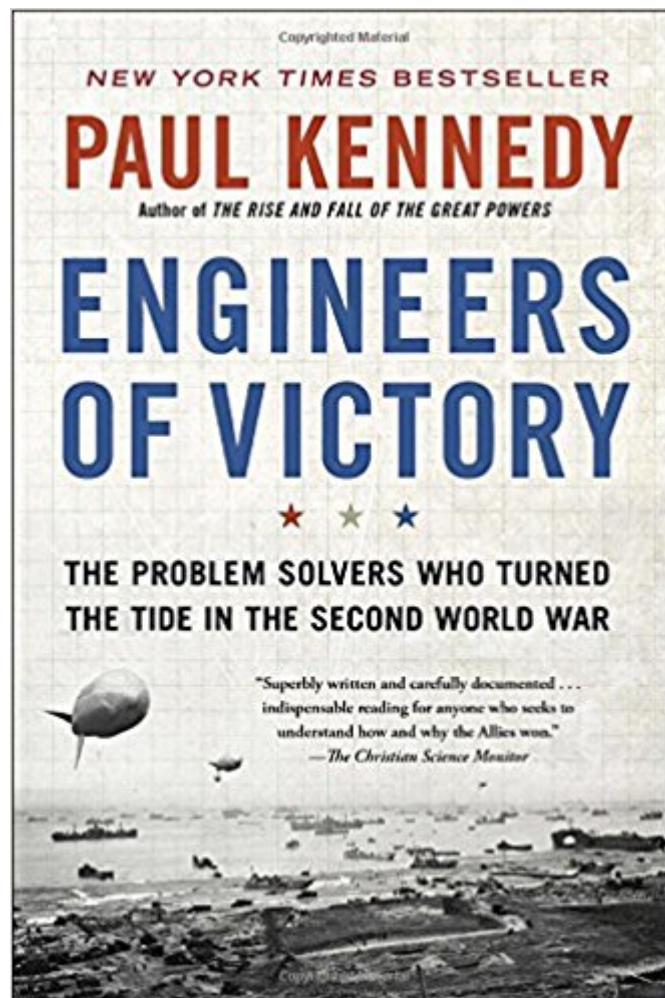




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Engineers Of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned The Tide In The Second World War



Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER Paul Kennedy, award-winning author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* and one of today's most renowned historians, now provides a new and unique look at how World War II was won. *Engineers of Victory* is a fascinating nuts-and-bolts account of the strategic factors that led to Allied victory. Kennedy reveals how the leaders' grand strategy was carried out by the ordinary soldiers, scientists, engineers, and businessmen responsible for realizing their commanders' visions of success. In January 1943, FDR and Churchill convened in Casablanca and established the Allied objectives for the war: to defeat the Nazi blitzkrieg; to control the Atlantic sea lanes and the air over western and central Europe; to take the fight to the European mainland; and to end Japan's imperialism. Astonishingly, a little over a year later, these ambitious goals had nearly all been accomplished. With riveting, tactical detail, *Engineers of Victory* reveals how. Kennedy recounts the inside stories of the invention of the cavity magnetron, a miniature radar "as small as a soup plate" and the Hedgehog, a multi-headed grenade launcher that allowed the Allies to overcome the threat to their convoys crossing the Atlantic; the critical decision by engineers to install a super-charged Rolls-Royce engine in the P-51 Mustang, creating a fighter plane more powerful than the Luftwaffe's; and the innovative use of pontoon bridges (made from rafts strung together) to help Russian troops cross rivers and elude the Nazi blitzkrieg. He takes readers behind the scenes, unveiling exactly how thousands of individual Allied planes and fighting ships were choreographed to collectively pull off the invasion of Normandy, and illuminating how crew chiefs perfected the high-flying and inaccessible B-29 Superfortress that would drop the atomic bombs on Japan. The story of World War II is often told as a grand narrative, as if it were fought by supermen or decided by fate. Here Kennedy uncovers the real heroes of the war, highlighting for the first time the creative strategies, tactics, and organizational decisions that made the lofty Allied objectives into a successful reality. In an even more significant way, *Engineers of Victory* has another claim to our attention, for it restores "the middle level of war" to its rightful place in history. Praise for *Engineers of Victory* "Superbly written and carefully documented . . . indispensable reading for anyone who seeks to understand how and why the Allies won." • *The Christian Science Monitor* "An important contribution to our understanding of World War II . . . Like an engineer who pries open a pocket watch to reveal its inner mechanics, [Paul] Kennedy tells how little-known men and women at lower levels helped win the war." • *Michael Beschloss, The New York Times Book Review* "Histories of World War II tend to concentrate on the leaders and generals at the top

who make the big strategic decisions and on the lowly grunts at the bottom. . . . [Engineers of Victory] seeks to fill this gap in the historiography of World War II and does so triumphantly. . . . This book is a fine tribute. —The Wall Street Journal —[Kennedy] colorfully and convincingly illustrates the ingenuity and persistence of a few men who made all the difference. —The Washington Post —“This superb book is Kennedy’s best. —Foreign Affairs

