

# Tasty Historiography Bites

Historian	Thesis / Main Ideas
<b><i>Blitzkrieg: France</i></b>	
<b>Strawson, John</b>	The French/British defeat in France is the responsibility of the General Staff (particularly Gamelin), not individual soldiers. There were opportunities to counter German offensives, but overall the French were not prepared to adapt to modern mobile warfare.
<b>Keegan, John</b>	Gamelin was an inept commander and the fault for the French defeat rests with him. French soldiers were of variable quality. The simple/streamlined unit structure of the Wehrmacht contrasts with a bloated, disorganized French structure.
<b><i>Battle of the Atlantic</i></b>	
<b>Mulligan, Timothy</b>	The Battle of the Atlantic can be viewed as a series of phases rather than one continuous campaign; U-boats remained a consistent threat in the Atlantic and were never truly defeated as a force.
<b>Calvocoressi, Peter, Guy Wint, and John Pritchard</b>	U-boats could have won the war for the Germans, but they did not produce enough at the beginning of the war. U-boats were defeated as a force by 1943.
<b><i>Battle of Britain</i></b>	
<b>Klee, K.</b>	German defeat in the Battle of Britain is not because of foolish strategy; while this influenced the course of the battle, production and materiel doomed the German offensive from the outset.
<b>Leighton, Den</b>	While the Germans lacked a materiel advantage, German pilots were better and they had more of them; Radar didn't matter; Germany lost because of the ineptitude of Goering.
<b>Keegan, John</b>	Radar was a crucial advantage for the British; agrees with Deighton that pilot shortages were the main concern of the RAF rather than production; Goering was inept and Hitler's heart was not invested in destroying Britain, which influenced his decision to call off Sea Lion.
<b><i>Africa / El Alamein</i></b>	
<b>Fraser, David</b>	The Germans were at a distinct materiel disadvantage in Africa, although Rommel was not given the freedom to use manoeuver to deny this advantage to the British; defeat and destruction of Afrika Korps should be blamed on Hitler, who never took advice seriously and thought he alone knew best.
<b><i>Barbarossa</i></b>	
<b>Roberts, Geoffrey K</b>	The initial success of Barbarossa is because Stalin refused to believe good intelligence reports. He was deeply suspicious of the British, who he thought wanted to lure the USSR into war with Germany.
<b>Bell, Philip</b>	Hitler was wrong when he thought attacking Russia would convince the British to surrender; on the contrary, it led to a political turning point of the highest significance: the emergence of the Grand Alliance between the USSR, Britain and the USA.
<b>Roberts, Cynthia A.</b>	The initial success of Barbarossa cannot be blamed solely on Stalin; the Red Army had poor defensive tactics that had not been updated since the 1920's and did not account for the obvious demonstration of Blitzkrieg in Poland and France.

<b>Burleigh, Michael</b>	Is critical of overly optimistic views of German success with Barbarossa. These “successes” look good on paper but do not account for the conditions that the Germans were fighting in. As these conditions worsened (fall, winter), the mistaken strategy of attacking Russia becomes obvious.
<b>Seaton, Albert</b>	Germany was strong enough in 1941, even without the assistance of allies, to have destroyed the USSR as a political state, but it could have done this only if it had mobilized the whole of its resources. Instead, it foolishly entered into a war on two fronts which it had no chance of winning. Seaton also highlights the effectiveness of NKVD coercion as a method of strengthening defense.
<b>Beevor, Antony</b>	Soviet victory was achieved against almost universal expectation. They were seen even by their allies as backwards, disorganized, and seemingly incapable of putting up an organized defense against the Germans. Thus, the traditional view is that the German defeat can be chalked up to German failures rather than Soviet successes – Germany could have won the Russian campaign if certain conditions were met. And although Beevor concedes that Germany’s “division of energies” on multiple fronts was a crucial factor in their defeat in the east, he maintains that the Russian ability to protect (surprisingly) their economy and produce formidable battlefield commanders that could mount an organized campaign points to a Russian victory rather than a German loss.
<b><i>Stalingrad / Fall Blau</i></b>	
<b>Hayward, Joel</b>	Even if Germany had captured the oil fields of the Caucasus it wouldn’t have been able to produce or ship any of the oil so it wouldn’t have helped Germany’s militarized economy. Hitler would have been better off focusing on destroying Baku and denying the Soviets oil instead of splitting forces to capture two targets that would have been relatively useless to the Germans (Baku, Stalingrad).
<b>Stone, David</b>	Soviet victory at Stalingrad was not simply a matter of human resources and Russian sacrifice. The Soviet adaptation to urban warfare was crucial in holding the city. Stone also highlights the importance of industrial production (sheer quantity of bombs/bullets/grenades) and tanks (both to German offense and Soviet defense).
<b>Beevor, Antony</b>	Meticulous research of primary documents reveal the nature of Stalingrad as <i>rattenkrieg</i> – a savage battle that resembled First World War tactics of attrition. German commanders (and Hitler) suffered from megalomania and did not prepare their troops for an extended campaign, nor did they cope well with an urban offensive. The Soviets, on the other hand, evolved in their urban defense tactics, especially in their use of snipers and Chuikov’s use of strongpoints. They also, however, heavily relied on coercion from the NKVD to force Soviet troops into battle, which counters the heroic nationalism of the official Soviet accounts of the battle. This is most clearly seen in the amount of Hiwis (Russians who fought for the Germans) who fought at Stalingrad, which numbered approximately 50,000.
<b><i>Allied Air Offensive over Europe</i></b>	
<b>Beaumont, Roger</b>	Despite some shortcomings in strategy, the air offensive constituted a major front and ultimately achieved strategic victory by 1943. It had major effects on German industry and other effects “which cannot be quantified.”

