

FORGING THE ANGLO-AMERICAN ALLIANCE: THE BRITISH AND AMERICAN ARMIES, 1917–1941

BY TYLER R. BAMFORD

University Press of Kansas, 2022
Pp. xi, 284. \$49.95

REVIEW BY ZACH WRISTON

Tyler Bamford's *Forging the Anglo-American Alliance* is well-timed, as the United States maneuvers political and military alliances around the globe, seeking to increase stability and security while challenging strategic competitors. Navigating the relational aspects of Ukraine-Russia, Hamas (Iran)-Israel, or Taiwan-China conflicts presents significant challenges to both diplomacy and defense. While Bamford's volume is limited to the Anglo-American alliance, its application remains relevant today as American leaders strive to build relationships, formal and informal, to protect the country and to promote freedom in the modern era.

In Bamford's inaugural work, he analyzes the bonds and personal relationships of U.S. and British army officers during the interwar period between World War I and World War II. Bamford asserts these informal relationships are directly responsible for the quick integration of forces contributing to one of the most effective alliances of World

War II. He frames the discussion with a concise analysis of the contributions of earlier historians to the study of Anglo-American relations between World Wars I and II. However, he narrows the focus of his research to the armies' activities, citing an established study of naval tensions and relations between the two countries.

Bamford leads the reader through seven foundational themes, applied chronologically, to illustrate how the deepening bonds between the United States and Great Britain led to intelligence sharing, cultural exchanges, and the identification of common adversaries. He introduces this concept with General John J. Pershing's World War I relationship with Lt. Gen. Sir George Fowke, which originated in 1905 when the two were observers for their respective countries during the Russo-Japanese War in Manchuria (13). He builds on this idea of shared service and personal interactions as the World War I veterans sustain a relationship through two challenging decades. He further articulates the idea that post-World War I memoirs formed the institutional memory that supported interpersonal relationships over the next two and a half decades. Bamford discusses the similarities between the officer ranks and their willingness to share ideas and experiences. He then transitions to the postwar occupation of Germany.

Postwar occupation duty following the conclusion of World War I is typically overlooked by historians and researchers. Occupation duty was shared by the French, British, and American forces divided into sections along the Rhine River. Bamford capitalizes on many wartime diaries and postwar memoirs to create a narrative of shared activities and goodwill between U.S. and British soldiers while on occupation duty. Equestrian activities, in particular, bonded the officers of the two nations. Throughout the text, Bamford weaves elements of common interests such as polo, hunting, and sports. These interests complement the study of war, military structure and organization, and military education. Occupation duty is also the only extended passage within the book that addresses the enlisted force.

Another fascinating aspect of *Forging the Anglo-American Alliance* is the contrasting perceptions of officers and enlisted soldiers, which is revealed broadly by Bamford's research. American enlisted

personnel did not share the fraternal warmth toward the British that their officer counterparts did. Bamford extracts primary sources revealing the enlisted soldiers' distrust of British training methods and strategic approaches: "Training under British guidance embittered many American soldiers" (10). The enlisted force also resented the British policies toward fighting Bolsheviks on the Eastern Front even after the armistice in November 1918. Bamford shows how "soldiers bemoaned the lack of a clear objective, the increasing strength of Bolshevik forces, and the tenuous supply lines" (42). The American enlisted opinion of the French also was strained because of price gouging, and "French soldiers showed little fondness for the Americans crowding their towns" (50).

By describing the dramatic shift in the two countries' national policies following World War I, Bamford further bolsters his argument that informal personal relationships fostered the future alliance. The United States' pull toward isolationism often is credited with creating most of the problems with defense preparation before World War II. Bamford skillfully demonstrates that isolationism was only one concern among several as the U.S. and British governments distanced themselves after the war.

He illustrates the significance of interpersonal and informal relationships as he explores the elements of national power: diplomacy, information, military, and economics. As the Allied powers negotiated the terms to end World War I, Americans yearned to return to an internal focus, demobilization, and the economy. Persistent disagreements about the direction of the League of Nations and the Treaty of Versailles increased the distance between the Allies after the war. There was also a growing political movement in the United States and Great Britain based on the idea that World War I was the war to end all wars, emphasizing disarmament to achieve peace and stability. Bamford examines the influence of the world economy on U.S. decision making during two important periods: first, as rapid growth led U.S. leadership to reprioritize the country's economic efforts in the 1920s, and later, as the Great Depression curtailed these ambitions. Bamford's analysis of the National Defense Act of 1920, with its promise of

a permanent army numbering 300,000, and which Hunter Liggett hailed as “one of the finest and best thought out pieces of legislation ever enacted” concludes that a well-intentioned bill, with significant potential toward achieving lasting national defense objectives, was never realized or implemented. This reflects both American and British economic priorities following the war (58). Despite passing the bill, Congress never funded, filled, or equipped the Army to its authorized strength. Within three years of the legislation, the Army had shrunk by more than half, down to a mere “112,108 by December 1923,” and it remained minimal until 1936 (59).

