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# The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945

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as a general officer. He was brave, and he won hero medals in World War II, including the Navy Cross, but as a general during the Vietnam War he was in Hawaii instead of in country. Flag and general officers usually need to be combat leaders during a war to reach iconic status.

As a result, this biography of Krulak by Robert Coram is an all the more worthy contribution to the historical literature on the American military. Coram was trained as a journalist and has written two biographies of Air Force colonels, John Boyd and Bud Day. This background proved important, because Krulak had a powerful military intellect and could think well on how to employ military power in all three mediums, air, land, and sea.

Coram makes a strength out of a weakness when he starts the biography off in what seems a vague fashion. Krulak was a brilliant self-promoter who often distorted the historical record to bolster his reputation. This tendency included lying about his early years growing up in Wyoming. Born and raised a Jew, Krulak decided sometime after his arrival at the U.S. Naval Academy that he was an Episcopalian. He also hid the fact that he had married as a teenager. Although his deception regarding his ethnic and religious identity could be understood as a consequence of the bigotry of the time, it continued for the rest of his life. One of his biggest claims was for a wartime association with Lieutenant (junior grade) John F. Kennedy—there was none. Krulak's assignment to the Kennedy White House had nothing to do with old ties of wartime comradeship.

As Coram notes, what is important about Krulak is his military career, not

so much his personal character. With that point made, Coram—in a testament to his skills as a reporter—does a good job of letting the man's personality come through. The biography grows in strength as Krulak moves through his career. In the days before World War II he made major, truly important contributions to the development of amphibious warfare. After the war he helped develop doctrine for the use of the helicopter. In the 1960s he turned his intellect toward counterinsurgency. The section on counterinsurgency is the best part of the book, though specialists will want to see more than is there. Krulak had good ideas that are still extremely relevant. In all of this, Krulak was a constant defender of the institutional interests of the U.S. Marine Corps, including in the acrimonious debates on military unification in the late 1940s.

In short, after reading this book it is easy to see why Krulak is such an icon. Marines and others will enjoy the read.

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Peattie, Mark, Edward Drea, and Hans van de Ven, eds. *The Battle for China: Essays on the Military History of the Sino-Japanese War of 1937–1945*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2010. 614 pp. \$65

The title of this book appropriately suggests a degree of ambiguity regarding the actors fighting over the territorial integrity and cultural identity of China. The interplay of imperial Japan, Nationalist and Communist Chinese, Great Britain, Germany, Russia, France, and the United States from 1937 through 1945 creates a terrain challenging to

navigate with historical accuracy and objective truth. The conflicting viewpoints on these contentious events have proved difficult, and perhaps impossible, material from which to develop a definitive narrative. Consequently, the editors have chosen to avoid illusions of defining the “facts” of the matter, instead offering a number of exploratory essays from opposing viewpoints. In order to offer this multisource assessment, the editors coordinated the efforts of scholars from China, Taiwan, Japan, and the United States.

Editors Mark Peattie (a research fellow at the Hoover Institution), Edward Drea (former chief of the Research and Analysis Division of the U.S. Army Center of Military History), and Hans van de Ven (a professor of modern Chinese history at Cambridge University) stand apart as leading authorities on the Pacific War. The other seventeen contributors range from unknown doctoral candidates to heavyweight historians like Ronald Spector. Despite the pitfalls of bringing together authors of multiple disciplinary backgrounds, varying languages, and competing cultures and ideologies, the editors have maintained a surprisingly well organized text, firmly grounded in analysis of events from the perspective of military affairs.

