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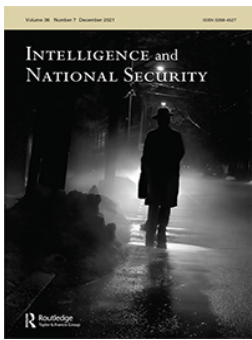
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## Journeys back along the roads to Mandalay, Imphal and Kohima: recent contributions to the history of the Burma theatre in the Second World War

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## Journeys back along the roads to Mandalay, Imphal and Kohima: recent contributions to the history of the Burma theatre in the Second World War


R. Gerald Hughes and Stephen Hanna

### ABSTRACT

This article explores recent literature on the often-overlooked Burma theatre of the Second World War. The brutal contest in Burma, which took place in the most hostile of climates, was never a priority for any of the belligerents in the global war. Despite this, a re-examination of the men who fought in the jungles, hills, and plains of Burma from myriad nations and cultures – and who bled and died in their thousands – adds a number of dimensions to our understanding of the war in the Far East. The twenty-first century has seen an expansion of the literature on the Burma theatre which has added both depth and colour to this truly unique arena of war. These contributions are invaluable in the realms of logistics, air-power, intelligence, politics, and soldiery. This fresh wave of literature includes the re-publication of certain first-hand examinations of some of the most disastrous moments in British military history; the longest fighting retreat conducted by the British Army; the reforging of that army into a victorious fighting force; and accounts of some of the greatest special operations units in history. Such accounts, in tandem with a number of recent scholarly monographs and edited volumes, argue strongly for the rediscovery of this ‘forgotten’ war.

‘Armies do not win wars by means of a few bodies of super-soldiers but by the average quality of their standard units. Anything, whatever short cuts to victory it may promise, which thus weakens the army spirit, is dangerous.’  
Field Marshal William Slim, 1<sup>st</sup> Viscount Slim.<sup>1</sup>

The war in the Burma theatre was occasioned by Japan’s drive to displace the Western colonial empires with an organisation of states arranged, ostensibly, in the name of Pan-Asianism.<sup>2</sup> The Burma theatre was the only campaign in the Far East/Pacific War that lasted for the entire duration of the conflict but was nevertheless rated as a low priority theatre for both sides during the Second World War. It was a sign of waning British power that this was so. After all, the reconquest of the British colonies of Burma and Malaya were essential if Britain were to remain a first-rate power.<sup>3</sup> During the war, senior US figures nevertheless complained that imperial matters remained the British priority in the formulation of their policy. By contrast, the Americans held that their primary aims were to defeat Japan and to save China,<sup>4</sup> which had been fighting a full-scale war against Japan since 1937.<sup>5</sup> The policy priorities of the Roosevelt administration, were apparent to the Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek as he effectively resolved to hang on until the United States involved itself in the war against Japan.<sup>6</sup> This was perhaps not a policy totally unfounded in reality for, as Rana Mitter has noted, without Western assistance China may well have become a Japanese colony as early as 1938.<sup>7</sup> That is not to say that US policy on China was entirely logical. In 1995, Edward Dreyer criticised

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This article is dedicated to the memory of Len Andrews, Eric Bailey, Walford Hughes, and Sir Tom Moore. Burma Stars all. This article has been republished with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

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American planners who, dismissing British concerns, failed to note the relative unimportance of the war in China and the very real lack of progress made by the ruling Kuomintang, and were unable to recognise, until quite late in the war, the relative unimportance of the Chinese war effort and the ineptitude of the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT, or Guomindang, GMD) government.<sup>8</sup> This belated US recognition of the ineffectiveness of Chiang and the KMT, much to the frustration of the British government (which was wholly aware of Chiang's antagonism to them)<sup>9</sup> had resulted in much wasted effort during the war. (In any case, none of this prevented the United States from repeating its mistake with the KMT all over again in the subsequent civil war in China).<sup>10</sup>

In assessing the wartime intra-Allied disputes over China, it is important to note that the US belief that London was pursuing their own agenda – of reclaiming their empire – was to rather overestimate the British capacity to sustain a global struggle on multiple fronts. For, despite US perceptions, in October 1943 Churchill told Charles Eade, about to depart for South East Asia to become an aide to supreme commander in that theatre, Admiral Louis Mountbatten,<sup>11</sup> that he wished to avoid excessive publicity about the region. Eade recalled that Churchill did not want the war in Burma 'written up and publicised . . . [preferring] if it were forgotten.'<sup>12</sup> The reason for this was that Churchill was only too aware that the British XIV<sup>th</sup> Army was fighting in a theatre that merited a low priority. It was with good reason that the XIV<sup>th</sup> Army had the moniker of the 'Forgotten Army' attached to it.<sup>13</sup> At the same time – for all kinds of political, military and diplomatic reasons – Churchill was keen to appear anything other than passive in South East Asia.<sup>14</sup> Such are the problems of fighting global wars for great powers in relative decline.

The geographical and climatic conditions in Burma, make the struggle there an intriguing subject for historians of war. Within the war in the Far East, the Burma theatre was highly idiosyncratic in many ways. In geographical terms, the obstacles were formidable for any form of human activity, let alone war. Climate, mountains, rivers, and disease all impacted upon the military efforts of all the players in a major fashion (in 1944, Churchill lamented that the majority of 40,000 casualties suffered in the first six months of that year were from disease).<sup>15</sup> The primitive nature of Burma's transport infrastructure naturally meant that air power and specialist military engineer units were much to the fore. (And, whatever their historical inaccuracies, Pierre Boulle's novel, *Le Pont de la rivière Kwaï* (1952)<sup>16</sup> and David Lean's subsequent film adaptation (1957),<sup>17</sup> were correct in its depiction of the priority accorded to major transportation and logistical projects). It is undoubtedly the case that the Allies, faced with the undeniable fighting abilities of the Japanese, eventually greatly improved their use of the important sinews of war – such as transportation and intelligence – far more effectively than did their opponents.<sup>18</sup> This was especially the case following a reappraisal after the fall of Singapore ('the greatest disaster in our history', according to Churchill)<sup>19</sup> saw the ditching of the rather lazy racial stereotyping that had previously informed British assumptions regarding the Japanese.<sup>20</sup> (By March 1944, for example, General Slim was able to use intelligence to anticipate the Japanese offensive towards Imphal with remarkable prescience).<sup>21</sup> The shift in British thinking took some time to take effect, as there was a great deal of confusion and infighting with the intelligence communities (and, as Richard Aldrich has noted, the war in the Far East was a prime example of cock-up and not conspiracy predominating as an explanatory tool).<sup>22</sup> In any case, in East Asia, 'the priorities of British secret service were as much about imperial, financial, and commercial power, as about specific military enemies [like Japan]'.<sup>23</sup>

Prior to the outbreak of war with Japan, it was certainly the case that the Far East Combined Bureau (based in Singapore since 1939) was woefully unprepared for war. This was perhaps less than surprising, given that British resources were stretched to breaking point to contain the Germans and the Italians in the European War.<sup>24</sup> Pearl Harbor at least brought the weight of US resources as a welcome boost to British morale, and it was fortunate that Japanese strategy had ensured that the United States would become a belligerent. The Japanese Empire's real targets had been the Dutch and British possessions in the Far East. These possessions contained the valuable raw material required by an Imperial project that was, from 1940, labelled the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.<sup>25</sup> This imperial scheme has been the subject of a recent study by Jeremy Yellen. In *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere: When Total Empire Met Total War* Yellen argues that the Co-

Prosperity Sphere characterised a dual struggle that would decide the future of Asia. This duality was played out in two wars: one waged by Japan to establish an imperial hegemony, the second, being the struggle for liberation from colonialism. The latter, of course, was embraced by the nationalist elite in Burma. Of course, to win 'their' war, the Burmese nationalists had first to support the Japan Empire in its.

