



“Dale Jenkins’ fascinating and highly readable book offers startling new facts regarding what happened in key, early battles. Based on new research and previously overlooked documents, it provides valuable insight.”

—JOHN F. LEHMAN, *Former Secretary of the Navy*

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Dale Jenkins adds to the historical literature of World War II with *Diplomats & Admirals*, which focuses on the political and military exchanges between the United States and Japan from July 1941 to June 1942. This period began with the Roosevelt administration’s economic response to the Japanese invasion of southern Indochina and ended with the reversal of Japanese fortune at the Battle of Midway. Jenkins tells a story of poor decision-making by U.S. and Japanese political leaders as they stumble into a war that neither wanted before transitioning to a recounting of Pacific naval battles during the first six months of the war.

*Diplomats & Admirals* serves as both a title and rough outline for the book. The first half includes an engaging history of the failed efforts of Japanese political leaders to maneuver the hawkish elements in their military away from a war with the United States they would likely lose. On the U.S. side, Jenkins details the failures of the State Department to understand the Japanese threat despite insight from the ambassador to Tokyo, Joseph Grew, and diplomatic intelligence from decoded Japanese communications. Japanese Foreign Minister Yōsuke Matsuoka and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson are shown to be particularly culpable. The diplomatic portion of the book concludes with the doomed efforts of Japanese Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe as he struggles to arrange the face-to-face meeting with President Franklin Roosevelt he believes will preserve peace, only to be foiled by State Department bureaucracy, distracted from Roosevelt, and stonewalled by Secretary of State Cordell Hull.

The book’s transition from diplomats to admirals occurs around the attack on Pearl Harbor and its immediate aftermath. Jenkins does a good job describing the chaos in post-Pearl Harbor Oahu and Washington, including the finger pointing and bungled efforts to save the American garrison on Wake Island.

The second half of the book focuses on the U.S. Pacific Fleet and moves chronologically from the carrier raids of early 1942, to the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo, the Battle of the Coral Sea, and ending with the Battle of Midway. The book focuses on Admiral Chester Nimitz and his efforts to reverse the course of the war. Jenkins’ focus produces a cohesive story and is especially useful in showing the Battles of the Coral Sea and Midway as parts of one continuum.

Jenkins accomplishes his goal in *Diplomats & Admirals*: to offer a historical perspective that connects the political run-up to World War II in the Pacific with the initial military confrontations that result. He does especially well to detail the mistakes of U.S. and Japanese statesmen in 1941 and presents their failures as effective warnings to future leaders.

★★★★★

REVIEWED BY COMMANDER MATT WRIGHT, U.S. NAVY

**AUTHOR:** Dale A. Jenkins

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