

Stille, Mark E. *Pearl Harbor: Japan's Greatest Disaster***Osprey, 2025**

448 pp., maps, images, appendices, bibliography, notes, index

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Mark E. Stille's latest contribution to military history focuses on the well-known attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii on 7 December 1941. Memorialized in bronze, film, and the written word, the event is one of the most important of the Second World War (7). This study presents as impeccably researched, well illustrated and, in some respects, data driven. The cherry on top is that it is also crafted in a manner that compels the reader to engage with the well-known event in a way that challenges them to shift their perspective and consider it from new angles.

The author combines an analysis of technical and tactical planning, strategic and intelligence considerations, and personal narrative that contributes to the success of the retelling of such a popular story. Stille gives ample attention to the Japanese perspective which is central to his thesis that this event was a disaster for Japan. The book takes us through the planning, execution and aftermath of the event in a manner that feels balanced, well thought out and diligent. For those who have read other works by Stille, this book's tone and approach will feel familiar.

I was very intrigued to learn about the use of submarines as part of the attack. Stille dedicates an entire chapter, plus other mentions, to "The Forgotten Offensive: Japanese Submarines off Hawaii" (295). This aspect of the attack was completely new to me, as I imagine it may be for many readers and although ultimately shown to not be significant in its tactical impact (they inflicted little damage and all but one were lost), the use of the submarines and their role in the attack is of interest.

Two specific elements that warrant mention here are inter-service rivalries and sub-par or absent communication between the services (273, 353, 368) and the fact that both the Japanese and the Americans underestimated one another (294, 338). The impact of these elements on the entire process (planning, attack and aftermath) act as semi-visible threads in the tapestry that is this story of Pearl Harbor.

I did appreciate Stille's incorporation of relative contemporary linkages, primarily in the latter portion of the text (332, Chapter 13). This reinforces, for those who may not already appreciate, the necessity to study and understand the past – and the value of re-examining it with new lenses and perspectives over time.

Although much of the book follows a logical narrative arc, I found the positioning of the last few chapters confusing. Chapters 11 through 13, the

final three chapters of the book, deal with “The Reckoning” (317), “Why Pearl Harbor Matters” (328) and “Kimmel and Short: Responsibility Misplaced?” (352). All are well-written and interesting complements to the more technical and operations-centric core of the book. That said, the chapter on Kimmel and Short, commanders of the United States Navy’s Pacific Fleet and Army forces in Hawaii respectively, should have come before “Why Pearl Harbor Matters” at the very least, if not before “The Reckoning.” These two chapters conveyed more of an air of conclusion-like writing, although they are not named as such. Positioning the chapter about Kimmel and Short at the very end felt like introducing substantial ideas and positions after neatly wrapping up the story. My reading experience was not bettered by this positioning of the chapters.

I understand the author’s focus and thesis, and appreciate the logical way it is set out in his introduction. This primed my reading experience and gave me a few tidbits of stories I could expect to learn more about throughout the book. That said, for all of the personal narrative and technical detail found in this book, it is a shame that no female perspective, particularly that of nurses who worked under fire that day, is included. There is in fact no mention of any medical personnel who were serving at Pearl Harbor while attention is accorded to male ranks from all service branches. Similarly, civilians are included in casualty counts (318), but no narrative account is shared. With such an important part of the result of the attack being the hardening of American sentiment toward Japan, it is curious that this perspective was not explored further. In addition, it would have been nice to see citations for the numerous archival documents referenced throughout the book, but the Bibliography simply groups them under “Archival Documents” and leaves us to do the legwork to locate them ourselves should we wish.

Overall, this reader highly recommends this book to those interested in naval strategy, the history of the Pacific War, and those open to insightful re-examinations of well-known history.

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**Stone, Richard. *Bristol and the Birth of the Atlantic Economy, 1500-1700*
Boydell & Brewer, 2024**

250 pp., graphs, charts, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index
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Richard Stone’s work is of fundamental importance for all who are interested in the origins of the Atlantic trade. Of his new findings, which emphatically are