this British version of American naval history.

Each of the summaries is organized chronologically by major surface movements, Japanese air engagements, and air battles, followed by lessons learned. Included are tables that list Japanese and Allied platforms, operational maps, and hand-drawn diagrams depicting force dispositions. Although the summaries do not contain battle photographs, they do provide diagrams of tactical formations and cloud coverage to assist readers in understanding how weather affected visibility and detection. Another interesting feature is the inclusion of Japanese sources. Discerning readers will find the footnotes

fascinating waypoints as to how the postwar historians generated the official account of these battles. For example, the summaries omit any specific mention of Joe Rochefort's decryption of Japanese messages prior to Midway but comment that "the Americans correctly appreciated that Midway Island and the Aleutians would be the threatened areas." This book is as much a description of history as it is a historical document, and it should be valued as such.

The battles of the Coral Sea and Midway were contests that brought many firsts in naval history. As Rodgaard observes, the Coral Sea was the first naval battle in which belligerent surface forces never saw the other side. At the Coral Sea attacks were exclusively conducted from the air, confirming "the primacy of the aircraft carrier as an offensive weapon" in the maritime domain. This book recognizes Midway as the beginning of the end for imperial Japan and provides detailed listings of Japanese losses. To be sure, Jon Parshall and Anthony Tully's *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway* (2007) remains the definitive account of Midway; however, *Turning the Tide* is a more succinct and, at times, accessible account of the battle.

In publishing these summaries in a single volume, the Britannia Royal Naval College has provided an excellent overview, one that can be useful for novice and seasoned naval historians in understanding two key Pacific battles. Furthermore, this book illuminates the rise of carrier aviation during the Second World War and, perhaps, the perpetuation of carrier aviation by navies thereafter.

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