<b>Neillands, Robin</b>	The Allies had achieved a strategic turning point by Feb 1944 (not earlier), especially with the onset of the P-51 Mustang. "Bomber" Harris' area bombing tactics might have worked if he was given the number of bombers he needed, but this is only speculation.
<b>Levine, Alan</b>	Criticisms of the bomber offensive are unfounded; it was never intended to win the war on its own. It had significant effects on German industry, however, the most important effect was that it put Germany on the defensive and paved the way for the Normandy invasion. He criticizes Overy for approaching the air war as if it were independent from the ground war. Allied bombing had decreased the mobility and communications of German ground forces. There were mainly German strategic/tactical mistakes in dealing the threat from the air.
<b>Clodfelter, Mark</b>	The example of Nazi Germany illustrates that, for a unified, autocratic state waging an unremitting conventional war, the aerial pounding of a populace and its means of subsistence is unlikely to stop that people from supporting the conflict.
<b><i>Invasion of Normandy</i></b>	
<b>Lewis, Adrian R.</b>	Operation Overlord was a flawed compromise between American and British strategy that nearly led to defeat at Omaha and perhaps the failure of the entire invasion. The attack achieved neither the surprise required by British doctrine nor the firepower required by American doctrine.
<b>Symonds, Craig</b>	The British were opposed to a cross-channel invasion, but this was overturned when the Americans assumed the primary role in the alliance later in the war. The most important factor to success was the logistical planning in moving men and material into position and off the beaches and into Normandy, rather than the overwhelming superiority in men and materiel itself.
<b>Hastings, Max</b>	Much history of D-Day is glorified and nationalistic. An objective view is needed to truly understand the campaign (also argued by Keegan) – and if one takes this objective view, one will see that the performance of Allied soldiers was mediocre, especially compared to their German enemy. Despite this, victory was only won on D-Day "by men on the sand", as many mistakes were made by commanders at the operational and strategic level. This is most clear in the case of the logistical failures of not being able to move sufficient men and armour off the beach to continue momentum. On the Anglo-American debate, is more or less in the first camp, as he portrays the British as wanting to delay the invasion as long as possible and being skilled in their diplomacy to do so.
<b>Ambrose, Stephen E.</b>	Credits the success of D-Day to the ability of junior ranks to adapt to unexpected conditions. This is especially the case on Omaha beach. Praises Eisenhower for his effective command of a joint Anglo-American operation.
<b><i>General Overview</i></b>	
<b>Bell, Philip</b>	There were "turning points" throughout the war that eventually shaped Allied victory. For Bell, the "sharpest" turning point was in the period 1942-43 when the Japanese were defeated at Midway and the Germans were turned back at Stalingrad.
<b>Beevor, Antony</b>	Stalingrad was more a psychological and symbolic turning point rather than a military one. The greatest turning point was December 1941 when America joined the war. According to Beevor, there was no way Germany could win against the added industrial and human resources of the United States.

# Savoury Historiography Entrees

## Blitzkrieg: The Battle of France

**Strawson, John.** "Sichelschnitt: Cut of the sickle." In *Hitler as military commander*, 97-116.

- Gamelin and the French general staff had mostly "closed their eyes to tactical realities" and had not changed their overall strategy in over twenty years. Their game plan was to preserve their manpower and wait for an allied build-up of forces with which to eventually launch an offensive. This type of wishful thinking and reliance on the Maginot Line did not account for *blitzkrieg*.
- Much of the French forces were strung out on a wide defensive line and did not have the communications or mobility to adapt to German breakthroughs.
- While Dunkirk was Germany's "military blunder No. 1," even if the Germans had succeeded in destroying the BEF in France this would not have guaranteed Britain's surrender; the British navy and air force would have been stronger (as it wouldn't have sustained the losses of the Dunkirk evacuation) and Churchill had repeated that Britain would fight on "forever and ever."
- Ultimately, Germany's long-term failure "was not neglecting to plan... for the invasion of England. It was failure to plan and secure resources for a long war."

**Keegan, John.** *The Second World War* (1990).

- French units were of variable quality. Some were full-time conscripts or colonial soldiers; others were reservist. Their organization of armour was haphazard and did not allow for strong, homogenous armoured units like the German Panzer divisions. German units, by contrast, were organized in a simpler, more straightforward way. There were only three types of units (armoured, motorized, and infantry), which helped define strategic roles.
- Gamelin was old not just in age (68) but in mindset. He never updated French strategy after WWI and he was often hundreds of kilometers away from the frontlines. He did not foresee (nor respond to) the dynamic nature of mobile modern warfare, even despite German Panzer division moving slower than their generals wanted to because Hitler was anxious about having their flanks protected with slower moving infantry divisions.
- The British and French laid blame on the Belgians for their defeat; however, the Germans typically praised them for their tenacity as defenders and noted their bravery. The "Triumph of Blitzkrieg" cannot be blamed on the French, British, and Belgian soldiers, but rather on their generals.

## The Battle of the Atlantic

**Mulligan, Timothy.** "Patterns of the U-boat war, 1939-1945." In *Neither sharks nor wolves: The men of Nazi Germany's u-boat arm, 1939-1945*.

- "Participants and historians of the Battle of the Atlantic usually frame the campaign in specific chronological periods that reflect significant operational developments. Such an arrangement, however logical, often overlooks the materiel, organizational, and personnel aspects that frequently determined the availability and deployment of combat forces. This is especially applicable for the Germans, who waged the uneven battle while continually struggling for a larger share of the limited resources available in Hitler's war effort."
- "Out of 1171 commissioned submarines, only 321 successfully attacked (sank or damaged) an Allied ship during the war... most of those attacked between one and five vessels... only twenty-five U-boats attacked twenty or more ships.... A handful of aces... inflicted a disproportionate amount of damage, as thirty commanders (about 2 percent) sank nearly eight hundred ships, or almost one-third of all Allied losses."
- The Battle of the Atlantic can be viewed as a series of phases rather than one continuous campaign. Eventually, most German U-boaters would be lost and a new generation would take its place in a new phase of the battle. While the Allies were eventually able to effectively counter the u-boats (allied materiel superiority and the destruction of the Luftwaffe), u-boats remained a consistent threat in the Atlantic and were never truly defeated as a force.

**Calvocoressi, Peter, Guy Wint, and John Pritchard.** "The battle of the seas." In *Total war: The causes and courses of the Second World War*.

- "Great Britain's survival in 1940 did not remove the danger of defeat. The U-boat might still succeed where the Luftwaffe had failed. The crisis of 1940 was followed by the crises of 1941 and 1942, when Great Britain's imports of food, weapons and materials for industry dropped to within sight of a war-losing level."
- "The idea of a shipping shortage did not occur naturally to the British."
- "The turning point in the Battle of the Seas came in the winter of 1942-43. In that period the U-boat was defeated. The Luftwaffe had been eliminated from this battle in 1942. Its anti-shipping force, though skilled, was always small. Its torpedo-carriers were a neglected and minor branch of the service; its long-range F.W. 200s were reduced by bombing of the Bremen factory where they were made; it was too deeply absorbed by prior commitments on the eastern front and in the Mediterranean. The U-boat was the weapon which threatened to turn the allied shipping shortage into an allied defeat, for the U-boat accounted for two-thirds of all British, allied and neutral shipping losses during the war – 14.7 million gross tons out of a total of 21.6 million.... Of the tonnage sunk by U-boats nearly half – 6.3 million tons – went to the bottom in the year 1942. Over half of all these sinkings were in the North Atlantic."

- “The Germans came closer to victory at sea than anywhere else after 1941, and at the time of their defeat in 1943 they had not exhausted their capabilities. They lost, not because they had no more cards to play, but because they played them too late.... Its main weaknesses were its inescapable need to surface to recharge its batteries and the practice, enforced by German High Command, of maintaining contact with home and so betraying its position from time to time by breaking wireless silence. These weaknesses, coupled with the small number of U-boats in the first two years of war, enabled the allies to turn the tables.... the U-boat was forced from the offensive to the defensive. It did not recover in time to stage another round. Its reverses in 1943 added up to final defeat.”