In terms of economic riches, the possessions of the United States in the Pacific were not in the same league as those of the British and the Dutch empires. That said, the Japanese decided that they could not risk the US remaining neutral – their possession of the Philippines meant that these could become a strategically-invaluable base for interrupting Japan's vital sea lanes linking the metropole with their projected new acquisitions. As Evan Mawdsley phrased it: 'the invasion of the Southern Area and the total security of the empire required Japanese control of the Philippines; control of the Philippines required war with America.'<sup>26</sup> This almost certainly ensured Allied victory in the long term but, in the meantime, British forces were sent reeling from the Japanese onslaught. The swift fall of Singapore (and Bangka and Java) meant that the maritime approaches to Burma were under IJN control. The Imperial Japanese Army took Rangoon on 8 March 1942, whilst the IJN secured the flanks of the expanding empire by taking the Andaman and Nicobar Islands fifteen days later. Once Sumatra was totally occupied by 28 March, Japan's so-called Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere had established its planned defensive perimeter against what Tokyo had labelled the ABCD (America-Britain-China-Dutch) powers.<sup>27</sup> This period of rapid expansion was portrayed as a great victory for defensive Pan-Asianism against the aggressive colonial West,<sup>28</sup> and Japan's stunning successes caused its leaders to become over-confident as they displayed the symptoms of what was termed 'Victory disease'.<sup>29</sup>

The launching of Japan's grandiose plans for East Asia and the Pacific were immediately followed by the German and Italian declarations of war on the United States.<sup>30</sup> These were accompanied by an agreement whereby the Eurasian land mass would be divided between the Axis powers on an imaginary line running from the Arctic to the Indian Ocean.<sup>31</sup> Whilst the Axis powers came to dominate a large portion of the globe by middle-1942, such fantastic schemes proved to be a chimera as the German willingness to take on multiple opponents was mirrored by the Japanese. The debate in Tokyo on whether, or not, to attack the British forces in Burma and Malaya before attacking the United States (or vice-versa) was eventually resolved by a piece of 'strategic audacity': the British Empire and the United States were to be attacked 'in two directions *at the same time*'.<sup>32</sup> At the time, Churchill conceded that this came to him as 'an immense relief, as I had long dreaded being at war with Japan without or before the United States'.<sup>33</sup> In the event, the co-ordination of the Axis war effort proved to be largely rhetorical in nature as the war in Europe and the war in Asia were fought as largely separate conflicts as far as Berlin, Rome and Tokyo were concerned. In contrast, the way the Allies fought the global war with a unified strategy (and a unified command in South East Asia under Mountbatten). This was a key constituent part of Allied victory in Burma.

Geography, history, and international politics also made the Burma theatre something of a crossroads in terms of the national interest of certain of the protagonists. For whilst Burma was part of the British Empire,<sup>34</sup> its location – and its invasion by the Japanese – meant that the Republic of China and the United States of America were also intimately involved in the Burma theatre. That said, while the Japanese threat may eventually have created common cause amongst the Allied powers, the American, British, and Chinese were all, in both traditional and contemporary terms, possessed of a very catholic range of strategic interests. Great difficulties arose because the United States rated the KMT government, as being rather more impressive than did the British,<sup>35</sup> as it resisted a process of Japanese aggression that went back to 1931. This difference in Anglo-American views remained a source of tension throughout the war in the Far East. In July 1940, the Japanese had prevailed upon the British (who were embattled in Europe fighting Hitler) to close the Burma Road – a major supply artery for the Chinese, who had been fighting a full-out war against the invading Japanese Empire since 1937.<sup>36</sup> The reasons for this act of British appeasement were made clear by R.A. 'Rab' Butler, a minister in the Foreign Office, to a secret session of the British parliament

on 30 July 1940. In his submission Butler candidly acknowledged the threat to Burma and the power of the Japanese navy, to which the British had nothing to offer. Worse, the US government had made it clear that, in the event of war between Japan and Britain, the United States would do nothing to help.<sup>37</sup>

Although the US was alarmed that Japanese conquest had permanently closed the Burma Road by 1942, South East Asia still ranked low in their list of priorities. For rather different reasons, largely to do with over-stretched resources, the British also accorded Burma a low priority.<sup>38</sup> This shortcoming was largely lost on Washington, and the US was uninterested in what it saw as British excuses. Washington's long-term concerns with China caused them to lobby the British to open the Burma Road to relieve the pressure on the Chinese government. In September 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt's chief of staff, Admiral William Leahy, advised him that: 'I have an idea that Great Britain will not give any useful assistance to the Burma expedition at the present time and it is my opinion that from the long distance American view point of essentials in our own war effort, the opening of the Burma Road and the support of China should have very high priority.'<sup>39</sup> In the face of such American insistence, the British sought the path of prevarication. For his part, Churchill hoped that he could educate the Americans about what dangers lay ahead: not least the long-term danger from the Soviet Union once the Axis powers were beaten. When Churchill warned Roosevelt that 'this war will last a long time', Aldrich and Cormac have noted that he was playing a 'delicate game of influence and empire.'<sup>40</sup>

To the international players involved in the Burma theatre, one might add the presence of the local populations and nations. On 1 August 1943, the occupying Japanese, seeking to bolster their flagging military fortunes, belatedly recognised the rising tide of anti-colonial nationalism by declaring the establishment of the so-called 'State of Burma' (under Ba Maw).<sup>41</sup> Whilst the activities of pro-Japanese Burmese nationalists elicited British concern,<sup>42</sup> sufficient of the Burmese people realised that the newly-minted Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was even less receptive to ideas of national self-determination than were the European colonial empires.<sup>43</sup> This prompted a group of Burmese nationalists including Aung San, Ba Maw's former minister of war, founder of the Burma National Army (BNA)<sup>44</sup> and father of the current State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi,<sup>45</sup> to secretly found the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League in August 1944.<sup>46</sup> This organisation made common cause with the Allies against the background of a tacit understanding that negotiations for independence would follow the defeat of the Japanese. On 27 March 1945, the BNA openly joined the Allies and attacked the Japanese (this day was later commemorated as 'Resistance Day'). When Aung San met Slim two months later, the British officer was impressed despite the Burmese nationalist's long history of antagonism to British rule.<sup>47</sup> The Burmese hill tribes (including the Naga and Karen) had always been keen to aid the British and, as the war progressed, flocked to enlist as guides and guerrilla levies in increasing numbers. On 21 July 1945, the commander of the British 33<sup>rd</sup> Corps, General Montagu Stopford, even attested to the fact that the local Karen forces recruited by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) had, in the previous month, inflicted more casualties on the Japanese than had the regular army.<sup>48</sup> The assistance of the Burmese was, naturally, gratefully accepted by the British at the time, although when independence for the colony was debated after the war, an unforgiving Churchill (then in Opposition) singled out Aung San for criticism.

[In 1940-1] U Aung San went over to the Japanese, and raised what we might call a Quisling army to come in at the tail of the Japanese and help conquer the country for Japan. Great cruelties were perpetrated by his army. They were not very effective in fighting, but in the infliction of vengeance upon the loyal Burmese - the Burmese who were patriotically fighting with British and Indian troops to defend the soil of Burma from Japanese conquerors - great cruelties were perpetrated on those men, because they had helped us to resist the Japanese.

Churchill bemoaned the fact that after years of fighting U Aung Sun had changed sides 'as soon as he saw that Japan would be defeated' and when 'it became quite evident that it was a matter of time only as to who was to win the great struggle'. Churchill stressed that he had only accepted these

overtures 'because of the general aim and importance of shortening the war, saving the unnecessary shedding of British blood, and bringing the whole of the Burma position forward into line with the American advance in the Pacific.' That said, he was unwilling to forget past sins.

