

US Army War College

USAWC Press

Parameters Bookshelf – Online Book Reviews

Parameters and Associated Collections

8-29-2023

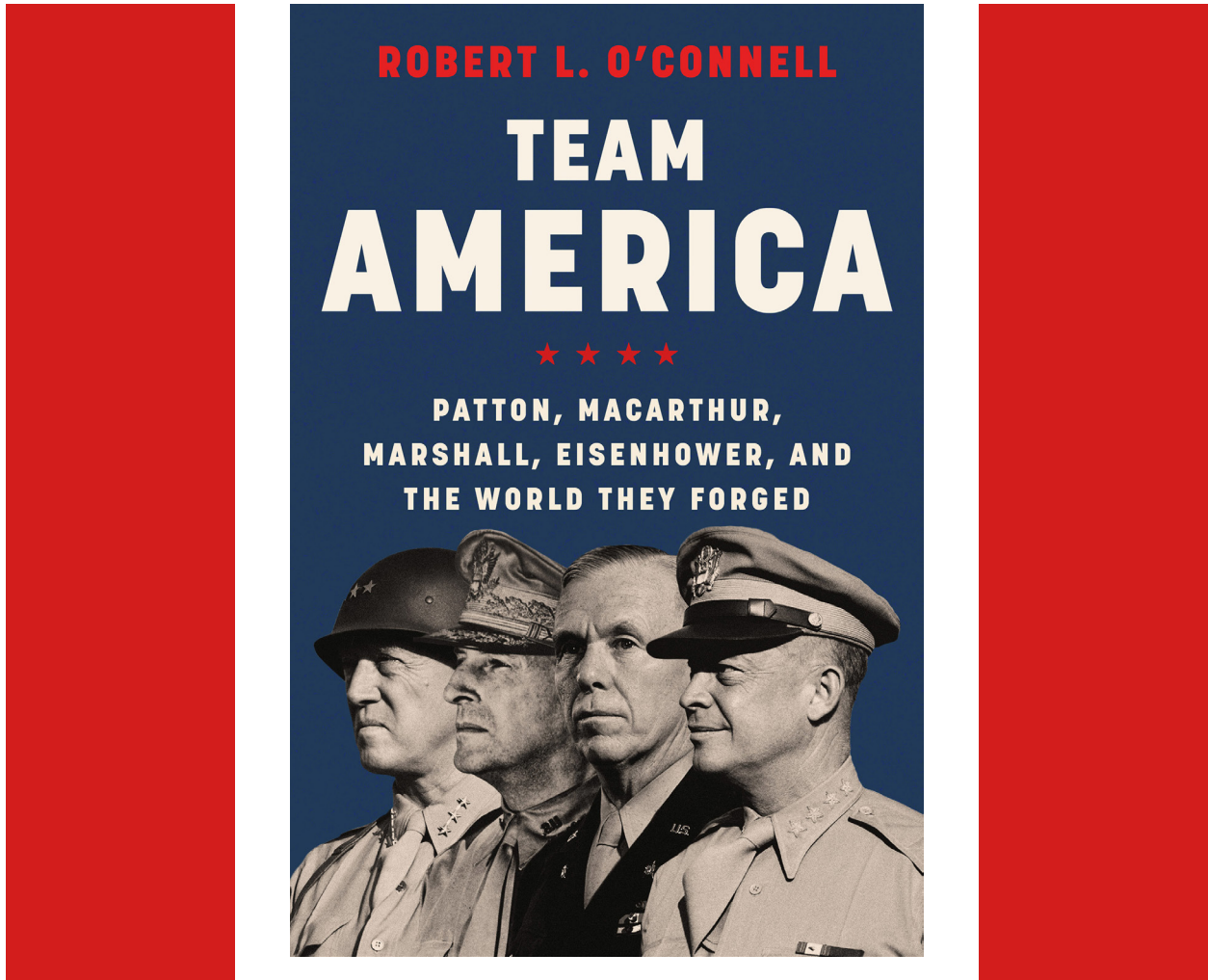
Book Review: Team America: Patton, MacArthur, Marshall, Eisenhower, and the World They Forged