## The Battle of Britain

**Klee, K.** “The Battle of Britain.” In *Decisive battles of World War II: The German view*.

- “Luftwaffe Group Command 2 presented two memoranda which made it quite clear that any air war against Britain could have nuisance value only and under no circumstances exercise any decisive effect on the course of a war.”
- “...the given numerical strength, equipment and training of Luftwaffe Air Fleet 2 would not permit it to secure a quick decision against Britain in the air.”
- The blitz of London was not a simple matter of reprisal and foolish strategy; up until that point, the RAF had been tactically avoiding contact with the Luftwaffe fighters in an effort to husband their strength for a German invasion or large bomber forces. Attacking London was Hitler’s strategy to force the RAF to come out and fight.
- “At the beginning of the Battle of Britain, Luftwaffe High Command felt confident that decisive success were possible.... [but] no thoroughly detailed and objective estimate of the situation had been made. Had such a study been undertaken it would have raised doubts whether the available strength and equipment were sufficient to obtain a decision in an air war against Britain. Today, when we can readily see all the factors involved, it is easy enough to answer the question correctly: they were not.”

**Deighton, Len.** *Fighter (1977)*.

- Materiel and Production: The Germans did not have a noticeable materiel superiority when it came to fighter planes. Many statistics often include transport craft and bombers and do not distinguish between serviceable aircraft and those in disrepair. At the commencement of *Adlerangriff* (the German air assault), Germany had 656 serviceable fighters to the RAF’s 531. The British had a significant advantage in production, however; they turned out 500 Spitfires and Hurricanes per month compared to Germany’s 140 ME109s. This means that the Luftwaffe was only reinforced with about 420 units of its primary fighter during the three deciding months of the battle.
- German pilots were better and they had more of them: Despite the materiel advantage, Germany had the advantage in quantity and quality of pilots. Their pilots were experienced (Spain, Poland, France) and flew loose combat formations that were low on showmanship but battle-proven. Pre-war RAF pilots trained in tighter formations, which required more technical skill but were not

practical in dogfights. In fighter-to-fighter combat the British often proved markedly inferior to Luftwaffe pilots and the rate at which they were being shot down negated their production advantage, threatened to bleed out their pilot base and threatened that “Fighter Command would cease to exist within six weeks.”

- Radar didn't matter: Radar was not a distinct advantage because although it took Luftwaffe pilots five minutes to cross the English channel once they had gained their altitude over France, it would take RAF Spitfires fifteen minutes to climb to altitude to meet their German foes. Attacking from below would have been suicidal. Radar was useless once the Germans crossed the coast – the British defense would make educated guess as to where the Germans would be based on Observer Corps sightings. Even on clear days “it was possible for an RAF and German formation to pass through the same map square without sighting each other.”
- Germany lost because of the ineptitude of Goering: “Unlike the RAF, with its Air Staff of career officers, the Luftwaffe was a one man show... [Goering's] decisions, when made, were not subject to challenge within the Luftwaffe.”
- Goering's arrogance led to a lack of communication between the Luftwaffe and Navy and he didn't trust German intelligence, often citing their information about British production as “lie reports”. He launched the operation without any cogent strategy and blindly trusted in the superiority of the Luftwaffe. He assigned no firm priorities to industrial or military targets.

**Keegan, John. *The Second World War*.**

- Fighter Command's warning system was accurate and elaborate and could draw on a variety of different sources to vector the location of incoming Luftwaffe formations: “Radar conferred on Fighter Command a most crucial advantage.”
- Production was never an issue, but the lack of pilots offered the British a paradox at the height of the battle.
- Goering was arrogant and produced “no considered strategy, no equivalent of Sickle Stroke,” believing the RAF could be “brought to its knees” with a “hard blow.” Despite this, Goering did not consistently employ Germany's force of bombers, which could have tipped the scales in the battle. He also never focused on attacking Britain's radar system, an odd oversight.
- Both Goering and Hitler were impatient with the lack of progress. Hitler never wanted to embarrass Britain like he did France; he was ambivalent about the battle. When the Luftwaffe finally began to approach victory in September, Hitler called off the invasion because it was too close to fall, which would bring winds and poor weather for an amphibious invasion of Britain.

## Africa / El Alamein

**Fraser, David.** "Watershed." In *Knight's cross: A life of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel*.

- "[Rommel] was under no illusions: if he fought on the Alamein line... he would be fighting a static battle of attrition, a *Materialschlacht*. The prospect was ominous. First, Rommel... disliked that sort of battle. Although he never ceased to be a highly skilled and thorough infantry commander, whether in siting a defensive position or leading an attack, his genius was for manoeuvre, for movement, for the unexpected: at Alamein there was little chance of such. Second, the winner of a *Materialschlacht* tends to be the one with the most material and the more certain methods of replacing it. This would not be Rommel."
- "[Rommel] had told Hitler that unless the Panzerarmee was withdrawn from a murderous *Materialschlacht* it would be destroyed and North Africa lost – and Hitler had replied that 'Not a step was to be yielded.... As to your troops... you can show them no other road than to victory or death.'"
- "Hitler, Rommel said frankly, was a lunatic, determined from sheer obstinacy on a course which would lead to the last German soldier and, one day, to the total destruction of Germany."
- "Rommel was coming to perceive... the total unreality with which Hitler was surrounding himself, and the indifference Hitler was showing to serious professional advice and to the fate of German soldiers. Hitler believed that he alone knew best, that his will alone sufficed to turn the tide of military events."

## Barbarossa

**Roberts, Geoffrey K.** "Stalin and the road to war, April-June 1941." In *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War*.

- "A German attack was coming. Moscow knew it, believed it, and prepared for it. As John Erikson has pointed out, Stalin 'possessed continuous and accurate intelligence of German intentions' regarding an attack on the USSR. During the months before the invasion there were numerous intelligence reports and summaries on German military preparations for war in the East. There was also a stream of reports from Soviet embassies containing information on the forthcoming attack.... Despite all this intelligence when the Germans attacked on 22 June 1941 they achieved complete surprise – an advantage which contributed greatly to their success in thrusting hundreds of miles into Soviet territory during the first few weeks of the war. The Germans were able to launch such a successful surprise attack because to the very last Stalin refused to accept and act on the knowledge that the German attack was imminent."
- "Stalin's blindness in the face of what his own people were telling him was intimately connected to the conviction that the warnings of a coming surprise attack were part of a British plot to embroil the USSR in a war with Germany."



**Bell, Philip.** *Twelve Turning Points of the Second World War.*

- “Hitler’s insistence on putting Nazi racial doctrine into practice threw away a political weapon of potentially vital importance. As the Germans advanced in the summer of 1941 they were often welcomed by the non-Russian nationalities and by others who had suffered under Stalin’s oppression.... During the war of 1914-18 the Germans had made successful use of anti-Russian sentiment.... but in 1941 they came as a master race.
- Hitler also argued that attacking Russia could encourage the British to surrender and prevent the Americans from joining the war. The Allies were betting on Russia – knocking them out would dash the hopes of Britain and the USA.
- “The German achievement had been immense, but not enough. They won one victory after another. They took 3,300,000 prisoners [in the first six months]. The Soviet armies lost about three million dead, and the Germans only 302,000. Even so, the German figure amounted to one-tenth of the forces they had committed at the start of the campaign; and when wounded, prisoners and missing were added, the total reached over 900,000, or nearly one-third of the troops involved. In cold blood, and in terms of sheer numbers, the Russians were better able to absorb their losses than the Germans.”
- “Hitler intended Operation Barbarossa to be a decisive turning point in the war through a rapid and total military victory over the Soviet Union. Instead, the campaign produced three military turning points, all contrary to Hitler’s intentions:
  1. The Germans failed to secure a quick victory.
  2. The Germans failed to reach Moscow.
  3. By December, the Russians had launched a counterattack and the initiative had been lost.

