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## Professional Reading

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# PROFESSIONAL READING

“Mrs. Hayes does not state whether the Joint Chiefs ever considered the evidence . . . that the Japanese were desperately searching for a way to end the war in the summer of 1945. She does report that the JCS materials contain nothing to indicate that the Joint Chiefs as a body discussed the possible influence of the atomic bomb on Japan’s will to resist.”

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by  
William R. Braisted\*

Hayes, Grace Person. *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War Against Japan*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1982. 964pp. \$31.95

**T**hanks to the author’s perseverance in securing its declassification, Grace Person Hayes’ superb history of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the war against Japan is finally available to the general public thirty years after its completion. Originally conceived by the Joint Chiefs for their own reference as one in a multivolume series on their wartime activities, the volume may well endure as the most authoritative inquiry into American military and naval participation in coalition warfare at the highest level from 1941 to 1945. Mrs. Hayes reviews in detail the initiation and development of strategies through bureaus, commands, and committees up to final action by the Joint Chiefs or by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the body in which the four American Chiefs were joined by their British counterparts. She also deals at length with the preparations for and military discussions at the major wartime conferences.

To uncover her complex story, she worked through vast quantities of JCS and related records. Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King was the only JCS member to read and comment on her entire manuscript, but Mrs. Hayes also

interviewed numerous other key policy makers. Although Mrs. Hayes did not have access to British records, the British positions are clearly established through their participation in the CCS and related activities. The Chinese were only invited to discuss with the Chiefs on carefully planned occasions; the Russians remained aloof.

Mrs. Hayes' study is perhaps most rewarding as an exposition on the limits of power that hedged competing commanders, military services, and even heads of state in their endeavors to influence policy. All theoretically operated within two basic premises accepted by the Americans and the British early in the war. These were, first, that the war should be won in Europe before the Allies turned finally to defeat Japan and, second, that the areas of Anglo-American military concern should be divided into three spheres: an Atlantic-Western Europe-Mediterranean sphere which Americans and British would control together, a Middle East-South Asian-Indian Ocean sphere for which the British were primarily responsible, and a Far East-Pacific sphere where the will of the American Joint Chiefs prevailed.

Through much of the Pacific War, the American and British Chiefs debated the distribution of scarce resources as the Americans, especially Admiral King, sought to mount counteroffensives against Japan which the British insisted on conserving for Europe and the Mediterranean. In addition, King battled General Douglas MacArthur, the Commander in Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, to win acceptance of a Central Pacific offensive. King's Central Pacific strategy was reminiscent of the prewar Orange Plans that army men had never relished, and the disputes between King and MacArthur included overtones of broader rivalries between the Army and the Navy with General George C. Marshall speaking for the Army in the Joint Chiefs.

It was in the China-Burma-India Theater that divisive interests were most destructive to the Allied cause. Chiang Kai-shek was quite reasonably unwilling to join the game until he was certain that the British and American players would subscribe their shares; the British seemed always diverted by more pressing imperial considerations elsewhere; and the Americans were bitterly divided amongst themselves. Even President Roosevelt failed to bring the strong-willed disputants in CBI to share a common purpose as national, service, personal, and possibly racial rivalries were just too intense to permit accommodation. In the CBI and other disputes, the President generally sought to remain above the contentions until they threatened to bring a total impasse or a dangerous explosion.

Mrs. Hayes leaves unresolved two questions that have long troubled this reviewer: how the Joint Chiefs were committed to an invasion of Japan and why that commitment remained so strong to the very end. Did invasion provide the Army with a mission in a campaign that might well have been

concluded with the isolation and bombardment of Japan by the Navy and the Air Force? Mrs. Hayes does not state whether the Joint Chiefs ever considered the evidence from intercepts and other intelligence that the Japanese were desperately searching for a way to end the war in the summer of 1945. She does report that the JCS materials contain nothing to indicate that the Joint Chiefs as a body discussed the possible influence of the atomic bomb on Japan's will to resist. Perhaps the intercept intelligence and the bomb were too highly classified for mention in the JCS minutes. Or was there some parochial interest that removed intelligence and the bomb from the Joint Chiefs' cognizance?

Mrs. Hayes' volume is enhanced by Dean Allard's fine bibliographical essay and by 166 single-spaced pages of notes. Had the Naval Institute furnished maps to replace the originals that were judged inappropriate that would have helped the readers immensely. It would also have been helpful had Mrs. Hayes provided a brief appendix describing the distinctive roles of such bodies as the Joint Staff Planners, the Joint Staff, the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, the Joint United States Strategic Committee, the Joint War Plans Committee, and others.

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Kennett Lee. *A History of Strategic Bombing; From the first hot-air balloons to Hiroshima and Nagasaki*. New York: Scribner, 1982. 221pp. \$15.95

Within the limits which the author set for himself, this is the finest survey of so-called "strategic" bombing that has been written to date. Such an enthusiastic estimate is based upon the author's distribution of the chronological content. Most books which claim to be "histories" of this subject are in truth no more than rehashes of World War II; fortunately, this book goes far beyond that. Less than half of the text which is more than enough, is devoted to the threadbare events of World War II, whereas the remainder deals with the pre-1939 world, and more than half of this

concerns itself with the *twenty years* between the two world wars.

Strategic bombing is one of the most formidable myths of the 20th century. A myth may be true fractionally true, or utter nonsense; its importance is that a majority of mankind, or an influential minority, believes it to be true and in one way or another it moves people to action. The great gestation of the myth of strategic bombing occurred during the interwar years, and most especially in the 1930s. No historian has given this era much attention because the research requires thousands of hours of grubby work among a discouraging number of diverse sources. This is not the kind of labor which anxious journalists and publish-or-perish academic historians are inclined to undertake. Justifiably