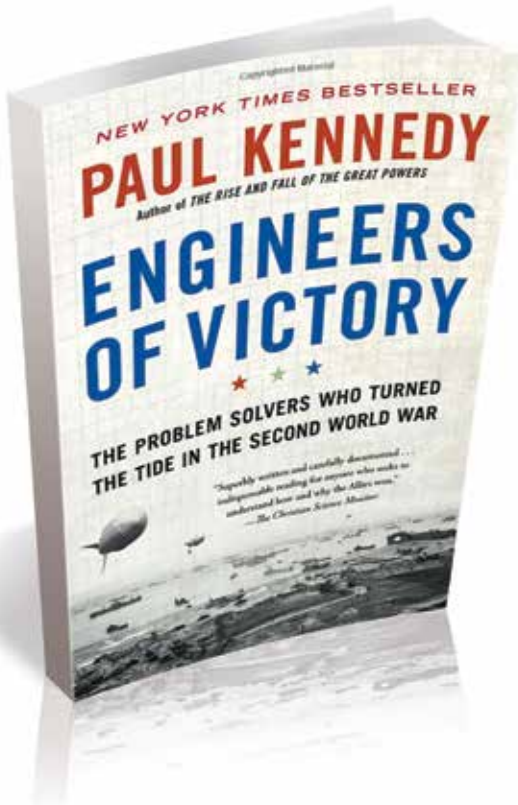


PROFESSIONAL READING LIST

The Defense Acquisition Professional Reading List is intended to enrich the knowledge and understanding of the civilian, military, contractor, and industrial workforce who participate in the entire defense acquisition enterprise. These book reviews/recommendations are designed to complement the education and training that are vital to developing the essential competencies and skills required of the Defense Acquisition Workforce. Each issue of the *Defense Acquisition Research Journal (ARJ)* will contain one or more reviews of suggested books, with more available on the *Defense ARJ* Web site.

We encourage *Defense ARJ* readers to submit reviews of books they believe should be required reading for the defense acquisition professional. The reviews should be 400 words or fewer, describe the book and its major ideas, and explain its relevance to defense acquisition. Please send your reviews to the Managing Editor, *Defense Acquisition Research Journal*:
Norene.Fagan-Blanch@dau.mil.



Featured Book

Engineers of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned the Tide in the Second World War

Author(s):

Paul Kennedy

Publisher:

Random House Trade Paperbacks

Copyright Date:

2013

Available Online:

<http://www.amazon.com/Engineers-Victory-Problem-Solvers-Turned/dp/0812979397>

Hard/Softcover:

480 pages

Reviewed by:

Dr. Glen R. Asner, senior historian, Historical Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense

Review:

Paul Kennedy's *Engineers of Victory* offers a nuanced, multicausal explanation for the outcome of World War II. Across five lengthy chapters, the author identifies what he considers the key decisions, battles, technological advances, and operational achievements that account for ultimate victory against Germany and Japan. Each chapter focuses on a different major operational challenge the Allies had to overcome to turn the tide of World War II in their favor: halting the U-boat menace to ensure safe passage for supplies and troops across the Atlantic; knocking out the Luftwaffe to gain control over the skies of Germany; countering the Wehrmacht's Blitzkrieg ("lightening war") strategy to reverse German advances on the Eastern Front; seizing an enemy-held shore in the Normandy invasion to open up the Western Front; and fighting across a great expanse—the Central Pacific—to reach Japan and destroy its war-making capabilities.

While Kennedy acknowledges that the Allies' tremendous advantages in output of war material beginning in 1943 partly explain the outcome of the war, he contends that Allied victory also rested on differences in how each side approached geographic challenges and differences in the culture and organization of their "war-making systems." The Axis powers badly overreached, most egregiously on the Eastern Front and in the Pacific, while the Allies were more sensitive to the role of geography and, most importantly, were better at learning from mistakes, transmitting and circulating knowledge, and encouraging innovation in all endeavors.

Readers unfamiliar with the war will appreciate the tightly packed overviews of key battles and campaigns, as well as helpful summaries of major operational challenges, such as amphibious landings or strategic bombing sorties, juxtaposed across the larger history of warfare. Knowledgeable readers will be frustrated by factual errors that plague the text and how much is left out of the story, particularly in the discussion of the Pacific campaign. Those looking for insights on engineering and acquisition during World War II will be disappointed. The author pays tribute to the role of technology and production, and to those who called forth, designed, built, and

improved upon critical weapon systems, but only in a cursory fashion and without providing much insight on how technological advances occurred.

Yet, this book is a worthwhile read, primarily for the author's ambitious effort to show how all aspects of the war—from high diplomacy and the factory floor, to the training and equipping of troops and the battlefield—were intimately linked and interdependent. For politicians, war planners, soldiers, weapons developers, and acquisition professionals, Kennedy's main argument is worth remembering: the Allies won "because they possessed smarter feedback loops between top, middle, and bottom; because they stimulated initiative, innovation, and ingenuity; and because they encouraged problem solvers to tackle large, apparently intractable problems." Founded on strong educational and economic systems and a culture of innovation, these attributes are no less important today for military and political advantage than they were 70 years ago.