These military turning points were accompanied by a political turning point of the highest significance: the emergence of the Grand Alliance between the USSR, Britain and the USA, which was eventually to win the war.”

**Roberts, Cynthia A.** “Planning for war: The Red Army and the catastrophe of 1941” in *Europe-Asia Studies* (1995)

- “Despite Stalin's gross blunders on the eve of war, the extent of the disaster of 22 June 1941 cannot be explained solely by Stalin's failure to heed warnings of the impending invasion. The Red Army also jeopardised Soviet security. [It possessed] an organisational ideology that predisposed it toward the offensive. This bias was in turn dogmatised, blocking organisational learning. By the early 1930s it was an article of faith, operationalised in Soviet war plans, that if the Soviet Union were attacked the Red Army would not surrender 'one inch' of Soviet territory to the aggressor. This goal and the complementary objective of transferring the war to enemy territory reinforced the central planning assumption of the Red Army that a significant time interval would separate the initiation of hostilities and the engagement of the main forces of the belligerents. Although the German victories in the West in 1940 challenged the validity of this paradigm, the Red Army continued to hold that

Blitzkrieg could not be effective against the Soviet Union. Wedded to a faulty conceptualisation of the initial period of war, the Red Army avoided any reassessment of key values.”

**Burleigh, Michael.** “See you again in Siberia.” In *The Third Reich: A new history*.

- “The initial success of [Barbarossa] seemed to confirm the dominant army view. The Axis advance was so rapid that as early as 3 July Franz Halder, the Chief of General Staff, noted in his diary that ‘the Russian campaign has been won in the space of two weeks.’”
- “Optimistic initial assessments were gradually belied by conditions on the ground. On paper everything looked impressive. In four vast battles of encirclement before September, the Germans captured 3,800 tanks, 6,000 artillery weapons and 872,000 prisoners. However, before the end of August, German losses amounted to 409,998 killed or wounded, with only 232,000 men in reserve to replace them. Conditions on the ground were deteriorating. Heavily laden infantrymen slogged along poor roads and tracks, covered in sweat and dust and plagued by stinging insects, towards destinations that only served to underline how gigantic this country was. The rigours of forced marches in the summer heat were duly superseded by the mud from the autumn rains, miring men, vehicles, and horses alike.... By October, the problems of mud were compounded by the first light falls of snow. Wheeled vehicles could advance only by being shunted or towed by tracked craft, and even chains and tow-ropes had to be dropped from the air in the first indication that the German army was ill-equipped for the ordeal ahead. With temperatures down to minus 8 degrees and falling in early November, machine guns jammed, telescopic sights proved useless, engines had to be de-iced with fires underneath, tanks without spiked tracks slid around, while the intense cold penetrated thin denim uniforms and worn leather boots.... Strategic errors and failure to anticipate appalling climatic conditions were now compounded by co-ordinated Soviet resistance...”

**Seaton, Albert.** Epilogue. In *The Battle for Moscow: 1941-1942*.

- “Germany was strong enough in 1941, even without the assistance of allies, to have destroyed the USSR as a political state, but it could have done this only if it had mobilized the whole of its resources. There could have been no question of waging, at the same time, a costly air and sea war against Britain, or of leaving fifty divisions behind to garrison Western Europe. And it would have been necessary to gear the whole economy of the Reich to total war. Even if Hitler had done this, the margin between the war strengths of Germany and the Soviet Union was not great. In any case, the USSR could not have been destroyed until after it had lost the Caucasus and the Urals, and German troops could not have overrun so vast an area in 1941.
- When Hitler ordered his armies eastwards against the Soviet Union he had already entered into a war on two fronts and, not six months later, in a fit of megalomania and caprice, he had added the United States of America to Germany’s enemies. Against such odds Germany could not win.”
- “All Soviet historical accounts of the victory [at Moscow] extol at great length the part played by the Communist Party ‘as the inspirer and organizer of all victories of the Soviet people and their Armed Forces.’ This is neither propaganda nor overstatement. For at that time Stalin and the Communist

Party were indivisible; the Party was Stalin; it was his tool, his sounding board, some of his eyes and ears, and one of the organs by which he ruled and oppressed the Soviet peoples. Together with the NKVD secret police, the Communist Party, through its commissar representatives with the Red Army, was the guardian of the morale, efficiency and political reliability of the generals, officers and troops. Incomprehensible though it might be to freedom loving peoples, the most remarkable aspect of this commissar organization, repressive though it was, was its effectiveness. The more desperate the deteriorating situation, the more harsh and bloody were Stalin's counter-measures in the face of in-efficiency, failure or misfortune. Such was the Russian and the communist mentality that these repressions achieved their object."

**Beevor, Antony.** *Russia's War - A History of the Soviet War Effort: 1941-1945* (1997)

- "The odds against the Soviet Union prevailing over Hitler's Germany were long even before the war broke out, longer still after the first months. The German propaganda machine emphasized the primitiveness of Soviet life.... The conventional view of the Soviet Union abroad, beyond the circle of dazzled enthusiasts, was of a system made inert by a stifling bureaucracy and savage repression.... When the news of Barbarossa arrived in Washington, Secretary of War Henry Stimson reported to Roosevelt the almost unanimous view of the American Joint Chiefs of Staff, which he shared: 'Germany will be thoroughly occupied in beating Russia for a minimum of a month and a possible maximum of three months.'"
- "Soviet victory was achieved against almost universal expectation. For all the criticism now levelled in the former Soviet Union against the crass incompetence and meaningless oppression that marked the early years of war, the Soviet system passed its most severe test. This presents historians with a circle difficult to square: the Soviet Union ought by rights to have been defeated in the war, but it prevailed triumphantly and comprehensively. Of course, the Soviet Union was not acting alone. Without the diversion of German energies prompted by the bombing campaign or the Mediterranean theatre the outcome would have been much less certain, perhaps very different. Nonetheless, the bulk of the damage inflicted on German forces was in the eastern campaign – 80 percent of their battle casualties – and it was here that the overwhelming weight of the Wehrmacht was concentrated until 1944. Nor can the German dimension be ignored. After the war German generals were quick to argue that Hitler's wayward leadership and shortages of equipment made defeat inevitable: Germany lost the war, the Soviet Union did not win it. This view fits ill with the facts. German generals rode to war in 1941 confident that victory was a matter of weeks (eight to ten at most) against the 'ill-educated, half-Asiatic' Russian fighters, and against Soviet commanders 'even less of a threat than... Tsarist Russian generals'. These judgements were almost borne out by events. The defeat of German forces required something German leaders never anticipated: that the Soviet Union would recover its economic strength, reform its armed forces and produce leaders of remarkable quality. Without these, Germany could not have been defeated. The Soviet Union had to *win* its war."

