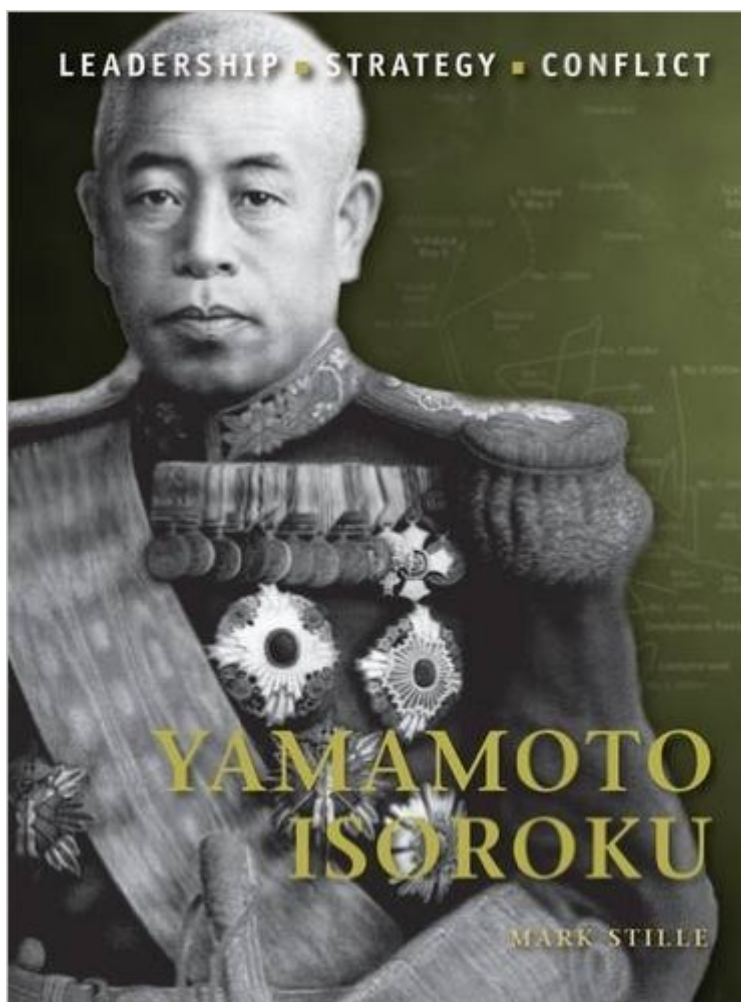


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Yamamoto Isoroku (Command)



Synopsis

Yamamoto Isoroku is the most well-known of Japan's military leaders and his name will be forever linked to the attack on Pearl Harbor. Because the attack was such an apparent success, he has gone down as one of the most brilliant naval figures in history. The truth is rather different as explained in this new book on Yamamoto which examines the reality and myth of one of the most important command figures of the Second World War. The easiest myth to explode is the success of Yamamoto's Pearl Harbor attack which he personally advocated for and went to great extremes to execute. In spite of his insight regarding the outcome of a war between the United States and Japan, Yamamoto's attack was not only a political disaster since it removed any possibility of a negotiated peace, but it had little military impact, and was in fact, unnecessary to guarantee Japan's early war conquests. Yamamoto's record later in the war is no better, as is examined extensively. As he had at Pearl Harbor, Yamamoto bullied the Naval General Staff into a series of badly conceived operations which lead the Imperial Navy to disaster. At the battle of Coral Sea, the Japanese squandered their numerical advantage and jeopardized Yamamoto's cherished Midway operation. Midway was Yamamoto's battle from its inception and planning through to its execution. His faulty planning and poor execution resulted in a seminal defeat which stopped Japanese expansion in the Pacific. Even after Midway, Yamamoto's reputation remained high. In the next campaign, the struggle for Guadalcanal, he failed to recognize that this was the decisive battle with the U.S. Navy that he had been seeking. His control of the battle was timid and weak, and thus the Japanese were never able to focus their still superior forces to achieve final victory. This new look at Yamamoto carefully examines the myth of Yamamoto and his impact on the War in the Pacific.

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Customer Reviews

This piece is an insightful look at the career of the famed Japanese naval commander Isoroku Yamamoto. Even well-read students of World War II would do well to read this rather short but well-written book, because it contains much about Admiral Yamamoto that many of us do not know. The book explains firstly that Yamamoto had a first-class mind. He placed second in the entire nation of Japan on the entrance requirement to Japan's naval academy. He graduated seventh in his class of 200. There can be no doubt that Yamamoto was a highly intelligent and able man. One interesting tidbit: Isoroku Yamamoto was not born into the Yamamoto family. In accordance with a common Japanese tradition of the times, as an adult he was adopted into that prestigious Japanese family in order that he could carry on that family name as its heir. Although the book gives no information about this, one wonders if this did not help propel Yamamoto's career into the ranks of Japan's Admirals. This piece does much to destroy certain stereotypes of Admiral Yamamoto. It is true that Yamamoto believed that Japan could not and would not win a protracted war with the United States, as he had served in the US as Japan's naval representative and toured American industries. However, in contradiction to this, Yamamoto believed that Japan could not avoid a war with America given Japan's war aims in China and the Pacific. As a result of this latter belief, author Stille explains better than any other author I have read that Yamamoto became almost obsessed with his belief that Japan had to strike first at America at Pearl Harbor to destroy the Pacific Fleet.

Any review of this book, like all of those in Osprey's "Command" series, would have to start out with what this book is and what it is not. Due to its very short length of about 60 pages, roughly a third of which consist of illustration, it is not intended as a definitive work on the life of Yamamoto (i.e., a true biography). For something along those lines this reviewer recommends Agawa's "The Reluctant Admiral", a book of roughly 430 pages. The relevant question with respect to Stille's book on Yamamoto is, does it perform the function it can reasonably be expected to (i.e., providing a short and succinct history of Yamamoto with an emphasis on his military command style)? The answer is an unequivocal yes. Stille does an excellent job, especially given the short amount of space he has to work with, at providing an overview of Yamamoto's background and how that background led to the strategic vision he possessed and what his strengths and weaknesses were as an operational commander. Stille, being a retired U.S. Navy Commander, does an exceptional job, particularly in

his analysis of Yamamoto as an operational commander. Stille's background as an ex-naval officer provides perspectives and insights into his analysis that even much lengthier books do not. For example, Agawa's 430 page biography comes nowhere close to as well as analyzing Yamamoto the operational commander than Stille does. Considering the fact that Agawa's does not have Stille's military background, however, this is no surprise. Stille starts off by discussing Yamamoto's entry into the Imperial Japanese Navy's (IJN) Imperial Naval Academy (Japan's equivalent of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis), where he entered with the second highest examination scores in the nation.

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