Of course, it is not a very agreeable transaction, when a traitor rebel leader, who has come in with foreign invaders, brings his army over to your side, when so many cruelties and outrages have been perpetrated- still, in war time, the great thing is to get to the end of the war as soon as possible in a victorious manner. I certainly did not expect to see U Aung San, whose hands were dyed with British blood and loyal Burmese blood, marching up the steps of Buckingham Palace as the plenipotentiary of the Burmese Government.<sup>49</sup>

Amongst local nationalists, U Aung Sun was not alone in his desire to make common cause with the Japanese Empire. To the west of Burma, the nationalist movement in India threw up a controversial 'man of destiny',<sup>50</sup> one Subhas Chandra Bose.<sup>51</sup>

Dubbed 'Netaji'<sup>52</sup> by his followers, Bose had eschewed the constitutional nationalism of the Congress Party for more violent methods. In 1941, having escaped to Germany, Bose established the Free India Legion (which was recruited from amongst Indian prisoners-of-war),<sup>53</sup> before returning to Asia to secure Japanese patronage for another anti-British force, the so-called Indian National Army (INA) in 1943.<sup>54</sup> Bose, who might be said to have transposed the Irish nationalist motto that 'England's extremity is Ireland's opportunity' to an Asian setting (similarly, in Burma, 'Britain's difficulty is Burma's opportunity' became a nationalist slogan).<sup>55</sup> Bose was an unstinting enemy of the British Empire, vowing that 'I am prepared to shake hands with Satan himself to drive the British out of India.'<sup>56</sup> From early 1942 onwards, Bose endured a frustrating period when the Japanese had not seemed interested in 'liberating' India,<sup>57</sup> as the Imperial Army wisely – given their local weaknesses – stood on the defensive on the frontiers of Burma.<sup>58</sup> But Bose's urgings that the Japanese should invade India were eventually heeded and Lieutenant-General Renya Mutaguchi. The result was the so-called U Go offensive. The INA's participation in this operation (labelled *Chalo Delhi* ('The March on Delhi') by Bose) was supposed to presage the creation of an independent India.<sup>59</sup> Bose had seen his (and India's) chance with first, German, and then Japanese ascendancy but the strategic situation was moving against him. As the Japanese XVth Army prepared to launch U Go, President Franklin Roosevelt impressed upon Churchill the very real danger from the 'continued build up of Japanese strength in Burma'. This required the Allied to 'undertake the most aggressive action within our power to retain the initiative and prevent them from launching an offensive that may carry them over the borders into India.' In addition the president stressed that:

I am gravely concerned over the recent trends in strategy that favour an operation toward Sumatra and Malaya in the future than to face the immediate obstacles that confront us in Burma. I fail to see how an operation against Sumatra and Malaya requiring tremendous resources and forces, can possibly be mounted after the conclusion of the war in Europe. Lucrative as a successful [Operation] CULVERIN [to recapture the northern tip of Sumatra] might be, there appears much to be gained by employing all the resources we now have available in an all out drive into Upper Burma so that we can build up our air strength in China and insure the essential support for our westward advance to the Formosa-China-Luzon area.<sup>60</sup>

This new direction in Allied priorities ensured that U Go failed. This defeat proved to be the prelude to the Allied liberation of Burma.<sup>61</sup> The decline of Japanese fortunes signalled the end of Bose's hopes for the INA leading India to freedom, but he continued to work against the British Empire. Bose eventually met his death in an air crash in August 1945, a few days after Japan had surrendered. The death of Bose was shrouded in mystery and rumour (and the British investigation saw them seek out the Japanese doctor who had tended to Bose in his final hours).<sup>62</sup> It is testament to Bose's reputation that so many people were relieved to see him depart the scene.<sup>63</sup> These figures included many senior members of India's Congress Party (an organisation in which the INA leader had occupied a prominent position in the 1930s) and many British politicians who were content to have to negotiate with Gandhi and Nehru rather than Chandra Bose.

There is little doubt that the Allied forces engaged in the Burma theatre – which eventually included British, Indian, Burmese, African, and Nepali troops – were initially poorly prepared and

equipped to face the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) which was, in turn, supported by Burmese and Indian nationalists. And, of course, the IJA's advances naturally engendered recriminations within the British armed forces and intelligence agencies. The British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) took its share of blame but after criticism from an Australian general, Gordon Bennett, SIS highlighted the fact that they had provided twenty-one reports on Japan's 'preparations for a southward move' in the week before Pearl Harbor.<sup>64</sup> And, as Richard Aldrich noted, there was no real intelligence failure before Singapore fell, more a refusal of higher authorities to accept the clear warnings provided.<sup>65</sup> When we take account of such factors, the successes achieved by the Allied intelligence during the successful campaigns against the Japanese in 1944–5 are not simply the result of superior resources.

In the years since the Japanese surrender, the work of writers and historians has done much to erode the 'forgotten' moniker of Britain's XIV<sup>th</sup> Army under Major General William Slim. Perhaps the best single-volume history of the war in Burma remains Louis Allen's *Burma: The Longest War, 1941–1945*, published in 1984.<sup>66</sup> Other scholars have focussed on specific aspects of the war in the Burma theatre between 1941 and 1945 (such as, for example, the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet).<sup>67</sup> Memoirs, including Slim's classic *Defeat into Victory* in 1956, <sup>68</sup> have given us a number of detailed and insightful accounts of a conflict that was often largely overlooked amid a wealth of histories of the European, African, and Atlantic campaigns of the Second World War.<sup>69</sup> A recent crop of works on numerous aspects of the Burma War – ranging from air power to operational accounts – provide us with further illuminating perspectives, whilst raising new questions for another generation of military historians.

For those interested in the higher command decisions made in the Burma Theatre, John Grehan and Martin Mace recently produced two volumes compiling senior officers' reports to the British War Office, providing a solid outline of such matters (*Fall of Burma* and *The Battle for Burma*). The wartime reports produced in these tomes provide a chronological overview of the major strategic and operational decisions and developments in Burma and the factors underpinning them, as well as detailed appreciations of the developing conflict.<sup>70</sup> The HUMINT, IMINT, and SIGINT gathered for, and used in, Allied decision-making and planning is discussed in several sections, as is its fatal absence in the early stages.<sup>71</sup> The two volumes cover both the traumatic fighting withdrawal across the major rivers and mountains of Burma and the subsequent rebuilding process and pursuit of the Imperial Japanese armies shattered so decisively in the Imphal campaign (March–July 1944). The emphasis here is on reproducing primary sources and, as a result, the narrative is somewhat disjointed. That said, the individual reports are clear, informative, and detailed. Ultimately, the nature of these volumes means the reader will need a prior understanding of the politics, context, and personalities involved in Burma in order to derive maximum benefit.<sup>72</sup> Grehan and Mace's books include a series of interesting maps that are, unfortunately, difficult to read due to their small type. More usefully, they contain appendices for those interested in order of battle and other tabulated data.