From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

There’s a simple explanation for the result of World War II: the Allies marshalled more military power than the Axis. While true, Professor Kennedy, the eminent author of many popular histories, would grade that explanation “incomplete.” He places a fuller interpretation on the chronological fulcrum of the global conflict, 1943, when Germany and Japan bestrode most of their conquered territories and seas, their armed forces battered but dangerous. For the Allies, someone had to devise applications of superior strength to numerous technical and strategic problems, and Kennedy elaborates five interlocking narratives of who these individuals were and what they did. Concerning amphibious landings, Kennedy elides pre-war planners of such operations with wartime designers of landing craft; ditto with theoreticians and practitioners of air power, supremacy in which was critical for the success of any invasion from sea. When Kennedy dwells on weapons like the P-51 fighter, the T-34 tank, or the Essex-class aircraft carrier, he treats them less as war-winning icons than as data for his ideas about running organizations, WWII being his case study. High authorial eminence ensures attention from the WWII readership. --Gilbert

Taylor --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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•The Wall Street Journal
“[Kennedy] colorfully and convincingly illustrates the ingenuity and persistence of a few men who made all the difference.”
•The Washington Post
“Kennedy has produced a fresh perspective on the war, giving us not just another history of an overfamiliar conflict, but a manual of technical problem-solving, written in the clearest and most compelling style, that could still prove useful to modern management today.”
•The Telegraph (UK)
“This superb book is Kennedy’s best.”
•Foreign Affairs
“Paul Kennedy . . . has thus achieved a notable feat in bringing a large dose of common sense, historical insight and detailed knowledge to bear in his refreshing study of what might be called the material history of the second world war. . . . This material history of strategy asks the right questions, disposes of clichés and gives rich accounts of neglected topics.”
•Financial Times
“Paul Kennedy’s history of World War II is a demonstration not only of incisive analysis and mastery of subject, but of profound integrity, and a historian’s desire to celebrate not great leaders but the forgotten scientists, technicians, and logisticians who gave us the tactical edge, without which the strategic designs could never have been achieved.”
•Robert D. Kaplan, author of The Revenge of Geography
“Kennedy’s fine-grained analysis and suspicion of any one single cause—like cipher cracking, intelligence and deception operations, or specific weapons systems, like the Soviet T-34 tank—permit him to persuasively array his supporting facts. . . . An absorbing new approach to a well-worked field.”
•Kirkus Reviews (starred review)
“A fresh and stimulating approach.”
•Publishers Weekly
From the Hardcover edition.

This author has a clear disdain for "Yanks." For all intents and purposes of this book, the US Army, Navy, Army Air Corps, Marines & Coast Guard were all minor bit player all under superior British command. Mr. Kennedy does not even mention a gentleman named Eisenhower, who, if memory serves, had some small part in the ETO until after page 250. Now this is a book about engineers and the Supreme Allied Commander, Eisenhower, was not an engineer. But the author does not hold back on how handily the British generals that he fawns over uses their engineers. It is as if the US had not one thing to contribute to the war effort. This is a very jaded view of how the raw power of GM, Dodge and Mr. Higgins-he of the Higgins Boats that landed the invasion forces on D-day had no real effect on the outcome. No mention of all the air craft from Mitchell, for one, that came off the lines by the thousands in this book. How do these not figure in any "Engineers of Victory" I will never know. This gent really doesn't like Americans.

This is a very good book, but not the book the title suggests. The title suggests that the book focusses on the engineering achievements that contributed to winning WWII, whereas in fact, the book is actually a history of the strategies that won the war. Whoever created the title deserves a dope-slap. "Engineering" has two meanings, (a) the most common meaning: the development of a device, like engineering a new machine gun; and (b) the less common meaning: a means to achieve an objective, like engineering a way to get Johnnie accepted into the college of his choice. Both meanings of the word contributed mightily to success in WWII, but the book only deals with the "scheme" meaning of the word (it mentions the tremendous contributions of new equipment developed during the war, but does not go into the engineering details thereof; rather, equipment developments are discussed as how they contributed to strategies). Therefore, use of the "engineering" in the title is extremely misleading. That said, the book is highly informative, presenting the comprehensive history of the war at the most macroscopic level. (I accept other reviewer's criticisms that some of the facts are wrong, but in my opinion this detracts very little from the value of the book. It would take a huge amount of fact checking to determine how pervasive the errors are, but from my knowledge of the history of the war, the book is probably mostly correct.) The book is written clearly, and discusses not only American strategies, but also British, German, Japanese, Russian, Italian and other countries' strategies as well. The book truly presents the Big Picture, in contrast with most other books that have narrower purviews.