Wylie W. Johnson

Follow this and additional works at: https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters_bookshelf



Part of the [Defense and Security Studies Commons](#), and the [Military and Veterans Studies Commons](#)



Reviewed by Rev. Dr. Wylie W. Johnson, US Army War College class of 2010

Robert L. O'Connell's comparative biography of four top American generals is delightful, gossipy, and an easy read. The personal and professional stories of these great general officers are well-trodden ground. The value for today's officers is placing these generals' lives and careers side by side. Their Army, while different from today's, was still a human organization. A wise student of military history will find understandable and timeless lessons in *Team America*.

These men were the epitome of the democratic ideal that any American can rise to greatness. Dwight D. Eisenhower came from hardscrabble origins. George S. Patton came from money. Douglas MacArthur was military royalty, the son of Medal of Honor winner Lieutenant General Arthur MacArthur Jr.—the military governor-general of the American-occupied Philippines and the highest-ranking officer of his time. George C. Marshall was an average student who graduated from the wrong school—Virginia Military Institute (not the United States Military Academy). Together they accounted for 19 stars; together they brought about victory in their generation. Two became Chief of Staff of the Army. One rose to become the US Commander in Chief.

Early twentieth-century America's Army was small, and the public regarded it with suspicion. It was also an army struggling with a meagerly funded system, a dearth of equipment, unpredictable

promotions, poor pay, service politics, military housing issues, personal peccadillos, poor fitness reports, unwanted assignments, demanding superiors, and big mistakes. Take away the situation of the era, and these are much the same issues that confront today's upcoming leaders. It is helpful to see how these four paladins negotiated the challenges confronting them.

In many ways, theirs are the stories of personal fortune and tragedy. Marshall aspired to lead Allied forces in Europe, but his "manager" (as the author frequently put it), President Franklin D. Roosevelt, held him in Washington to direct the logistical-political-military effort, while his subordinate (Eisenhower) became Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. Patton struggled with personal issues that made him a brilliant warrior but frequently sidelined him because of impolitic declarations and emotional outbursts—such as slapping shell-shocked soldiers. He died in a vehicle accident, which relieved him of an embarrassing desk job following the war. MacArthur overreached in the Orient by challenging his civilian "manager" (President Harry S. Truman) and was dismissed. Eisenhower rose to the pinnacle of American society, but by that time his health was quite marginal.

Having the right mentor is a key learning point in this book. For instance, US Army Chief of Staff General John J. Pershing gave Brigadier General Fox Conner command of the 20th Infantry Brigade in the Panama Canal Zone. Conner then asked a flabbergasted Eisenhower to be his chief of staff. Simultaneously, a legal issue hanging over Eisenhower's head was adjudicated by the inspector general. He received a letter of reprimand, however, freeing Eisenhower for further duty. Of course, backstage, Conner and the then Chief of Staff of the Army General John J. Pershing engineered this result to keep Eisenhower on track (107).

There is much about a military career to learn from these giants of a past era. They were warriors of vastly different backgrounds who excelled and made it to the top. The lessons are also for those of senior rank because there were numerous points when these great leaders could have been stymied, sidetracked, or fired but were retained, and the rest of the story is history. Mentors who can recognize ability are critical for the success of the force. Junior leaders aspiring to climb the ladder should carefully digest these stories and find the pathway left behind by these paladins.

New York: Harper Collins, 2022 • 592 pages • \$29.99

Keywords: John J. Pershing, George C. Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, George S. Patton, Douglas MacArthur

Disclaimer: Book reviews published in *Parameters* are unofficial expressions of opinion. The views and opinions expressed in *Parameters* book reviews are those of the reviewers and are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army, the US Army War College, or any other agency of the US government.