## Stalingrad & Fall Blau

**Hayward, Joel.** "Too Little, Too Late: An Analysis of Hitler's Failure in August 1942 to Damage Soviet Oil Production" in *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July, 2000).

- "During the last months of 1941 and the first of 1942, economic considerations played as much of a role in the formulation of a new strategy as did the run-down state of the eastern armies and air fleets. Hitler feared heavy Soviet bombing attacks on Rumanian oilfields, his main source of oil, and knew that the Reich's reserves were almost exhausted. Consequently, he considered the protection of the Rumanian oilfields and the acquisition of new sources of oil crucial if he were to wage a prolonged war against the growing list of nations he opposed." *Fall Blau* (Operation Blau) was thus directed at capturing the Caucasus oil fields.
- "The Luftwaffe could have dealt the Soviet economy a major blow, from which it would have taken at least several months to recover, if Hitler had not been so obsessed with Stalingrad and wasted his airpower assets on its destruction."
- A key target for the Luftwaffe should have been Baku, which produced 80% of Soviet oil and had relatively weak anti-air defenses and little Soviet air support.
- Even if the Caucasus were captured, very little oil could have actually been transported overland to Germany. Furthermore, if the Black Sea could be made safe for shipping there still weren't enough German transport ships (particularly river transports on the Danube) to carry oil as they were already working to near capacity.
- Soviet "scorched earth" policies would have meant that even if the Germans had captured key oil cities in the Caucasus, it would take an unacceptable amount of time to repair oil facilities. For example, even though the Germans captured Maikop (in the north Caucasus), it never produced any oil for the Axis during the war.
- The Germans still could have done critical damage to Soviet industry and oil production, however Hitler insisted on committing increasing amounts of his Luftwaffe forces to capturing Stalingrad, effectively splitting his strength.

**Stone, David R.** "Stalingrad and the Evolution of Soviet Urban Warfare" in *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* (2009).

- "Soviet victory was not simply a matter of enormous human sacrifice, but also required winning the production battle with Nazi Germany. The Red Army also had to master the tactics of urban warfare from bitter experience, given the underdeveloped state of Soviet doctrine before the war and lack of relevant experience before Stalingrad."

- “After the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the first year of fighting provided the Soviets with little concrete experience of fighting in cities.... Tula and particularly Sevastopol are remarkable examples of Soviet tenacity in defense but they are, like Odessa, a case of stubborn defense of fortifications, not defense in a city.”
- Problems of human resources and materiel: “Over the summer of 1942, the campaign from the Don to the Volga that brought the Germans to Stalingrad was marked by thin, brittle Soviet defenses, thanks to insufficient reserves and anti-tank weaponry, as well as shortages of manpower that led to Soviet infantry divisions’ routinely being asked to hold 15–20km frontages, far above their norm. Over the course of the war, there was a marked improvement in Soviet handling of the problems of defensive warfare, but that is inextricable from greater reserves of manpower and more machine guns, anti-tank rifles, antitank guns, artillery pieces, mines, ammunition, and all the panoply of industrial warfare. Better ammunition and more anti-tank weaponry led directly to deeper and more effective defenses.”
- Importance of tanks: “The importance of airpower in Stalingrad is well-attested; more surprising, however, is the importance of tank warfare in Stalingrad, something far out of line with traditional understandings of Stalingrad specifically and of urban warfare in general. Conventional wisdom has typically held that urban terrain negates the advantages of armor and makes tanks more vulnerable to infantry attack. Stalingrad suggests, on the other hand, that the value of tanks in an urban setting far outweighs their disadvantages.... German attacks in the city routinely employed large numbers of tanks, forcing Soviet defenders to supplement their meager stock of anti-tank guns and rifles with improvised Molotov cocktails. Soviet tactics shifted to reflect the importance of anti-tank warfare, channeling German tanks towards antitank strongpoints of 2–4 anti-tank guns. Chuikov himself stressed the power of a coordinated German assault using aircraft, tanks, and infantry; the key to stopping such an assault, he argued, was decoupling it. Separating German tanks from German infantry made both far more vulnerable.”
- The author argues that allowing for more individual freedom at the small-unit level, establishing a linked system of strongholds and trenches, and using snipers were critical aspects of urban defense fighting for the Soviets in Stalingrad. This suggests an ability to adapt to urban fighting that is often overshadowed by the traditional view that the Soviets relied on human capital ie., the ability to out-bleed the Germans.

<p><b>Beevor, Antony.</b> <i>Stalingrad – The Fateful Siege: 1942-1943</i></p>
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- Hitler never prepared his army adequately for war with the Russian behemoth, and the blitzkrieg petered out as the Russian winter closed in.
- Hitler delayed the attack on Moscow, and by the early spring of 1942, when General Friedrich Wilhelm Paulus assumed command of the Sixth Army, the combination of surprise and terror on which the Nazis had depended was lost.

- Despite strategic victories along the way, the objective, Stalingrad, proved elusive, and after Paulus's repeated assaults against the city proved ineffective, his position became a trap for thousands of German troops, few of whom survived the battle or the rigors of the Soviet gulag.
- Beevor is evenhanded in his treatment of the two sides: By contrasting the German and Soviet points of view, he conveys the experiences of Axis generals and fighting men (who comprised thousands of Romanian, Hungarian, and disaffected Russians as well as Germans) in the midst of a total war, and those of Soviet soldiers, who had to fear the NKVD and SMERSH, the Soviet intelligence services, as much as the Nazis.
- "German generals do not seem to have imagined what awaited their divisions in the ruined city. They lost the great Blitzkrieg advantages and were in many ways thrown back to First World War techniques, even though their military theorists had argued that trench warfare had been 'an aberration in the art of war.'"
- The *rattenkrieg* "possessed a savage intimacy which appalled their generals, who felt that they were rapidly losing control over events. 'The enemy is invisible,' wrote General Strecker to a friend. 'Ambushes out of basements, wall remnants, hidden bunkers and factory ruins produce heavy casualties among our troops.'"
- Chuikov's plan was to funnel and fragment German mass assaults with 'breakwaters'. Strengthened buildings, manned by infantry with anti-tank rifles and machine guns, would deflect the attackers into channels where camouflaged T-34 tanks and anti-tank guns waited, half-buried in the rubble behind."
- Beevor also notes the effectiveness of Soviet snipers and the cult of heroism that surrounded them.

## Allied Air Offensive over Europe

*"Germany is a fortress, but a fortress without a roof." - Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1944*

**Beaumont, Roger.** "The Bomber Offensive as a Second Front" in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 22 (1987).

- "Allied efforts overall ignored the classic military principles of concentration and mass. Even the large-scale area attacks were uneven and stretched out over time, affected, as already noted, by bad weather, diversions, the push-and-pull of various schools of thought, and constant changes in technology on both sides. Only in hindsight was it wholly clear that the air offensive usually proved more effective when a particular target complex was bombed again and again."
- "Bombing had won a clear cut strategic victory in 1943."
- "While the air offensive fell short of its goals set by its advocates, it did constitute a major theatre of war. The Soviets noted a decline in the quality and number of German pilots on the Eastern Front from late 1943 on. By early 1944, the German air defense forces deployed against the western Allied air offensive exceeded German ground forces fighting the Allies in Italy."