Elsewhere, Grehan edits – and introduces – the 1942 report of Colonel E.C.V. Foucar on the Japanese conquest of Burma. This report, commissioned by the Director of Military training, is based on extensive contemporary documents and first-hand accounts of the fighting against the IJA. This source material means that Foucar's report remains highly informative and insightful perspective. Helpfully, at the outset of report Foucar provides useful background to the Second World War, detailing the British colonial presence in Burma and the nature of the country and its people.<sup>73</sup> The *First Burma Campaign* complements Grehan and Mace's *Fall of Burma*, providing an impressive account of the Allied retreat to India. An early acknowledgement of the woeful lack of intelligence on the IJA is noted here, as are the belated attempts to establish effective networks to rectify this shortcoming (and the difficulties of maintaining effective intelligence in hostile terrain and whilst the Allied forces are on the back foot).<sup>74</sup> This all provides essential context to the early Allied defeat and retreat into India before the remoulding of the available Allied forces into the effective fighting units that eventually recaptured Burma. In the introduction to Foucar's report, Grehan correctly observes that the First Burma Campaign has not received the same level of attention as the pivotal defeat of the IJA's thrust into India at Kohima and Imphal. The publication of this report is thus designed to



bring this campaign to light. In seeking to achieve this, Grehan is assisted by the fact that Foucar's exceptional contemporary narrative effectively draw the reader into this complex, dramatic, and neglected story. The Allies' long and demoralising retreat has received some historical attention but is often minimised within histories of the Second World War – despite its importance. That said, the publication of Foucar's report serves to provide necessary background for improving our understanding as to how the Allies adapted to fight an enemy that they had been outfought by in 1941–2.<sup>75</sup>

Intelligence, primarily of the combat variety, was key to the rebuilding of the Allied forces vanquished in Burma. Much can be gleaned from Foucar regarding the way these experiences were put to tactical and operational use. Foucar's account also explores some of the controversial command decisions of the Burma Campaign – such as in the blowing of the Sittang Bridge, a key defensive point for Rangoon and central Burma.<sup>76</sup> The author's perspective on such important decisions – decisions which remain controversial – are explained clearly and in detail and allow the contemporary reader to reach their own conclusions. This chronicle of the campaign benefits from its being crafted by a soldier. To derive the maximum possible set of perspectives, Foucar reached down to the company level to provide an exemplary explanation of the nuances of modern war. Foucar's account is testament to the grim professionalism exhibited by Britain's Imperial forces and her allies in the face of an efficient and highly motivated enemy, despite the lack of preparation and resources on the part of the Allies. Foucar explodes some of the myths regarding the conduct of the war in Burma: not least the nature and extent of Burmese cooperation with the invaders, and the belief that the IJA was invincible in the jungle.<sup>77</sup> The report has an earnest honesty which critics will contrast with the relevant volumes of the official histories of the war in Burma.<sup>78</sup> After all, Foucar's task was to correct vital failings and not to provide any *post bellum* alibis for British military shortcomings. In sum, Grehan's edition of Foucar's report is highly commended to all interested parties, not least because of the fascinating data contained in the appendices.

The pivotal battles of the Burma campaign, centred around Imphal and Kohima, have naturally seen more widespread coverage from historians than is the case with the rest of the Burma campaign.<sup>79</sup> By this stage of the war (1944), the institutionalised racism that had caused British intelligence to underestimate the Japanese soldier had undergone considerable change. Indeed, the experience of 1941–2 had caused a transformation in Allied perceptions: the Japanese infantryman came to be regarded as something of a 'superhuman'<sup>80</sup> in terms of his ability to endure hardship. This unhelpful oscillation in stereotyping was at least being corrected by mid-1943 in favour of a far more helpful realism. By 1944, the received wisdom amongst the Allied force held that setbacks and extended privation were badly affecting the IJAs fighting abilities through the diminution of the morale of the ordinary soldier.<sup>81</sup> This modified, rather more sober, view of the opponent's capabilities, undoubtedly assisted in the Allied victories of 1944.

The Siege of Kohima, one of the key battles of 1944, is revisited in the re-publication of John Colvin's *Not Ordinary Men* (it originally appeared in 1994). This was a clash that Earl Mountbatten of Burma later considered 'probably one of the greatest battles in history', while Field Marshal Wavell observed that 'when the history of this war comes to be written, the fight here will be put down as one of the turning points of the war ... when the Japanese were routed and their downfall really began'.<sup>82</sup> Colvin's focus on Kohima and the engagements around it gives a more thorough and detailed account than that which may be found in works covering the larger engagements around Imphal and includes details on the efforts of V Force and other supporting groups.<sup>83</sup> The main battle around Imphal is dealt with in its strategic context and through its relationship to the Kohima siege (particularly with regard to its influence on IJA decision making).<sup>84</sup> Though primarily focused on the Allied side, Colvin's volume analyses decision-making on both sides. Facilitating this, he utilised first-hand accounts from all ranks in the Allied and Japanese forces. The presence of maps and appendices is welcome, rendering the description of a chaotic battle clear and intelligible to the reader. There are some descriptions and observations of the Japanese that are now somewhat dated. These include, as part of a discussion of what 'Japanese character' constituted, references to Ruth

Benedict's hugely influential 1946 study, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. While Benedict's book has sold millions, and remains a landmark publication, it really should be treated with caution by modern authors.<sup>85</sup> (One can derive a flavour of the book, by observing that Benedict wrote that the Japanese character was 'both aggressive and unaggressive, both militaristic and aesthetic, both insolent and polite, rigid and adaptable, submissive and resentful of being pushed around, loyal and treacherous, brave and timid, conservative and hospitable to new ways').<sup>86</sup> As an indictment of an entire people, Benedict's book can be compared to its near-contemporary, *The Course of German History* by Alan Taylor.<sup>87</sup> Alas, Colvin seems rather too uncritical of Benedict when referring to the era preceding 1941–5 as one of brutal militarism which, he asserts, had an effect upon the Japanese people.<sup>88</sup> Such lapses are unfortunate for Colvin's book is an otherwise engaging and informed assessment of tactical and strategic decisions as well as the general build up and progress of the battle and also serves as a valuable collection of first-hand accounts.

The exploits of the Long-Range Penetration Groups (LRPG, or 'Chindits'), and their enigmatic and controversial leader Brigadier General Orde Wingate (of whom Churchill was a great admirer),<sup>89</sup> have attracted much attention from historians.<sup>90</sup> The popular appeal of figures such as Wingate contributed to the acrimonious debates concerning the Chindits. These often centred on the cost-benefit analyses of the LRPG operations,<sup>91</sup> as well as endless discussions of Wingate's own eccentricities.<sup>92</sup> These did not deter Churchill, who deemed Wingate 'a man of genius', from considering Wingate for the post of overall commander of India (to the great alarm of senior British officers).<sup>93</sup> That said, Wingate's talent was undeniable and the Chindits pursued ambitious offensive operations behind Japanese lines, inflicting a great deal of damage whilst requiring little cooperation from the indigenous Burmese population (in contrast to many classic guerrilla operations).<sup>94</sup> This was rarely unaccompanied by critics who questioned their effectiveness in terms of value for money and many commentators highlighted their role as being, primarily, providers of propaganda (in this, the Chindits can be compared to the 'Dambuster' raids of May 1943).<sup>95</sup>

*The Road Past Mandalay*, the extraordinary autobiography of John Masters, a British officer who served with the Chindits, has served as a standard text on the Chindits' war in Burma for over fifty years now.<sup>96</sup> Its strengths are legion. (For example, Masters provided an excellent account of the establishment, by Chindit forces, of an interdicting strongpoint in support of the Lieutenant General Joseph W. Stilwell's operations in Burma).<sup>97</sup> Masters nevertheless demonstrated a willingness to criticise the whole Chindit concept, noting that, without supporting air power, the fighting strength effectiveness of Wingate's forces was reduced by over 60%.<sup>98</sup> Naturally, given the number of hagiographies devoured by military history enthusiasts, such statements fuelled rancorous disputes about Wingate, although these have now mostly subsided and debates are now characterised by a more consensual tone. Chinnery's second work on the Chindits, *Wingate's Lost Brigade*, takes a relatively balanced but ultimately admiring look at the first foray into occupied Burma in 1943: Operation Longcloth (in which air power played a particularly prominent role).<sup>99</sup> Longcloth was the precursor to the larger (and better known) Operation Thursday of 1944,<sup>100</sup> and it has often been overshadowed by its successor operation. *Lost Brigade* is a detailed exploration of the planning, and steep learning curve that the Chindits underwent in training for, and then experiencing, bitter fighting behind Japanese lines. Chinnery explores the value of the Chindits in terms of their originality, offensive potential, and their effectiveness as gatherers of intelligence. Though filled with enthusiasm for Wingate's projects, and the man himself, Chinnery's book does not shy away from discussion of his more controversial characteristics, decisions, and mistakes including his crossing of the Irrawaddy, changing of plans without proper communication, and gaps in training and planning for the foray.<sup>101</sup> *Wingate's Lost Brigade* is a balanced and lucid account of the first expedition and is punctuated with numerous informative perspectives, first-hand experiences, and maps (some presented in stylish appendices).

