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Forged in War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War

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for combat use. By 1942 he thought he had paid his dues and would be sent to sea, duty for which he was long overdue. If he had had his choice, Parsons's next assignment would have been as executive officer of the light cruiser *Helena*. Instead, the president's science advisor, Vannevar Bush, drafted him into the atomic bomb project. On 5 May 1943, Parsons received a call to report to Admiral Ernest King, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet. King dashed Parsons's hopes for wartime sea command. King told him that the services of an ordnance officer were needed to supervise the production of an atomic bomb. Like the military leader of the Manhattan Project, General Leslie Groves, Deak Parsons put aside his personal desire for combat duty to make greater contributions to the total war effort—helping to create "a perfectly functioning atomic bomb that could end the war."

In today's climate, where lip service to "technology" is often given by many who themselves lack the detailed knowledge needed to participate in its development, the example of Parsons, with his expertise, should stand as a model for officers. Parsons did his duty, sacrificing "careerist concerns."

Al Christman has done his homework, synthesizing the results of research from recently released Manhattan Project records with personal interviews, conducted over thirty-plus years, of prominent World War II scientists and officers. *Target Hiroshima* is a "must read" for those who wish to understand the role of a military officer in technological innovation.

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Kimball, Warren F. *Forged in War: Roosevelt, Churchill, and the Second World War*. New York: William Morrow, 1997. 422pp. $16

Some casual readers of World War II history have the simplistic notion that the Anglo-American alliance was a natural, inevitable coalition against the evils of Hitlerism and that following America's belated entry into the war, the Anglo-Saxon powers, with a bit of help from the Soviet Union, were foreordained to defeat Nazi Germany. In this view, these nations formed a noble, almost selfless alliance dedicated to the unconditional defeat of a monstrous regime that could not be allowed to survive.

The reality was, of course, much more complex. Far from sharing a unified view of the war, each of the three allied nations had its own divergent national interests and imperatives throughout the war. Most readers are aware of the divergence between the Soviet Union on the

one hand and the Western allies on the other. Fewer are aware of the deep differences that divided Great Britain and America.

The relationship between the Anglo-Saxon powers had, broadly, three phases. The first phase ran from the summer of 1940 until Pearl Harbor (7 December 1941), months in which an anxious America provided increasing logistical and diplomatic support to Britain. It was by no means clear that Britain would remain in the war after Dunkirk. The United States faced the difficult choice between providing scarce resources to a losing cause and ultimately facing a hostile Europe alone. Less than full U.S support during that desperate time, on the other hand, did not sit well with Britain. Prime Minister Winston Churchill stated privately that the Americans were "very good in applauding the valiant deeds done by others." When Americans slowly realized that Churchill would survive politically and that the British would be in it for the long haul (the ruthless British attacks on the French fleet in July 1940 and survival in the Battle of Britain were key), the United States increased its support accordingly.

In the second phase, from 1942 through early 1943, victory remained in doubt (or so thought the protagonists). There were deep disagreements on strategy between the U.S. and Britain. The United States argued forcefully for an early cross-Channel invasion in 1942, which the British rightly viewed as unrealistic (as the initial combat engagements with the Wehrmacht had surely demonstrated). British reluctance fueled American threats to shift significant resources to the Pacific theater if they were not going to be used aggressively against Germany. Underpinning all U.S.-British debates was the constant worry that Germany would either defeat the Soviets before American industrial and military potential could be brought to bear or that Stalin, who was deeply mistrustful of the Western allies, would negotiate an end to the war on the Eastern Front. Severe shipping losses in the Atlantic (which at one point caused the suspension of Lend-Lease shipments to Russia) through early 1943, the dismal British military performance in North Africa and the Far East, and Soviet awareness of deep anticommunist views on the part of senior American and British political leaders (Senator Harry S. Truman suggested hopefully that Germany and Russia would bleed each other to death) all influenced the dynamic calculations each ally made concerning the amount and nature of the cooperation necessary for eventual victory over Germany. Issues in the Far East were left for less desperate times.

After early 1943, in the third and final phase of the war, it was clear that Germany and Japan would

lose. Britain and America now could afford to pay closer attention to how the postwar world should look. Since intensity of cooperation within an alliance varies with the level of mutual need, Anglo-American frictions increased, and divergences in their outlooks and interests became more apparent. The United States opposed the restoration of the prewar European colonial systems, while British policy was "Hands Off the British Empire." Britain was already actively concerned with postwar European balance-of-power issues, especially about how to deal with the Soviet Union. America, however, under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, intended to rely on great-power cooperation through international treaties and organizations (like the future United Nations) as the basis for maintaining peace. America and Britain strongly disagreed over how to resist Soviet influence in eastern and southeastern Europe, even while each was engaged in separate discussions with Stalin. The postwar bitterness over the 1945 Yalta agreements and their aftermath suggests how great the divergence between American and British views became late in the war.

Throughout this book, Kimball shows the extent to which the relationship between America and Britain was a close reflection of the personal relationship between Churchill and Roosevelt. Early mutual underappreciation and private Churchillian bitterness and frustration over Roosevelt's apparent reluctance to commit America against Hitler gave way to an intimate partnership once the United States entered the war. Yet as national interests diverged toward war's end, their close personal bond that had developed during the war's most desperate years so deteriorated that Churchill chose not to attend Roosevelt's funeral. Still, as Kimball concludes, "But almost always, when faced with crucial choices about victory versus postwar political advantage, Roosevelt, Churchill, or both made the decision to keep the Grand Alliance together and to defeat the Axis."

The Second World War is thoroughly plowed ground. However, *Forged in War* is an outstanding, highly readable, single-volume account of the complex political and strategic issues with which Roosevelt and Churchill dealt. Readers at all levels will find it worthwhile.

Warren F. Kimball, a professor of history at Rutgers University, has spent his career studying both Churchill and Roosevelt. His three-volume *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton University Press, 1984) is a basic source for period scholars.

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