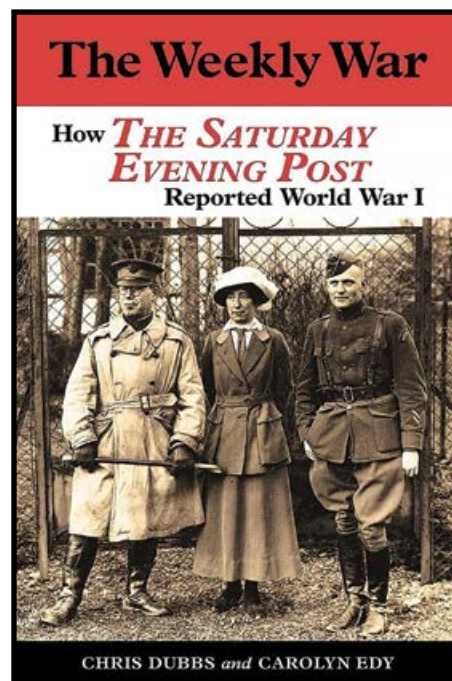
Bamford’s overall objective is to demonstrate “that the Anglo-American alliance rested on hundreds of interpersonal connections stretching back to World War I” (5). In addition to distinguishing the unique relationship that developed between the two countries, he analyzes the other great powers—Germany, France, and Japan—to determine why they did not develop similarly close relations with the United States. The British and Japanese were allies throughout the early twentieth century and through World War I until 1923. The British and French were the dominant allied forces during World War I. Yet, Bamford argues, the bond between the British and the Americans is clearly unique. He probes Anglo-American similarities in race, class, religion, and politics, which can establish and explain connections, the lack of which might explain why personal relationships were not shared between the other nations.

The most significant contribution of Bamford’s scholarship is his thorough case study of military attachés and liaison officers, and his insight feels relevant not only to historians but also to those currently serving in these roles. Army doctrine stresses the importance of these roles, but Bamford brings them to life by distinguishing the tangible and intangible attributes necessary to succeed as an attaché.

He describes the successful approaches of some officers as well as the inflexible officers who quickly were removed from their positions. By addressing both the triumphs and the pitfalls, Bamford equips his readers with practical insights that will be invaluable for those assuming these positions and for the commanders

who will select them. Bamford’s volume properly fuses readability with expert research and analysis to benefit general readers, veterans, professionals, and experts.

Sgt. Maj. Zach Wriston is a 2022–2023 Sergeants Major Academy–Penn State Fellow. He is an instructor at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy in the Department of Joint, Interagency, Intergovernmental, and Multinational Operations. He holds a master’s degree in public policy from Liberty University and another in education from Pennsylvania State University. He resides in El Paso, Texas, with his wife, Rebekah.



THE WEEKLY WAR: HOW THE SATURDAY EVENING POST REPORTED WORLD WAR I

BY CHRIS DUBBS AND CAROLYN EDY

University of North Texas Press, 2023
Pp. viii, 279. 34.95

REVIEW BY ADAM T. STEVELEY

In *The Weekly War: How the Saturday Evening Post Reported World War I*, authors Chris Dubbs and Carolyn Edy provide an expert retelling of the United States’ most comprehensive international expedition and how it was depicted through the pages

of the nation’s most popular circulation magazine. Having previously written comprehensive works covering the broad topics of journalism in the American Expeditionary Force and the importance of female war correspondents during America’s coming of age, the authors narrow their scope to recount how the era’s most well-known magazine, the *Saturday Evening Post*, told the stories of World War I, from the war’s outbreak to its armistice. The authors’ ability to transport their readers back to the age of the American Expeditionary Force, trench warfare, and news by print journalism is remarkable. In today’s world of twenty-four-hour news cycles and sound-bite reporting, literary journalism may seem as antiquated as war on which it reported; however, Dubbs and Edy provide an expertly curated selection of readings that transport their audience back to America’s entry into global affairs.

Through presenting a collection of the magazine’s most well-written, comprehensive, and representative articles, Dubbs and Edy introduce today’s readers to the era’s most luminary writers; many of whom, in a time before television and radio, were once household names (6). At the same time, they tell the story of how a floundering newspaper was transformed into the nation’s most widely circulated magazine by its visionary editor, George Horrace Lorimer, and how this magazine delivered the feelings and emotions of war to those on the home front. The most notable strength of this work is the opening pages of each chapter, in which the authors briefly set the stage concerning the war’s timeline and contextualize the primary sources that follow. This gives an excellent overview to those not intimately familiar with the details of the Great War and makes the text that follows more accessible. Like the journalists they represent, Dubbs and Edy have no pretention about their tactical expertise. Rather, like the journalists whose stories they tell, the authors are expert story tellers who consistently use the power of narrative to bring to life the human elements of war.

Interestingly, in an era that often is critiqued as an age of unquestioned, boisterous Americanism, Dubbs and Edy show how the *Post*’s writers covered the unfolding of the war from the perspective of all its belligerents. Additionally, the authors take special care to highlight how