The way Allied supremacy at sea and in the air won the war against the Axis has recently been conclusively demonstrated by Phil O'Brien in his magisterial *How the War was Won*. Even as the

Japanese were storming across the Pacific, it was clear to perceptive observers that long-term Allied superiority in the air and sea would prevail. As Roosevelt wrote in a memorandum in April 1942:

The objective of [the present Allied] defense strengthened by offensive actions is to destroy or damage as many Japanese naval vessels, merchant ships and airplanes as possible. In this regard, it is essential to maintain destruction or damage of a much larger number of Japanese ships and planes each month than they can replace. In other words, combat against Japanese ships and planes must be sought out in order to hasten the attrition of Japanese arms.<sup>102</sup>

The Allies certainly used air power very effectively in the Burma theatre, exploiting their assets in to the full.<sup>103</sup> It is certainly the case that Aerial transport and supply played a significant role in the operations of the Chindits in 1943–4<sup>104</sup> (and intelligence *per se* also benefitted from the essential ‘armed services approach to logistics’).<sup>105</sup> Bryn Evans’ *Air Battle for Burma* adds to this dimension of the Burma campaign, which is particularly welcome considering the importance of air power in controlling the battlespace over Burma – and for protecting the long supply lines that the campaign necessitated.<sup>106</sup> The importance of aerial reconnaissance as an intelligence tool, and the importance of early warning systems for maintaining air superiority, are discussed in some detail by Evans,<sup>107</sup> as is the support and maintenance of both ‘The Hump’ air supply route to China (‘the most dangerous, terrifying, barbarous aerial transport run in the world ... the skyway to Hell’).<sup>108</sup> ‘The Hump’, the replacement for the closed ‘Burma Road’, and the Chindits’ operations behind Japanese lines, are both accorded special attention by Evans. As operations, they were unique to the Burma theatre and illuminating their mechanics is of real utility in moving towards a complete military history of Burma. In his account, Evans demonstrates how Chindit air support operations were crucial to liaison between those on the ground and their conveyance of useable intelligence for the Allied air forces to act upon.<sup>109</sup> In 1944, transport aircraft of the Royal Air Force (RAF) and United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) supplied large numbers of ground troops, defying serious Japanese efforts to cut the Allied ground forces off. Subsequently, Slim was also able to use air power to move the 5<sup>th</sup> Indian Division at Imphal, prior to the advance of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army into Burma proper. Such sophisticated military operations anticipated by some years the modern concept of the Air-Land Battle.<sup>110</sup> Even during Allied recovery in the Burma theatre, differences remained between Washington and London. ‘The Hump’ air route prompted Churchill to confide to his wife that he objected to British troops ‘fighting in the most unhealthy country in the world under the worst possible conditions to guard the American air line over the Himalayas into their very over-rated China.’<sup>111</sup> Evans succeeds in bringing the human perspective of the Burma campaign to life through his use of numerous personal accounts and through them provides an informative and compelling description of the experience of the Allied air forces in Burma. That said, Evans makes a few unfortunate errors in his book, particularly relating to naval matters. These include the misidentification of the 1912-vintage *Kongō* Class battlecruisers as ‘modern battleships’ and the mistaken assertion that 14” (35.6 cm) naval ordinance of the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) was a crucial factor in the victory at the Battle of the Java Sea,<sup>112</sup> a battle where no such weapons were present, and in which 5.5” (14 cm) and 8” (203 cm) guns and torpedoes were decisive.<sup>113</sup> While such errors are not fatally damaging to the account of the air war, they do unfortunately create doubts in the mind of the reader when it comes to the accuracy of other claims and descriptions. One such instance is the text’s mentioning the presence of Ki 48 ‘Julia’ heavy bombers, despite accounts of such aircraft in Burma being confirmed as misidentifications of Ki 48 ‘Lily’ light bombers.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, *Air Battle for Burma* is a highly readable work that incorporates valuable first-hand accounts from pilots and ground crew. These provide the reader with fascinating insights into the everyday problems faced by the RAF and the Indian Air Force (IAF). Used alongside existing scholarship on the subject, Evans’ work is of real utility for those seeking to develop our knowledge of the development of air power in the Far East to a level that has long been commonplace in accounts of the Second World War in Europe.<sup>115</sup>

In terms of major offensive actions, the years 1942–4 was a period of relative passivity by the Allied forces in South East Asia. Despite this, a draft project for the liberation of all Burma (Operation

Anakim) was mooted until finally being dropped at the Washington Conference of May 1943. One of the main reasons for this lay in the weakness of available British naval forces in theatre.<sup>116</sup> These naval forces, the subject of Charles Stephenson's *The Eastern Fleet and the Indian Ocean*, had originally been part of an ambitious British naval project. Early in 1941, the ABC-1 ('American-British Conversations') had discussed sending (then neutral) US Navy heavy units to the Atlantic to allow the deployment of Royal Navy (RN) units to East Asia. In the late summer of 1941, the increasingly bellicose attitude of Japan caused the British to make solid commitments. In November 1941, Churchill made a speech in which he warned Japan of British resolution and the commitment of the to defend the British Empire in the Far East.

I am able to announce to you that we now feel ourselves strong enough to provide a powerful naval force of heavy ships, with its necessary ancillary vessels, for service if needed in the Indian and Pacific Ocean ... This movement of our naval forces, in conjunction with the United States main Fleet, may give practical proof to all who have eyes to see that the forces of freedom and democracy have not by any means reached the limit of their power.<sup>117</sup>

The battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* was despatched to the Far East as a deterrent to Japanese aggression, for which purpose it was teamed with the battlecruiser HMS *Repulse*. Their arrival at Singapore in early December heralded the creation of the RN's Eastern Fleet. In the event, the two ships, which came to be designated as 'Force Z' proved sadly inadequate. Lacking air cover, both were sunk by Japanese aircraft.<sup>118</sup> In the House of Commons, Churchill was candid regarding the magnitude of the disaster.

The Japanese onslaught has brought upon the United States and Great Britain very serious injuries to our naval power. In my whole experience I do not remember any naval blow so heavy or so painful as the sinking of the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse" on Monday last. These two vast, powerful ships constituted an essential feature in our plans for meeting the new Japanese danger as it loomed against us in the last few months.<sup>119</sup>

Henceforth it was the IJN, and not the Eastern Fleet, that held the initiative in South East Asia. Stephenson's book provides a sound analysis of how the Eastern Fleet dealt with this strategic position (in which it might be said to have embraced the notion of its status as a 'fleet in being').<sup>120</sup> And yet, although the Eastern Fleet did not play anything like the role in the war against Japan played by the US Pacific Fleet,<sup>121</sup> Stephenson's history enhances our understanding of the Burma and Pacific theatres. This he does by carefully dissecting Allied naval strategy. In addition to a pre-existing weakness in numbers, the Royal Navy's marginalisation from the war in the Burma theatre was the result of three events. First, the loss of 'Force Z'; second, the fall of the main port of Rangoon in March 1942; and third, the damage that the Eastern Fleet suffered in the IJN's Indian Ocean Raid (31 March-10 April 1942). This 'raid' saw an IJN carrier force, commanded by Vice-Admiral Chūichi Nagumo, threaten Allied shipping and naval bases in and around Ceylon. In fact, it ultimately failed to locate, and destroy, the bulk of the British Eastern Fleet.<sup>122</sup> That said, in its wake Ceylon and South India were virtually defenceless, and Churchill supposedly termed this 'the most dangerous moment of the war'.<sup>123</sup> Fortunately, Japanese inability to spare any troops for an offensive meant that Admiral Sir James Somerville, commander of the Eastern Fleet from 2 January 1942, was able to concern himself with the protection of Ceylon (whose control was essential to defend vital convoys from India reaching Europe and North Africa) and Allied shipping.<sup>124</sup> After April 1942, the IJN refrained from sallying forth into the Indian Ocean. The Eastern Fleet concentrated on countering Axis submarines (with German U-Boats posing the greater threat). The Eastern fleet only took its first surface ship 'scalp' in January 1944, when a British submarine sank the IJN light cruiser *Kuma*.<sup>125</sup>