Having read a great many books of the role of technology in the Second World War I looked forward to reading this book, thinking it would add detail to that covered by excellent books like R. V. Jones'

"The Wizard War," in which he described projects he worked on during the war under the auspices of the Tizard Committee, or Robert Burden's history of radar, "The Invention That Changed the World." But despite the subtitle of this book, "The problem solver who turned the tide in the Second World War," there is little or nothing on the men and women who were responsible for the great technological inventions like radar, radio navigation, landing craft and so on. In fact, much of the narrative has nothing whatsoever to do with engineering and technology, and is instead about how various political, tactical, and strategic decisions affected the outcome of the war. Where Kennedy does get into the details of the machinery of war or its creators he gets much of it wrong, like referring to legendary Supermarine Spitfire designer R. J. Mitchell as "J. R. Mitchell." It's hard to imagine how a mistake like this made it into print. In the section on the battle for the Atlantic, he states that antisubmarine rockets SQUID and LIMBO could actively search for their targets, which is not true (they were time fused) and that SQUID is still used "in vastly improved form in today's navies" which is certainly not true as SQUID was replaced by the active seeking Mk44 torpedo twenty years ago. Kennedy also suggests that the Rolls Royce Merlin engine was a copy of the Curtis D-12 (which he calls the Curtis V-12) and that Rolls Royce imported the engines to copy them. Actually the engines were imported by Fairey, later well known as the builders of the Swordfish Biplane. Regardless, the Merlin is not a copy of the D-12 but rather a much more advanced engine that was in part influenced by the D-12, as were many other European aircraft engines. He then tells a story of how an RAF test pilot suggested that the P-51 would be improved by the substitution of a Merlin engine, after which clever RAF mechanics slipped one in, the engine compartment of the P-51 coincidentally being just the right size for the Merlin. But as Peter Pugh's history of the company, "Rolls Royce: The Magic of a Name" points out, there's a good reason the Merlin fit in the P-51. The aircraft had already been tested with both the Packard and Merlin engines at Wright Field, long before any aircraft reached England. The US Army initially chose the Packard in order to simplify the supply chain but quickly came around to the choice of the supercharged Merlin once the RAF showed its superiority. In his chapter on amphibious assault, Kennedy states that the "Cockleshell Heroes" arrived at Gironde in midget submarines. What he's referring to is Operation Frankton, in which commandos were delivered offshore via submarine (not a midget submarine) and paddled folding canoes (nicknamed "cockles") into the Gironde estuary. "Cockleshell Heroes" was the name of a movie about this raid. When he finally gets around to discussing technology, Kennedy does manage to devote a few paragraphs to the specialized mine clearing and bridging tanks known as "Hobart's funnies" but never touches on the most important technological innovation of the invasions, the specialized landing craft used to deliver men and

machinery to the beaches. Whole volumes have been written about the role played by these craft but they seem to have escaped the author's notice. (The Higgins boat get a one sentence reference in a later chapter.) Neither is there any mention of PLUTO, the cross-channel pipeline developed to supply the invading force with fuel. Kennedy does mention the Mullberries, the artificial harbors towed across the channel, but then says they were erected by Seabees, which is incorrect, as others note. A great many critically important scientific and engineering advances never get mentioned at all. Kennedy credits allied success in the Battle of the Philippine Sea (aka the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot) to US aircraft superiority, but an even more important factor was the combination of radar guided anti-aircraft guns firing shells equipped with radar proximity fuzes that protected the Allied ships and allowed for unprecedented success in shooting down attacking aircraft. Those same proximity fuzes were a massive force multiplier in the European theater, making US artillery far more effective than German artillery, which was impact fused, but no mention is made of this, either. There is much in the book that is both accurate and interesting, but unfortunately this is outweighed by the scores of historic and technological errors and omissions that abound. Add to that the fact that it doesn't actually live up to its title and discuss the technology that contributed to victory or those engineers behind the technology, and I cannot by any means recommend this book. Instead, I recommend that readers interested in the technological history of WWII start with the two books I referenced in the first paragraph, Richard Rhodes' "The Making of the Atomic Bomb" and go on from there.

Paul Kennedy is to be commended for taking a fresh and broader look at just how the Allies won the Second World War, conceptualizing the path to victory as how five strategic and logistic needs were satisfied: How to supply Britain across the Atlantic, how to achieve air superiority over western Europe, how to counter combined-arms tactics, how to conduct large-scale amphibious assaults, and how to conduct operations at very long distances. (This is my phrasing, not Kennedy's.) His reconsideration of the conventional history of WW2 does not require any original research and there is little evidence of any in the book. Unfortunately, neither does Kennedy present evidence for (or even convincingly argue for) any explanation of how all these things were done. In the end, the book is all assertion, no proof. Anyone with a middling familiarity with the history of WW2 will find little of interest here. (The text is also studded with little attention-getters - the chief of the American Volunteer Group in China was not 'Claude' Chennault, for instance - that bring reading to a halt. I expect better of a Yale historian.)

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