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21st Century Ellis: Operational Art and Strategic Prophecy for the Modern Era

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an easy read, the arguments it makes are of vital interest to naval strategists, innovators, and those interested in the complex relationships and processes that are now part and parcel of the national defense paradigm.

JOHN T. KUEHN



Friedman, B. A., ed. *21st Century Ellis: Operational Art and Strategic Prophecy for the Modern Era*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 150pp. \$21

21st Century Ellis is a solid contribution to the Naval Institute's 21st Century Foundations series and the scholarship regarding the touted U.S. Marine Corps visionary Lieutenant Colonel Earl "Pete" Ellis. The strength of this volume lies in the compilation of most of Ellis's scholarly works. B. A. Friedman has assembled five articles written by Ellis in the decade between 1911 and 1921 (a total of about 110 pages) into four chapters. Ellis's text is supplemented by Friedman's introduction and additional commentary highlighting the value of Ellis to both his contemporaries and current executors of the operational art.

Friedman arranges the essays by subject rather than chronologically. This allows the reading of the book by section without any loss of flow or context. Chapter 2, the shortest, reviews Ellis's First World War experience in France on the staff of John A. Lejeune. Chapter 3 is substantially longer but unlike the preceding chapter is perhaps of more applicability to modern practitioners. Two lectures prepared by Ellis during his tenure as a faculty member at the U.S. Naval War College examined the challenges of fighting a naval campaign in the western

Pacific. Composed in 1911–12, these proved prescient in their assessment of the tension building between Pacific naval powers and the war they would fight after Ellis's death. There is great legitimacy to the editor's claim that "Ellis predicted war with Japan in 1912."

Chapter 1 may be most relevant to Marines of this century. Ellis draws from his substantial experience fighting counterinsurgency in the Philippines during the early years of last century. His seventeen-page article "Bush Brigades" provides a solid foundation for any twenty-first-century warrior preparing for service in Iraq or Afghanistan. The editor summarizes how Ellis's tenets are strongly reflected in the Marine Corps's *Small Wars Manual* as well as today's counterinsurgency doctrine, while lamenting the "ill use of many of these tenets" in more-modern conflicts. A current practitioner would benefit by paying attention to Ellis's words.

The final chapter built around Ellis's work, chapter 4, is the longest and the major impetus behind Friedman's effort. Ellis is frequently viewed by Marines as the man who laid the template for modern amphibious operations. Read in detail, Ellis's article "Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia" reinforces that view. Ellis systematically takes a reader through the requirements for an advance across the Pacific to be successful. Many of these tenets informed Marine Corps development prior to the U.S. entry into the Second World War, laying the groundwork for highly successful amphibious operations in both the Pacific and European theaters.

While successful in providing a new generation of military practitioners easy access to Ellis's work, *21st Century Ellis* could have more successfully achieved

the book series's stated purpose of asking "the right questions." With the operational factors of time, space, and force still vital to success, few questions with which the Marine Corps must struggle in the twenty-first century relative to Ellis were asked. The editor's acceptance of "Air-Sea Battle" as a valid concept relative to Ellis falls short. The editor's comments fail to question shortfalls of the current Navy-Marine Corps team to sustain the logistics necessary for any large-scale amphibious operations in the maritime environment of the Pacific—a setting whose scope and scale have not changed since Ellis's day. Questions should be asked about whether current equipment procurement can fulfill the tenets Ellis was prescient in defining should they become required again in this century. This solid work of scholarship, produced by a junior Marine Corps officer, missed a chance to challenge current Marine Corps efforts by failing to ask tough questions the way that Ellis did a century ago. So, for practitioners of war, *read this book*, but keep a paper and pen handy to scribe your own tough questions for the future.

DAVID C. FUQUEA



Friedman, Norman. *Fighting the Great War at Sea: Strategy, Tactics and Technology*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2014. 416pp. \$85

This title is the most recent "tour de force" from this prolific and authoritative naval historian. It is a massive undertaking in almost every way, from its imposing 12" × 10" coffee-table format to its 360-plus pages (over 400 with notes) filled with dense, small print and lavishly illustrated with contemporary photographs. People familiar with

Friedman's other works will understand that it is no exaggeration to say that the detail that he provides in these captions alone could form the framework for any number of smaller, themed books were they to be collected and organized differently. So, coffee-table format it may be, but this is a serious work, covering all aspects of the maritime war in an encyclopedic fashion. The endnotes alone run to forty-plus pages and, while we may lament the imprecise citations in some areas, the notes are filled with further ideas to stimulate still more work in the future.

In many ways this is a book that only Dr. Friedman could have attempted; most others would have shied away from the immensity of the task and back into the comfort of a focused analysis on a smaller, more easily bounded theme. Friedman, however, has an almost unique ability to sweep across the disciplines, picking out the main points and delving into both the historical and technological detail where necessary. A case in point is his exposé of the loss of the three British battle cruisers at Jutland, a tragedy that he lays squarely at the feet of the poor magazine practices prevalent in certain quarters of the Grand Fleet at the time and not, in spite of the official sanction, the result of any undue design flaws in the ships themselves. Such an approach is not an easy one, and some may feel that the book sits rather uncomfortably between the true historical monograph or narrative and a specialist reference work as a result. Technically speaking, it is neither. The text is not chronological and is too dense and concentrated to be read easily from cover to cover, while the inconsistent citations, although far better than in other works, will likely still aggravate the serious scholar. Enticing and unattributed