Evan Mawdsley's new naval history of the Second World War *The War for the Seas* places the influence of maritime power in superb context. His history underlines the fact that sea battles are the exception rather than the norm. And, while the great maritime clashes of the Pacific War inevitably draw most of the attention, it was the long game of the control of the sea that won the war. As Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond observed in June 1942: 'Sea power is the power of using the sea for

one's own purpose in depriving the enemy of its use'.<sup>126</sup> With this truth underpinning his narrative, Mawdsley illuminates the influence of sea power upon the history of the Second World War quite magnificently. Stephenson achieves an enviable level of clarity about Somerville's command and strategic reasoning. He could have illuminated matters further by recording something more on Japanese operations and decision-making (as it is, the assertion that the IJN was busy with the US Navy is rather inadequate). More encouragingly, Stephenson does deal with intelligence rather well. He is particularly strong on RN appreciations of IJN strengths and weaknesses (derived primarily from pre-war intelligence but perfected by assessments of battle performance after December 1941). Unfortunately, much of the intelligence gleaned after the outbreak of war had to be fed into remedial processes as war exposed the fact that the RN had fallen behind the IJN in the 1930s, particularly regarding naval air power and in specialist war-fighting doctrines.<sup>127</sup> Stephenson's conclusions here are indicative of his generally sound treatment of intelligence work, which included the extensive exploitation of ULTRA and its role in the fleet's primary mission of shipping protection. The book's utility is slightly hampered by a lack of a proper bibliography (which is duly acknowledged by the author). This is a shame because Stephenson's arguments regarding subjects such as inter- and intra-Allied politics are well made and are sourced in endnotes. In sum, this narrative of a rather less glamorous aspect of British naval history, is deserving of a wide readership.

A welcome development in the literature of the Burma theatre in recent years is the increase in specialist works dealing with the influences of the unique and challenging conditions and circumstances of this theatre. Most works on Burma, and indeed on the Second World War generally, contain comment on aspects of military intelligence including reconnaissance, forward observation, and interrogation but these aspects are not focused upon as much as being included as additional detail of broader narratives. The growth of intelligence studies as a discipline has produced some well researched works on prominent intelligence matters such as strategic and signals intelligence and has now expanded to focus on more specialist subjects.<sup>128</sup> Two notable examples here are Duggie Ford's work on aspects of the intelligence war waged between the forces of Imperial Japan and the British Empire in Asia, and Tim Moreman's well-researched and innovative account of the development of British jungle fighting doctrine and training in response to encounters with the IJA.<sup>129</sup> The dearth of primary source material makes studies of IJA intelligence rather rare (and those focused specifically on the Japanese in Burma are rarer still).<sup>130</sup>

Some existing works have looked at the experience of specialist military arms such as Perret's account of the experiences of armoured forces fighting in the jungles and plains of Burma or Sir Martin Farndale's account of the Royal Regiment of Artillery and the war in the Far East.<sup>131</sup> Some effort has also gone into the exploration of some of the stay behind and special forces groups including the Special Operations Executive (SOE), of which Aldrich highlights the 'political' dimension of their operations,<sup>132</sup> and the Bush Warfare School that add scholarly analysis to the insightful memoirs on similar topics.<sup>133</sup> Keith Jeffery's official history of SIS paid due regard to many overlooked corners of the British Empire and, significantly, he noted that, when the war ended, SIS was left with a 'sprawling deployment' in India and China. And although these were areas of vital importance, SIS had expanded to facilitate the military campaign in Burma and to prepare for the recovery of Malaya from the Japanese. (SIS was not, however, so well-placed to support the reestablishment of British Imperial authority in South East Asia).<sup>134</sup>

The last two decades have produced some welcome additions and interesting perspectives to the literature on Britain's longest active land campaign of the Second World War. If the Burma theatre remains largely 'forgotten', it is now no longer through a lack of primary and secondary material for historians to pore over. Of course, as history is an argument without end, much remains to be given a scholarly treatment if the literature on the Burma theatre is to approach even a fraction of the comparable works on the Eastern Front or the Pacific War. Naturally, 'new' advances in scholarship always entail the re-visiting of many 'old' questions. These perennial questions include: What role did intelligence ultimately play in this theatre? To what degree did the Japanese attempt to adapt to their resurgent Allied enemy? Other gaps remain in the literature and some may be filled through the

assessment of, for example, Japanese perspectives and experiences, as well as those of the Burmese and Indians – both those allied to, and fighting against, Slim's XIV<sup>th</sup> Army.

Many of the popular perceptions of the war in Burma remain embedded in popular culture. One author has noted that 'the story of the Siam-Burma Death Railway was romanticized and glamourized' by Pierre Boulle before gaining a mass worldwide audience in David Lean's Oscar-winning *The Bridge on the River Kwai* as 'a glossily packaged Hollywood film'.<sup>135</sup> Of course, the persistence of popular mythologies does not dissuade scholars from studying the war in South East Asia. And, more than 75 years on from the cessation of hostilities, there remains much to explore and examine about the conflict through both archival research and the application of comparative and evaluative tools to this intriguing and complex theatre which merited relatively low priority in Allied strategy.<sup>136</sup> Recent work has cast considerable light on aspects of the war in Burma. For example: it is testimony to the achievements of SIS that their wartime activities facilitated the resumption of British rule in post-war Burma.<sup>137</sup> And yet, despite the heroic efforts of the Allied forces in Burma, when Japan surrendered in 1945 nearly all South East Asia (including most of Burma) remained under Japanese occupation. The United States, having previously been relatively unsympathetic, now realised the necessity of bolstering the strength of its colony-owning allies. In May 1945, the director of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) William Donovan, a committed anti-colonialist through most of the war, was warning the new president, Harry S. Truman, that the US anti-colonialist attitudes towards the British, the Dutch and the French had been wrongheaded. 'We have at present no interest in weakening or liquidating these empires or championing schemes of international trusteeship which may provoke unrest and result in colonial disintegration, and may at the same time alienate us from the European states whose help we need to balance Soviet power'.<sup>138</sup> In truth, the campaign in the Burma theatre represent an episode in the end of the European empires, rather than exercise in restoring British colonial prestige.

The Allied campaign in Burma had eventually culminated in a very effective set of military operations that secured victory. The British Imperial project in South East Asia was nevertheless living on borrowed time. Those policymakers who began the period of ending 'Splendid Isolationism' by concluding the Anglo-Japanese alliance in 1902 were right in concluding that a major conflict in Europe required a reliable partner to safeguard British interests in Asia. Indeed, Churchill himself had stated, before the attack on Pearl Harbor, he had regarded the 1902 treaty as an essential step.