- “The air offensive placed myriad burdens on German industry, over half of which worked to meet *Luftwaffe* needs by 1944.”
- “Whatever number games one chooses to play, the bomber offensive was a major fighting front, and a major link in the chain that throttled Nazism. It had effects which cannot be quantified.”

**Neillands, Robin.** *The bomber war: Arthur Harris and the allied bomber offensive, 1939-1945.*

- Neillands argues that Arthur “Bomber” Harris’ strategy of area bombing and carrying the war to the heart of the German homeland was prevented by a focus on strategic bombing, which lacked definitive successes until February 1944. Harris’ strategy could have worked, but was consistently set aside to provide more air power to peripheral campaigns (Africa, Italy, Far East). “There was a failure, at all levels... in not providing Bomber Command with the wherewithal to carry out this declared intention.... This steady drain prevented Harris from ever achieving the size of force he needed to carry out the instructions he was given.”
- Describes the internal Allied Chiefs of Staff debate about how best to conduct a bomber offensive. Much of the war to 1944 focused on strategic bombing (Americans by day, British at night), while Arthur “Bomber” Harris wanted to area-bomb German industrial cities.
- Early in the war (to 1943) submarine pens and construction yards were a favoured target due to the heavy losses of Allied shipping in the Atlantic (“Admiral Tovey had a point. Before the war was won, it was important not to lose it.”) However, sub pens were heavily defended and results were questionable.
- To mid-1943: “The RAF had still not found a reliable way to bomb accurately at night, and the Eighth had been unable to demonstrate that daylight precision bombing was a feasible proposition in a war zone.”

RAF Bomber Command – “Bomber Harris”

- Harris... believed that bombing alone could force Germany to surrender – if applied in sufficient force.... “If I could send 20,000 bombers over Germany tonight, Germany would not be in the war tomorrow. If I could send 1,000 bombers over Germany every night, it would end the war by autumn.”
- “That was what Harris believed. That was the thinking that underlined his concentration on area bombing. Smash the cities, carry the war to the people, crush the beast.”
- “[Portal] proposed to launch attacks that would kill or maim some 2 million civilians... [which] simply indicates how the war had eroded, and would continue to erode, the morality with which Britain had entered the war three years before.... Much of the post-war odium attracted by area bombing has been directed at Harris, but many of the ideas and proposals on which area bombing was based emanated from Portal.”

- “Casablanca Directive” (1943) reiterated focus on strategic bombing of German military and economic targets. “It is clear that if Harris had hoped for a clear run at the German industrial cities in 1943, he was not going to get it.”

*Practical problems with night area bombing:*

- Poor navigation at night; inability to accurately identify targets
- Creative defenses by German cities, such as decoy fires on city outskirts to fool bomber crews

USAAF (Eighth)

- “The plain fact was that the USAAF doctrine did not work in the cloudy, flak and fighter-filled skies of [pre-1994] Western Europe.”
- Air Chief Marshall Arthur Tedder stated in 1944, “I do not myself believe that any modern war can be won either at sea, on the land alone or in the air alone... in other words, war has changed to three-dimensional, and very few people realise that.”

*Practical problems with daylight precision bombing:*

- Navigation during the day still difficult in poor weather; cloud cover made use of Norden bomb sight difficult and inaccurate
- Navigation with GEE improved only marginally, and these systems were being jammed by late 1942
- Lack of long-range fighter support, leaving bombers prey to *Luftwaffe* fighters when short-range spitfires turned back to England

The Battle of Berlin

- Battle of Berlin was a failure for the British due to high losses. Berlin was not destroyed and the population did not rise against Hitler.

“Big Week” – Feb 1944

- “Big Week marked another turning point in the Bomber War: the USAAF had put up 1,000 bombers for the first time and had carried out long-range missions into Germany with high but acceptable losses. It also marked the moment when the strength of the Eighth Air Force first exceeded that of RAF Bomber Command.
- The P-51 Mustang was a significant turning point in the air war by 1944:
  - “Fitted with long-range tanks, the P-51 Merlin-powered Mustang was capable of escorting heavy bombers all the way to Germany and back, and when it met the *Luftwaffe* fighters in combat it outclassed them in every way: in speed, ceiling and rate of climb. The growing success of USAAF bomber operations over Germany after March 1944 was due *entirely* to the arrival of the P-51 Mustang.”

**Levine, Alan J.** “Conclusions” in *The Strategic Bombing of Germany, 1940-1945*.

- “The air offensive against Germany was costly in economic resources and in manpower.... The terrible losses of Bomber Command, in particular, cast a grim light on prewar hopes that strategic bombing would be a ‘cheap’ way to wage a war, or at least far less costly in lives than the deadly



land battles of World War I.... the death rate in Bomber Command was proportionally higher than those on the Western Front, and formed a substantial part of British losses in World War II.”

- “For a variety of reasons, the historical reputation of the strategic air offensive against Germany has not been high, particularly in the last 25 years. The most recent general histories of World War II, by Gilbert, Keegan, and Leckie, give short shrift to the bombing of Germany or are actively critical of the campaign. The low repute of the strategic air offensive is partly due to a tendency to identify the whole offensive with the British area attacks.... And the knowledge that those attacks broke neither German morale nor the German economy... [and] was regarded as a costly failure.”
- This is not a fair characterization, however, for British bombers were never expected to win the war alone; bomber production remained low until mid-1943 (“The buildup of the bomber force did not precede, but coincided with, the buildup of the D-Day invasion.”)
- **Overy:** “All the great expectations of air power as a war-winning weapon that had been kept alive, despite the failure in 1940, by the single-mindedness of the bomber school, were confounded by the fact that even the winning of the war in the air could not measurably reduce the time that it took to defeat the German armies in Europe.”
  - This is a fallacy because it assumes that land battles in '44-45 “proceeded independently of the air war and were unaffected by the shortage of fuel and disruption of transportation
  - By the fall of 1944, fuel was only sufficient to maintain operations if the Germans resorted to horse-drawn transport from railheads, a 50% reduction in the use of vehicles, and a harsh system of rationing.
  - During the last months of the war communications were entirely disrupted, so that it was nearly impossible for any replacement to reach its destination (“It took longer to transfer troops from one end of Germany to the other than it had once taken to send them from France to Russia.”)
- “The defensive effort forced upon the Germans would have justified strategic bombing if it never accomplished a more positive aim.”
- Strategic bombing “paved the way for the Normandy invasion.”
- However, “They made no important contribution to the winning of the Battle of the Atlantic and did not seriously impair German morale, reduce overall German war production, or stop the manufacture of any critical items.”
- “From the spring of 1944... things were drastically different. The attack on oil crippled the Luftwaffe, and then the mobility of the German army, and it sharply reduced production of explosives, rubber, and other items dependent on the oil industry.”
- Nazi mistakes:
  - Technical: Lapse in technical development after the introduction of the ME-109 and their standard bombers.