The book is organized in six parts: the overview; opposing armies’ organization, training, and equipment; initial hostilities (1937–38); a “stalemate in strategies” (1938–42); the Burma and Ichigo campaigns (1943–45); and conclusions. Each section begins with valuable information provided by the editors, furnishing continuity between thematic essays. The essays themselves are insightful, if not groundbreaking, offering milestones for future study and

debate. One innovative and striking theme is the attention to and appreciation for the challenges facing Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT). While not excusing any failures, the authors make it easy to understand the KMT’s weak position in an agrarian society with undeveloped state organization in the face of a growing communist insurgency, tepid allied support, and a vicious campaign of destruction by an industrialized opponent. The deprivations endured and the sacrifices made by the Chinese through seven long years of the most brutal warfare does much to explain the KMT’s precarious situation at the war’s end. At the end of the book, Ronald Spector provides excellent context to these essays on the Sino-Japanese War, placing the scholarship within the framework of the Pacific War, World War II, and the history of warfare.

For military officers, I think, this book provides a number of important insights. For one, it imparts valuable lessons regarding the success of and shortcomings in the Imperial Japanese Army. At a tactical and operational level, the Sino-Japanese War validates the Japanese emphasis on offensive tactics and aggressive spirit to overcome numerical superiority of opponents—a technique proven successful in this case against the Chinese rather than the Russians, for whom the Japanese had prepared.

My only criticism of *The Battle for China* derives from the inadequacy of the maps. Those not intimate with Chinese, Japanese, and Burmese geography will find places described difficult to locate. For instance, the prominent province of Chahar in Inner Mongolia finds its name nowhere on the fourteen maps, including that given for the battle

of Pingxinguan Pass, which took place in Chahar. The Burmese map shows fewer than half the important locations discussed and no indications of the Burma Road, for which the forces were fighting. The Japanese province of Kyūshū was certainly an important place for recruiting, but one will have to look elsewhere to find its location. The political instability of the period exacerbates the situation in terms of geography. Many locations have Japanese, Chinese, and European names. For instance, the Japanese refer to Tianjin, near the city of Peking (modern-day Beijing), as Tientsin. This situation is compounded by the fact that provincial boundaries and place-names of what we now call China, especially in the north, changed frequently in the mid-twentieth century. Although the political and geographic landscapes of the Sino-Japanese War admittedly pose a challenge, the maps could have better illustrated the events described.

As I am not certain that Chinese or Japanese audiences (those most interested in this topic) will gravitate to this English work, *The Battle for China* must be presumed to target a small niche market of Sino-Japanese War military history enthusiasts in North America and Europe. To offset what may be limited interest in its subject, I feel compelled to praise in the strongest terms the efforts of Peattie, Drea, and Van de Ven in organizing, editing, translating, and publishing this important book. Without these distinguished professionals, Western students of the Pacific War would not have access to this important Chinese and Japanese research, mediated by celebrated Western scholars. *The Battle for China* is a rare treasure that will likely renew interest in an

underdeveloped field of Western scholarship. I highly recommend it to those interested in the Pacific War or greater insight into modern Chinese history.

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Mort, Terry. *The Hemingway Patrols: Ernest Hemingway and His Hunt for U-boats*. New York: Scribner's, 2009. 272pp. \$26

The Battle of the Atlantic has been thoroughly researched and exhaustively studied, especially by students attending the Naval War College. However, rarely has the epic campaign to defeat the German U-boat menace been viewed through the lens of the life and personality of one of America's greatest literary figures. In *The Hemingway Patrols*, Terry Mort offers a well researched account of this great campaign, one that reads almost like an actual Hemingway novel.

For students of military history, Mort's account of the titanic struggle between the Allied navies and German U-boats in the early months of 1942 will be somewhat familiar. It is the juxtaposition with Hemingway's decision to participate in the campaign that provides the strength of this narrative. Mort depicts Hemingway in 1942 as at the zenith of both his life and his professional career. Likewise, the German U-boat campaign would reach its zenith during this year: American shipping suffered grievous losses at the hands of only a dozen or so U-boats in the early months. Why would Hemingway, living in luxury in Cuba at the time, risk everything, with his drinking buddies, to hunt U-boats in his wooden fishing trawl