I must admit that, having voted for the Japanese Alliance nearly 40 years ago-in 1902-and having always done my very best to promote good relations with the island Empire of Japan, and always having been a sentimental well-wisher of Japan and an admirer of her many gifts and qualities, I would view with keen sorrow the opening of a conflict between Japan and the English-speaking world.<sup>139</sup>

With that alliance's termination in 1922, Britain's long-term prospects for fighting a multi-front war had become uncertain, to say the least. In 1938, Churchill told Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky that: 'Today, the greatest menace to the British Empire is German Nazism'.<sup>140</sup> When war came in September 1939, the defence of the British Empire was contingent upon others: the restraint of the Japanese, and the ability of the Americans to deter aggression from Tokyo. Neither proved sufficient. Indeed, In December 1941, Hitler had told a group of his cronies that 'For years I told every British person I met: You will lose East Asia if you start a war in Europe'.<sup>141</sup> Although Churchill, reverting to the reactionary defence of empire that had characterised his career in the 1930s, attacked Burmese independence in the House of Commons in 1947,<sup>142</sup> the international system had changed. For while we can dismiss Hitler's ideas of who started the war in Europe, in terms of the opportunity the conflict there afforded the adventurers in Tokyo, and the anti-colonial nationalists within the British Empire, Hitler was right. As Ba Maw later recalled: 'The Axis victories had changed the entire picture for us . . . [for] however the war might eventually end, British power in Asia would never be the same again, and our liberation was nearer and surer than ever'.<sup>143</sup> Time was to confirm him in his opinion.

## Notes

1. Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 456.
2. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, 24–5.
3. Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan, 1937–1945*, 5.
4. O'Brien, *How the War was Won*, 211.
5. For a recent history of the Sino-Japanese war of Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937–1945*.
6. Gordon, "The China-Japan War, 1931–1945," 143.
7. Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937–1945*, 388.
8. On this, see Dreyer, *China at War, 1901–1949*, 265–311.
9. The National Archives: Public Record Office (TNA: PRO): FO 954/1B/501 (Bur/42/36), Churchill to Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden regarding Chiang Kai-shek, 1942 (n.d.).
10. For a biography of Chiang that also charts the decline and fall of the KMT, see Fenby, *Chiang Kai-shek*.
11. Royal Navy Admiral Louis Mountbatten was appointed Supreme Allied Commander, South East Asia Command (SEAC), in August 1943. Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet 1734–1995*, 186.
12. Roberts, *Churchill*, 799.
13. On this, see Hickey, *The Unforgettable Army*.
14. Mawdsley, *The War for the Seas*, 408.
15. Roberts, *Churchill*, 834.
16. Brackman, *The Other Nuremberg*, 278.
17. See Fordy, "The lies that built *The Bridge on the River Kwai*."
18. On the beginnings of improvements in transportation facilities in Burma during the first year of the war, see Charney, *Imperial Military Transportation in British Asia*. On corrective measure in intelligence in Burma, see Jeffery, *MI6*, 573.19
19. Churchill quoted in Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 126.
20. Ford, 'British Intelligence on Japanese Army Morale during the Pacific War', p. 440; and Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan, 1937–1945*, 44–5.
21. Bellamy, *The Evolution of Land Warfare*, 98; and Jeffery, *MI6*, 588–9.
22. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 19. On this perennial question, see David Kaiser, "Conspiracy or cock-up? Pearl Harbor revisited" 354–72. Review article of Henry C. Clausen and Bruce Lee, *Pearl Harbor*.
23. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, p. 377.
24. Jeffery, *MI6*, 469.
25. The creation of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was formally announced by Japanese Foreign Minister Yōsuke Matsuoka on 1 August 1940. McClain, *Japan*, 470. On this Imperial project, see Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*.
26. Mawdsley, *December 1941*, 12.
27. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941–1945*, 90–92.
28. Ienaga, *The Pacific War: 1931–1945*, 132.
29. Boling, *Campaign Planning*, 16–17.
30. Norman Rich noted that: "By declaring war on America while the greater part of his army was still bogged down in Russia Hitler sealed his fate". Rich, *Hitler's War Aims*, 245.
31. Rich, *Hitler's War Aims*, 235. This represented a change of heart on the part of the German leadership. After France had fallen in 1940, Hitler had stated he had no desire to destroy the British Empire 'only in order that Japan, America and others might benefit.' Quoted in Rich, 158.
32. Mawdsley, *December 1941*, 13. Emphasis in the original.
33. Churchill quoted in Mawdsley, *December 1941*, 161.
34. British dominion in Burma dates from 1824. In 1885, Upper Burma was annexed following the Third Anglo-Burmese War. This led to the creation of the province of Burma a year later. This occurred when Lord Randolph Churchill, Winston's father, was Secretary of State for India. Roberts, *Churchill*, 17. Eleven years later, Burma became a 'major province' (or a 'lieutenant-governorship') within the Indian Empire. On all of this, see also Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma*; and Charney, *A History of Modern Burma*, chapter 1.
35. O'Brien, *How the War was Won*, 209.
36. Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan, 1937–1945*, 27.
37. Somewhat incredibly, the Soviet ambassador to London, Ivan Maisky, had been a spectator in the House of Commons. Diary entry, 31 July 1940. Gorodetsky (ed.), *The Maisky Diaries*, 301.
38. Mawdsley, *December 1941*, p. 284. The setbacks of early 1942 confirmed that British military capabilities in Burma were woefully inadequate. Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan, 1937–1945*, 4.
39. Leahy quoted in O'Brien, *How the War was Won*, 209.
40. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 113.

41. A lawyer, like so many Third World nationalist leaders, after the war Ba Maw continued to be politically active in Burma (although he was imprisoned in 1947 and between 1965/6 and 1968). He died in 1977. For his memoirs, see Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*.
42. Smith, *The Ultra-Magic Deals*, 133.
43. To get a flavour of what Japanese rule would mean for Burma, see Swan, "Japan's intentions for its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere as indicated in its policy plans for Thailand."
44. Thant, *The River of Lost Footsteps*, pp. 252–3.
45. After an army coup in early 2021, the State Counsellor was detained. Rebecca Ratcliffe and Guardian staff in Yangon, "Myanmar army takes power in coup as Aung San Suu Kyi detained," *The Guardian* (London), 1 February 2021.
46. Smith, *Burma*, 60.
47. Thant, *The River of Lost Footsteps*, 238–41.
48. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 125.
49. *Hansard*, HC Deb, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, volume, 443, columns 1848–9, 5 November 1947.
50. A label applied by his followers, then and since. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, p. 62. Bose had been one of the most influential leaders of the Indian Congress Party in the 1930s.
51. On Bose, see Gordon, *Brothers Against the Raj*.
52. Trans. Hindustani for 'Respected Leader'.
53. Günther, *Die Indische Legion und das Dritte Reich*, 23–4.
54. On the INA, see Fay, *The Forgotten Army*. The INA was composed largely of Indian soldiers who had been captured in Malaya or Singapore, as well as of ethnic Indians from Malaya.
55. Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 124.
56. Bose quoted in Yellen, *The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere*, 209.
57. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 62.
58. Keegan, *The Battle for History*, 81.
59. Bose remains a venerated figure in Indian nationalist discourses, and within the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) especially. In 2021, the BJP Government of India declared 23 January to be henceforth known as 'Parakram Divas' ('Day of Valour) to commemorate the birth of Subhas Chandra Bose in 1897. Shiv Sahay Singh, 'Political row over Centre's decision to celebrate Netaji's birth anniversary as Parakram Diwas', *The Hindu*, 19 January 2021.
60. TNA: PRO: FO 954/IB/522, Roosevelt to Churchill, 25 February 1944.
61. Allen, *Burma*, 638.
62. TNA: PRO: 208/3812, "Statement of Yoshimi Taneyoshi, Captain (Medical) of the Imperial Japanese Army, with regard to the death of one Chandra Bose, who died at Taihoku, Formosa, on 18<sup>th</sup> day of August, 1945." Stanley Gaol, Hong Kong, 19 October 1946.
63. Bayly and Harper, *Forgotten Wars*, 2.
64. Jeffery, *MI6*, 574.
65. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 52.
66. Keegan, *The Battle for History*, 81.
67. On this, see Stephenson, *The Eastern Fleet and the Indian Ocean, 1942–1944*.
68. Keegan, *The Battle for History*, 81.
69. See Slim, *Defeat into Victory*; Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay*; and Fraser, *Quartered Safe Out Here*; and Lowry, *Fighting Through to Kohima*.
70. This volume includes reports by Field Marshal Wavell, Field Marshal Auchinleck, General Giffard, Lieutenant-General Leese, and Vice Admiral Power.
71. Grehan and Mace, *Battle for Burma*, 5, 17, 36, 152.
72. See Thorne, *Allies of a Kind*; Bond and Tachikawa, *British and Japanese Leadership in the Far Eastern War 1941–45*; and Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*.
73. Foucar, *First Burma Campaign*, 1–40.
74. *Ibid.*, 60–69.
75. *On Japanese wartime intelligence, see Fujiwara, F. Kikan; and Kotani, Japanese Intelligence in World War II*.
76. Foucar, *First Burma Campaign*, 104–122; Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, 70–101; and Latimer *Burma*, 58–71.
77. Foucar, *First Burma Campaign*, 151, 189, 200–210, 229–230.
78. Kirby *et al.*, *The History of the Second World War: War against Japan, Volume I: The Loss of Singapore*; and *Volume II: India's Most Dangerous Hour*.
79. Keane *Road of Bones*; Swinson, *Kohima*; Callahan, *Triumph at Imphal-Kohima*; and Rooney, *Burma Victory*.
80. Dower, *War without Mercy*, 8–9.
81. Ford, "British Intelligence on Japanese Army Morale during the Pacific War," 439–40.
82. Mountbatten and Wavell quoted in Swinson, *Kohima*, xiii.
83. Colvin, *Not Ordinary Men*, 33–41, 42–52.
84. *Ibid.*, 28–33, 53–57, 64–69, 206, 210, 219.
85. On this, see Lie, "Ruth Benedict's Legacy of Shame."



86. Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, 2.
87. Taylor, *The Course of German History*.
88. Colvin, *Not Ordinary Men*, 7.
89. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 94; and Roberts, *Churchill*, 790.
90. For some useful correctives on Wingate, see Anglim, 'Orde Wingate, 'Guerrilla' Warfare and Long-range Penetration, 1940–44'; and Anglim, *Orde Wingate*.
91. Rooney, *Wingate and the Chindits*, 76.
92. See Calvert, *Fighting Mad*; Rooney, *Wingate and the Chindits*; Fergusson, *Beyond the Chindwin*; and Fergusson, *The Battle for Burma*.
93. Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 125.
94. Quester, "The Guerrilla Problem in Retrospect," 192.
95. This was the opinion of the head of RAF Bomber Command. Mckinstry, 'Bomber Harris thought the Dambusters' attacks on Germany 'achieved nothing'.
96. Keegan, *The Battle for History*, 81.
97. Stilwell had been appointed Roosevelt's envoy to Chang and was hugely influential in shaping US policy towards China. Mitter, *China's War with Japan, 1937–1945*, 342.
98. Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay*, 140.
99. Allen, *Burma*, 319.
100. See Chinnery, *Wingate's Lost Brigade*. See also Chinnery, *March or Die*.
101. Chinnery, *Wingate's Lost Brigade*, 22–3, 71, 78–91, 124–5, 142, 172–9, 190–9.
102. Roosevelt memorandum for the Joint Chiefs of Staff and senior advisors, 6 May 1942. O'Brien, *How the War was Won*, 138.
103. Bellamy, *The Evolution of Land Warfare*, 98.
104. Kane, *Military Logistics and Strategic Performance*, 15, 22–7; and Masters, *The Road Past Mandalay*, 172.
105. Jeffery, *MI6*, 589.
106. Evans, *Air Battle for Burma*, 98, 165–167, 185, 196.
107. *Ibid.*, 19–20, 48, 147–148, 167.
108. Theodore White quoted in Spencer, *Flying the Hump*, xii.
109. Evans, *Air Battle for Burma*, 80, 142–144, 168–169, 175–176, 189–190.
110. Bellamy, *The Evolution of Land Warfare*, 98; and House, *Combined Arms Warfare in the Twentieth Century*, 174–5.
111. Roberts, *Churchill*, 834.
112. Evans, *Air Battle for Burma*, 56, 59.
113. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941–1945*, 76–88; and Mawdsley, *The War for the Seas*, 189–91.
114. Evans, *Air Battle for Burma*, 156
115. See, for example, Pearson, *Burma Air Campaign 1941–1945*; Shores, *Air War for Burma*; and Franks, *The Air Battle of Imphal*.
116. Mawdsley, *The War for the Seas*, 407.
117. Churchill speech, Mansion House, 10 November 1941. *International Churchill Society*, 'The Bright Gleam of Victory', <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1941-1945-war-leader/alamein-the-end-of-the-beginning/> (accessed 27 February 2021).
118. Mawdsley, *The War for the Seas*, 165, 187–9.
119. *Hansard*, HC Deb, 5<sup>th</sup> Series, volume, 374, columns 1694–5, 11 December 1941.
120. The term was first employed by the Royal Navy's Lord Torrington in 1690, when his forces in the English Channel were faced by a stronger French fleet. Torrington explained himself to parliament, this: 'As it was, most Men were in fear that the French wou'd invade; but I was always of another Opinion, which several members of this Honorable House can witness: for I always said, that whilst we had a Fleet in being, they would not dare to make an Attempt.' Hattendorf, "The Idea of a "Fleet in Being" in Historical Perspective," 43–4.
121. Mawdsley, *The War for the Seas*, 406–7.
122. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941–1945*, 103–111. On this IJN operation, see also Clancy, "The Most Dangerous Moment of the War."
123. Mawdsley, *The War for the Seas*, 194.
124. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941–1945*, 104–105.
125. Mawdsley, *The War for the Seas*, 408.
126. Richmond quoted in Mawdsley, *The War for the Seas*, xxxix.
127. Stephenson, *The Eastern Fleet and the Indian Ocean, 1942–1944*, 7–20, 68, 97, 112–115.
128. On this, see Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914–1941*; Elphick, *Far Eastern File*; and Lewin, *The other ULTRA*.
129. See Moreman, *The Jungle, the Japanese and the British Commonwealth Armies at War, 1941–45*; and Ford, *Britain's Secret War against Japan, 1937–1945*.
130. See Fujiwara, *F. Kikan*; and Kotani, *Japanese Intelligence in World War II*.

131. See Perrett, *Tank Tracks to Rangoon*; and Farndale, *History of the Royal Regiment of Artillery*.
132. Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 106
133. Ogden, *Tigers Burning Bright*; Chapman, *The Jungle is Neutral*; and Dunlop, *Behind Japanese Lines*.
134. Jeffery, *MI6*, 697.
135. Brackman, *The Other Nuremburg*, 278–9.
136. Mawdsley, *December 1941*, 284.
137. Jeffery, *MI6*, 705.
138. Donovan quoted in Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 304–5.
139. Churchill speech, Mansion House, 10 November 1941. *International Churchill Society*, 'The Bright Gleam of Victory', <https://winstonchurchill.org/resources/speeches/1941-1945-war-leader/alamein-the-end-of-the-beginning/> (accessed 27 February 2021)
140. Churchill-Maisky conversation, 23 March 1938. Gorodetsky (ed.), *The Maisky Diaries*, 110.
141. Mawdsley, *December 1941*, 284, 268. Hitler quoted on 268.
142. Roberts, *Churchill*, 902–3.
143. Ba Maw, U. *Breakthrough in Burma*, 73.

## Disclosure statement

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