- Technical: Misguided focus on V1 and V2 rockets and jet fighters instead of perfecting long-range piston aircraft (comparable to P-51 Mustang)
- Resources: Failure to fully mobilize for war until 1942
- Tactics: Avoiding American fighter escorts after 1943. This let pilots gain more experience and fly deeper into Germany.

**Clodfelter, Mark.** "Aiming to Break Will: America's World War II Bombing of German Morale and its Ramifications" in *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2010).

- The aerial offensive against Germany "revealed that a nation-state's will to resist actually consists of three distinctive elements – the will of its populace, government leaders, and the armed forces – which together form a collective desire to fight. The bombing also showed that the resilience of the individual components depends on the strength of the bonds that connect them and the war aims pursued by all belligerents. It further illustrated that the individual element most likely to break from air attack is the will of the armed forces."
- "The example of Nazi Germany illustrates that, for a unified, autocratic state waging an unremitting conventional war, the aerial pounding of a populace and its means of subsistence is unlikely to stop that people from supporting the conflict, nor are attacks aimed at leadership targets likely to deter its leaders from continuing the struggle."

## The Invasion of Normandy

*"Amphibious operations are a complex form of warfare. On the material side they entail technical study, the production of new machines of war, special types of assault craft, both large and small, and the use of these and other devices. On the human side they demand the creation of sailors-soldiers, soldiers-sailors, and airmen-soldiers, who must cooperate with imaginative understanding of each others' methods and problems."* – **Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten**

*"Good luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking."*  
– **Dwight D. Eisenhower, Order of the Day, June 4, 1944.**

### **Key debate: British vs. American doctrine – surprise or firepower?**

To summarize this debate, military historians have followed one of three lines of the D-day historical narrative:

- First, that the **British were clever and astute military and political thinkers and outfoxed American strategists** leading to an indirect strategy but ultimately ending up with a cross-channel invasion, as espoused by Chester Wilmot.
- Second, that **the British were unalterably opposed to the invasion, deathly afraid of the cost in blood of a direct assault and did everything in their power to delay.** The Americans, on the other hand, were always for a direct assault, and consistently pressed the British for the cross-channel invasion, which they got in 1944.

- Finally, that **Operation Overlord was a compromise between American strategy (a direct attack) and British strategy** (a series of indirect attacks seeking to weaken Nazi Germany but ultimately leading to a cross-channel invasion as a death blow).

**Lewis, Adrian R. *Omaha Beach – A Flawed Victory.***

- **Counterclaims:** “Wilmot, Weigley, and Hastings have placed the blame on the specific tactical plan for the battle at Omaha Beach, as opposed to the overall operational plan for the Normandy invasion. They have argued that it was a uniquely American ‘predilection for direct assault’ that produced the flawed tactical plan. The terrible casualties suffered at Omaha Beach were thus the results of bad decisions made by tactical commanders. The problem with this argument is that all of the tactical commanders opposed the plan that was put into practice. If the American tactical commanders developed a bad plan, it was because they were directed to produce battle plans that conformed to the operational plan.... **The operational plan for the Normandy invasion, which was based on a new, hybrid doctrine, was deeply flawed in numerous ways.** If the British and Canadian forces at Sword, Juno, and Gold Beaches and the American forces at Utah Beach had fought German forces of the quality and quantity of those at Omaha Beach on similar terrain, they too would have suffered heavy casualties and faced the prospect of defeat.”
- **Significance of Omaha:** “The Anglo-American commanders conducted multiple landings over a broad front, the doctrinal approach employed in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy. This approach permitted the Allies to suffer defeat in one tactical battle and still achieve the campaign and strategic objective of getting ashore. However, if several tactical battles had failed, the entire campaign might have collapsed and the strategy for the conduct of the war might also have failed. Defeat at Omaha Beach would have considerably diminished the margin for success. Each battle at Normandy was of considerable importance to the strategic plans of the United States and Britain.”
- **British and American doctrine incompatible:** “The American strategic vision and practice of war were distorted in World War II by the presence of the British, and the British way of war was distorted by the presence of the Americans. Neither nation would have conducted operations in World War II the way they were carried out had they been left to their own designs. In 1942, the British way of war dominated the American practice of war, but by 1944, the British were no longer the senior partner.... In 1944, the balance of power shifted in favor of the American practice of war, a practice to which the British objected for the remainder of the war.... The doctrine employed in the Normandy invasion was the offspring of two genetically different parents...”

### **British**

- Traditionally employed “Indirect grand strategy”: limited-war, exhaustion strategy
  - o “de-emphasized direct confrontation, concentration, mass
  - o “Emphasized surprise, mobility, maneuver, peripheral attacks on enemy weaknesses... conservation of resources, and negotiated settlements.”
- British used sea power to achieve these limited objectives

- “The British way of war was to destroy... the enemy’s fleet; attack enemy trade; blockade the enemy’s coast and conduct raids on the enemy’s ports; seize the enemy’s colonies... wait for the attacks on the enemy’s economy and peripheral areas to erode its capacity to resist.”
- “The Dieppe raid was given credit for revealing the weaknesses of British amphibious doctrine.”
- The advent of modern professional armies “with radar, radio communications, high-speed transportation systems.... [meant that] tactical surprise became more difficult to achieve and less necessary because the combat power of the landing force was multiplied by technology in the form of battleships, aircraft carriers, close air support, landing craft of all types, and the sheer magnitude of the forces industrialized society could produce. The ‘limited commitment of elite troops for short duration’ approach could not produce decisive results.... Its history of amphibious raids and its lack of resources initially confined British thinking on the conduct of amphibious operations. Habits of mind change slowly.”

### **American**

- “The development of US amphibious doctrine was an outgrowth of the great energy and momentum built up during the westward expansion of the United States.... Into the Pacific to Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, and the Philippine Islands.”
- “Marine Corps operations were heavily dependent on naval gunfire: surprise played no part”
- “The American practice of war at the strategic and operational levels was not to attack the enemy’s weakness but to attack its strengths, to seek the enemy’s main army and to destroy it. This is called the ‘direct approach.’ To do this, Americans preferred to conduct daylight assaults, which allowed the maximum use of strategic and operational resources, such as battleships and strategic bombers.”
- Battles in the Pacific reflected American military doctrine: “Surprise was not significant. Battles were... won with the deliberate, methodical, sustained use of overwhelming firepower, followed up by a direct, mass infantry assault.
- Success using extended bombardment (16 hours) during Operation Dragoon, the invasion of southern France, indicates that the American doctrine would have been a better choice for the Normandy invasion: “Had [American doctrine] been employed at Normandy, it is safe to say that ‘bloody Omaha’ would have been less bloody.”

