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# Agents of Innovation: The General Board and the Design of the Fleet That Defeated the Japanese Navy

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strategy before presenting a thorough examination of operations and tactical considerations for both land and maritime forces involved in the campaign. The outcome in Norway was never a foregone conclusion. Germany's tactical prowess and brilliant leadership at the small-unit level are conveyed nicely, leaving the reader to actually wonder throughout the narrative whether the Germans can pull off such a bold and daring feat of arms.

It is a tribute to Rhys-Jones's authoritative approach to the subject matter and his fine writing style that he has created such a useful study of the elements—the matching of strategy and policy, the conduct of joint operations, and the wisdom of opening a new theater—while at the same time telling a riveting story.

Any student of grand strategy, as well as the casual reader, will find plenty of value in this well written historical narrative. If there is a waiting list of books to be included into the curriculum at the Naval War College, this book should top the list.

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Kuehn, John T. *Agents of Innovation: The General Board and the Design of the Fleet That Defeated the Japanese Navy*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2008. 296pp. \$32.95

Skeptics of disarmament treaties, such as Richard Pearl, have long argued that these treaties make a nation weaker by depriving it of the means of self-defense. John Kuehn, former naval aviator and presently professor of military history at the U.S. Army Command and

General Staff College, in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, is far more subtle in this excellent book. He shows how the Washington Naval Treaty of 1921 froze battleship construction and yet made the U.S. Navy stronger by 1941. While it is never easy to prove something so counterintuitive, Kuehn does it hands down.

How did this happen? First, by freezing the building of battleships the treaty drove the Navy to invest more time, money, and imagination into other projects, particularly submarines and aircraft carriers. These ships had greater potential than the battleship, which had just about reached its maximum technology by the end of World War I. In addition, by preventing the United States from enhancing its base fortifications west of Hawaii, the treaty drove the Navy to design new vessels of much greater operational radius, build floating dry docks, and enhance its total transport capabilities. By World War II, the U.S. Navy could do the seemingly impossible: beat a peer competitor in the western Pacific without permanent bases in the area of operations.

One wonders why the Japanese did not take advantage of the constraints imposed by U.S. arms limitations. Kuehn offers a convincing explanation, by focusing on the General Board of the U.S. Navy. Whereas the Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy were hierarchal and faction ridden, the U.S. General Board was collegial, collaborative, and remarkably open to new ideas from all branches of the service, virtually irrespective of rank. Both the British and the Japanese fell far behind in antisubmarine warfare. The Japanese stuck to their Mahanian dogma of decisive naval battle conducted by large battleships.

The Americans, meanwhile, built a more balanced fleet, able to starve Japan of supplies as well as defeat its forces on land, in the air, and beneath the sea.

When Kuehn writes of being collegial and collaborative, this reviewer thought of a perpetuation of the status quo, since I was of the opinion that military innovation is only the by-product of egotistic individuals who are unable get along with their fellow officers. Billy Mitchell, J. F. C. Fuller, George Patton, and Pete Ellis readily come to mind. Kuehn points out yet another irony as well—that the U.S. Navy of the 1920s thrived because of financial constraints. All naval officers with pulses and open eyes could see that they could no longer rely on their navy’s simply being bigger than its prospective opponents. Hence the institution entertained all serious ideas of reform, so that the rebels, so to speak, became the norm.

Although this is an excellent book, it is not perfect. The discussion of flying-deck cruisers (a model never put into production) is too long. Chapter 8, however, which compares innovation or lack of it in the navies of Britain, Japan, and Germany, is about the best writing I have seen on military development in the interwar years.

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Kozak, Warren. *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay*. Washington, D.C.: Regnery, 2009. 434pp. \$27.95

Warren Kozak captures the true essence of General Curtis LeMay. Like many great leaders, LeMay was a paradox, a vivid contrast of unique strengths and debilitating weaknesses. He was insecure, afraid of failure, always questioning his own decisions. LeMay hid his insecurities beneath a stern and gruff demeanor that gave the impression of confidence and strength. The antithesis of the stereotypical dashing American flyboy, “LeMay was dark, brooding, and forbidding. He rarely smiled, he spoke even less, and when he did, his words came out in a snarl.”

Always seeking to learn as much as he could, LeMay not only flew airplanes but took time to service and repair them alongside his maintenance crew. He made himself the best navigator in the U.S. Army Air Corps. For example, he successfully located the USS *Utah* in a 120,000-square-mile area of the Pacific, and he found the Italian ocean liner SS *Rex* in a large Atlantic storm. As the United States entered World War II LeMay commanded the 305th Bomber Group, which began with only three aircraft to train thirty-five crews. He was a stern disciplinarian who demanded excellence.

LeMay was always able to cut to the heart of the matter. He devised radically new tactics that improved bombing accuracy and reduced aircraft losses. To build trust and confidence within his crew, he led the missions himself. His success was noticed, and as Generals Hap Arnold’s and Ira Eaker’s “fireman” he was given the toughest challenges to overcome.

Kozak goes on to describe LeMay’s development of Strategic Air Command (SAC), which supported his long-held