



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

By Paul Kennedy

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**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*

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### Editorial Review

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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

Review

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"[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.*

#### About the Author

**Paul Kennedy** is internationally known for his writings and commentaries on global political, economic, and strategic issues. He earned his B.A. at Newcastle University and his doctorate at the University of Oxford. Since 1983, he has been the Dilworth Professor of History and director of international security studies at Yale University. He is on the editorial board of numerous scholarly journals and writes for *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Atlantic*, and many foreign-language newspapers and magazines. Kennedy is the author and editor of nineteen books, including *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, which has been translated into more than twenty languages, followed by *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century* (1993), and *The Parliament of Man* (2006).

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