

experience into its broader European and, to an extent, global contexts. This brilliant book sets a model for other works.

Jeremy Black, *The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Strategies for a World War* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2022), ISBN-13: 978-1538163702, 234 pp. Paperback £25.

Reviewed by Nicolas Lipscombe.

After graduating with a starred First from Cambridge, Jeremy Black undertook research at Oxford and was subsequently Professor of History at the universities of Durham and Exeter. He retired from the latter post in 2020 and had grand plans to travel the world. Alas Covid 19 thwarted those plans, but Professor Black's loss was our gain, for it spurred him to add another 30 (or so) books to his already extraordinary list of 150 publications.

The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, Strategies for A World War is one of his latest works. It is not a chronological blow by blow account of the French Wars that spanned the period from 1792-1815 and shaped the modern world. Instead, it concentrates on the dynamics of strategy (as the full title directs) over the period and the consequences, and implications of the strategic contexts and strategies involved at the time, and subsequently. Half of the chapters are concerned with placing strategy (at the end of the eighteenth century) in context, looking at the institutional structure for strategic assessment during the wars and then finally, a reflection on the strategic legacy of the wars. Black examines this latter point by considering the works of Jomini and later Clausewitz, both of which affected the development and use of the term and concept of strategy, which as a term, was in its infancy. The central chapters within the book are concerned with an examination of the wars themselves, from the strategic concept. Thus, this work looks at the nature of warfare and the evolving character of conflict but within, and alongside, the context of the evolving character of strategy.

Black pointedly avoids the temptation to search for, and utilise patterns, when considering the strategic concepts of the major and lesser powers. He debates how much of a priority should be given to the international system as opposed to the strategies of the different supremacies. Inevitably, the focus is on the five great powers, from a global perspective, and on France,

Britain and Russia in particular. Black makes a strong case that much of what has been written on Napoleonic strategy is in fact operational rather than strategic. He concludes that this is also the case for the other players and that much of the past and present discussion is, in point of fact, operational in nature which 'frequently adopts misleading or decontextualised accounts of strategy'. Strategy, he argues, is not the plan (or plans) to implement national objectives by military means, but the way which nations shape the situation, nationally and internationally, in order to pursue outcomes that safeguard and advance their interests. When viewed through such a lens Napoleon, in the end, fares very badly indeed.

At the start of the period many of the nations are burdened with a strategic requirement of having to maintain the home base against rebellion. This constrained their ability to focus purely on state-to-state conflict. Even after the French Revolution, the nation was facing Royalist risings in the Vendée, while Britain was no less preoccupied with events in Ireland. But Black argues that France mishandled (perhaps not surprisingly with the emergent Directory at the helm) both her strategic priorities and her allies, and despite tactical and operational success in the 1790s, was less well prepared for the Napoleonic Wars that were to follow than Britain, who had prepared for a strategy of total war underpinned by her navy. The national strategies for the Third (1805-7) and Fourth (1809) Coalitions were largely driven by the failures of the interim peace. The Austrians, Prussians and Russians vacillated in their strategic ambitions and priorities and paid the price. Napoleon was happiest with a strategy of force. A continuation of that of the Revolution that paid scant regard to the diplomatic aspects of strategy. This mishandling of his allies was perhaps his greatest strategic error. For having defeated the Central European Powers he did not nurture those alliances and failed to compromise. Then, in 1807, he turned on his long-term ally Spain, for no more tangible reason than having full control of her navy to replace/rebuild his own naval forces in the wake of Trafalgar. Conversely, the failure of the allies to present an allied front against Napoleonic France was a strategic failure, or set of failures, on an equivalent level.

What Napoleon achieved tactically and operationally for the Grande Armée is not in question. That he achieved this success without an operational navy has led to a clouding of the issue from a strategic sense. But his victories and skill as a General, provided what Black terms 'Western commentators with the ambition and apparent need to explain [his] success at war'. But what possible long-term strategy explains his intervention against Spain in 1807, his invasion of Russia in 1812 or his last desperate campaigns in 1815. The consequences to the

French nation are all too apparent. There has been an almost inevitable consequence of a ubiquitous historical focus on Napoleon, leading to an examination of land-based events in Europe, rather than the wider, global nature of the conflict and its far-reaching consequences in the shorter and medium term.

Having written a work on strategy in the eighteenth century (*Plotting Power: Strategy in the Eighteenth Century*, Indiana University Press, 2017) and a more general all-encompassing study on Military Strategy (*Military Strategy: A Global History*, Yale University Press, 2020), a strategic study into the world wars at the end of the eighteenth, start of nineteenth centuries, seems an obvious corollary. But what Black has done with this excellent work is to look holistically at the strategies of all the leading belligerents from a global perspective and from the perspectives of national, international and military strategy today. In the end he draws the strings together and concludes that the political will that shapes national strategic context and conjecture is underpinned by national support. Of all the key players, the national support of the French population, courtesy of the Revolution, was the most fragile element of all. By Black's own admission he is not a great admirer of Napoleon but this (arguably) long-overdue approach to this fascinating period of history, has led to some very interesting conclusions. In terms of Grand Strategy of the period, and of military strategy through the period of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, this book is an essential addition.

Kim Hoskin, *In Plain View: Borneo to Vietnam and thereafter: A Personal Journey 1964-1971*. (John Douglas Publishing, Waikanae, New Zealand, 2020), ISBN-13: 978-0994105967, 696pp. USD 78,-

Reviewed by J.P. Harris.

Socrates taught that a life not reflected upon is scarcely worth living. No-one could accuse Kim Hoskin (British by origin, a New Zealand national by adoption and currently resident in Sarawak in Malaysian Borneo) of a lack of reflection on his personal and professional experiences. His memoirs fill a volume of nearly 700 pages, including notes and appendices. They centre, as the title indicates, on his involvement in two wars of the second half of the 20th Century. In one of those (by far the smaller) he was on the winning side. In the other (by far