<p><b>Symonds, Craig.</b> <i>Neptune: Allied Invasion of Europe and the The D-Day Landings</i></p>
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- Symonds’ account places him firmly in the second camp. His description of the interaction between the American Joint Chiefs and the British Chiefs of Staff and the interactions between Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt side with a narrative that suggests the British were opposed to the invasion.
- Symonds observes that the task of producing sufficient landing craft for the Normandy landings was complicated by the simultaneous need to build destroyers, destroyer escorts, auxiliary aircraft carriers, and cargo ships, all in large quantities:
  - “All of the agreements solemnly accepted by the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the heads of government about invading occupied France on May 1, 1944, would be meaningless if the Allies could not produce the thousands of landing ships and landing craft needed to carry the invasion force to the beaches. Landing craft had constituted a

bottleneck for the Torch landings [in North Africa], and again for the invasion of Sicily and Italy. The invasion of France would require far more. Without literally thousands of new landing craft, any talk of a cross-Channel operation was simply fatuous.”

- In his telling of the D-Day landings, Symonds concentrates on the difficulties of moving men, vehicles, and equipment to the beaches under heavy German rocket, artillery, mortar, and small arms fire. In so doing, he provides many details not discussed in previous histories of D-Day, again complementing the work. In his final assessment, Symonds credits the success of history’s largest amphibious invasion to the Allies’ planning and execution more than their advantages in men and material.

**Ambrose, Stephen.** *D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climatic Battle of World War II*

- Notes that while Churchill sometimes delayed military planning, there was an early recognition by the British that a cross-channel invasion was essential to defeating Germany (as early as 1941 when the British government issued a call to the public to send them any postcards of northern France they might have picked up while on holiday). While there were some differences in discipline, Ambrose commends Eisenhower as a supreme commander, who made a conscious effort to foster positive relations with British commanders like Montgomery (who he personally disliked).
- “At the end of 1943... the British overcame their doubts and the Allies committed themselves to a cross-channel attack as the decisive effort for 1944.”
- Concedes that while there were some errors in planning, the Germans did an even poorer job defending, mainly due to the conflict between Rommel and Guderian/Rundstedt: “Allied errors pale beside those of the Germans. In trying to defend everywhere they were incapable of defending anywhere.”

**Hastings, Max.** *Overlord: D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944*

- **Significance:** “The struggle for Normandy was the decisive western battle of the Second World War, the last moment at which the German army might conceivably have saved Hitler from catastrophe.”
- **An objective view is needed when studying OVERLORD:** “Much has been written about the poor quality of the German troops defending the Channel coast. Yet these same men prevented the Allies almost everywhere from gaining their D-Day objectives, and on the American Omaha beach brought them close to defeat, even before the crack units of the SS and the Wehrmacht approached the battlefield. In the weeks that followed, despite the Allies’ absolute command of sea and air, their attacks were repeatedly arrested with heavy loss by outnumbered and massively outgunned German units. None of this, of course, masks the essential historical truth that the Allies eventually prevailed. But it makes the campaign seem a far less straightforward affair than the chauvinistic post-war platitudes suggested...”
  - John Keegan's *Six Armies in Normandy* (1982) similarly dismisses post-war nationalistic views of Normandy as a heroic victory, favouring instead a more objective view.

- “Post-war study of the campaign has focused overwhelmingly on the conduct of the generals, and too little attention has been paid to the respective performance of German, British and American ground troops. How could it be that after months of preparation for OVERLORD, Allied armoured and infantry tactics in Normandy were found so wanting?”
- **On the Anglo-American debate:** “[I]t was the Americans who began to focus decisively upon an early cross-Channel invasion. The debate that now began, and continued with growing heat for the next 20 months, reflected ‘an American impatience to get on with direct offensive action as well as a belief, held quite generally in the US War Department, that the war could most efficiently be won by husbanding resources for an all-out attack deliberately planned for a future fixed date. American impatience was opposed by a British note of caution: American faith in an offensive fixed date was in contrast to British willingness to proceed one step at a time, molding a course of action to the turns of military fortune.’ Here, in the words of the American official historian, was the root of growing division between the Combined Chiefs of Staff throughout 1942 and much of 1943.”
  - American thinking was dominated by a fear of rapid Russian collapse
  - “Despite [British] assent to the operation [of an early cross-Channel invasion], in the name of Allied solidarity, they began a successful struggle to divert resources towards much more modest – and in their view, more realistic – objectives.”
  - The Casablanca Conference of January 1943 “was to be the last meeting at which, by a dint of brilliant military diplomacy, the British gained acceptance of their own ideas about the manner in which the war should be pursued.”
  - Operation Husky (invasion of Sicily) and a greater bomber offensive against Germany were British ideas that the Americans “reluctantly accepted.”

## General / Misc

**Bell, Philip.** *Twelve Turning Points of the Second World War.* (2011)

- The narrative of the Second World War did not necessarily follow a well-marked path to Allied victory, nor was it ultimately decided by attrition and material. Rather, “while there were indeed long and gruelling battles, with appalling casualties, notably on the Russian front, there were also distinct events that reveal a pattern in the war.
- 1940-1942 established the geographical shape of the war and marked the limits of the early triumph of the Axis of Germany and Japan.
- 1942-1943 a shift in the balance of power: Japanese loss at Midway (the “sharpest” turning point for Bell) and the loss of the German Sixth Army at Stalingrad.
- The Battle of Britain and Pearl Harbour were psychological turning points in that it established a resolve within the British and American populace.

- “The results of the war, for good or ill, arose from its turning points. The Battle of Britain, the Battle of the Atlantic and the Normandy landings together decided that the British and Americans would control western Europe at the end of the war; while the Battle of Stalingrad and the two conferences at Teheran and Yalta secured the domination of eastern Europe for the Soviet Union. In the Pacific, the American victories over Japan imposed an American peace in that country. Turning points had established the shape of the war and decided its issue, and then they did much to shape the peace.”

**Beevor, Antony.** “The Greatest Turning Point of WWII” interview with Laurence Rees

- “There are three major turning points in the war and they’re all different in their own particular way. The first one is... Churchill’s decision to fight on in May 1940. If we hadn’t had that then there would never have been a base for the Americans to fight back, and there is always the possibility that Hitler could have maintained a complete hegemony over Western Europe. The second and probably the great geopolitical turning point was December 1941, as both the Germans were checked in front of Moscow and the Americans entered into the war. The third is the psychological turning point which is Stalingrad, though it wasn’t necessarily the military turning point except in the fact that it gave the Red Army the confidence, and the techniques that it really needed, to go on beating the Germans. But it was the psychological turning point as far as the rest of the world was concerned, even in Western Europe, even in South America, throughout the world - Stalingrad became a huge symbol.”
- December 1941 was the main turning point of WWII “because that was the geopolitical turning point. There is no way that the Nazis could have won after that particular moment, and they were bound to be beaten eventually by the industrial power of America, by their manpower, and all the rest of it. I doubt that even though there were many horrors in 1942, and in many places British morale was so bad that they really thought that we might still lose the war in early ’42, one has to remember that though there were a series of disasters at that particular time, the great turning point had actually been passed.”

**Beevor, Antony.** *The Second World War* (2012).

- “The fate of the fronts at Stalingrad, in the Caucasus, and in Egypt was closely linked. A grossly over-extended Wehrmacht, relying excessively on weak allies, was now doomed to lose its great advantage of... a war of movement.”