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B.A. Friedman, ed., *21st Century Ellis: Operational Art and Strategic Prophecy for the Modern Era*. Annapolis: Naval Inst. Press, 2015. Pp x, 151. ISBN 978-1-61251-807-7.

Review by Martha Sloan, Michigan Technological University (masloan@mtu.edu).

Capt. B.A. Friedman has edited the third volume of the Naval Institute Press series of collections of essays by past military strategists and philosophers with comments relating their thoughts to today's military challenges. This installment assembles not just the better known papers of Earl Hancock (Pete) Ellis on his plans for war in the Pacific, but also his century-old articles on counterinsurgency and combined warfare. Friedman (Naval War College¹) relates all of these to current military practice.

Ellis was born (19 December 1880) and raised in Iuka, Kansas. His interest in the Spanish-American war led him to enlist in the Marine Corps after he graduated from high school in 1900. Being ambitious, he hired a US Army colonel to tutor him for the officer examination, which he passed easily; he was commissioned a second lieutenant in December 1901. He served two tours in the Philippines, where his outstanding work led to his promotion to captain and transfer to the commandant's staff in Headquarters Marine Corps.

Although Ellis wanted to become an aviator, his commandant sent him to a summer course at the Naval War College designed for more senior officers. He performed so well that the president of the college arranged for him to complete a longer course and then appointed him to the faculty. His mentor was another instructor, William Sims, who later became president of the college. Ellis's work at the college (1911-13) resulted in four of his best known papers on advanced bases.

During World War I, future commandant John Lejeune appointed Ellis as his adjutant. Ellis wrote of his experiences working with allied armies in a paper that highlighted— humorously—the communication and coordination required in a combined service environment. After the war, (then) Lieutenant Colonel Ellis, under Lejeune's patronage, wrote his most famous paper, "Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia," which became the Marine Corps' contribution to Plan Orange, the American strategy for war with Japan. Ellis died in 1923 during a tour of Micronesia, likely from chronic alcohol abuse.

Ellis did not live to see the profound effect he had on the Marine Corps or the war against Imperial Japan, which he had predicted would happen. He had accurately gauged the trends in geopolitics and warfare he witnessed and predicted where those trends would lead. He was the Marine Corps' first real intellectual, and perhaps still its finest, and he provided it with ideas that would make it relevant and effective for decades to come. (7)

Chapter 1 reprints Ellis's 1921 *Marine Corps Gazette* article "Bush Brigades," in which he reflects on his experiences with counterinsurgency in the Philippines. Friedman notes that his analysis of relations between insurgents and local people parallels Mao Tse-tung's sixteen years later. Similarly, he compares his recommendations on tactics with those of T.E. Lawrence five years later and David Alula forty-three years later. Ellis stresses that strategic legitimacy is essential to military operations and the morale of counterinsurgent troops.

In chapter 2, also published in 1921, Ellis considers the Marine Corps' experiences in World War I, showing a fine grasp of communications and coordination in combined (multinational) battles. Friedman focuses on the continuing problem of information overload, quoting Ellis's observations on First World War message centers. He comments that today "message center" is the Combat Operations Center (or Tactical Operations Center) and that the tendencies Ellis recognized in 1918 have "continued apace until today. Whereas Ellis had to deal with too much information brought by runners, dogs, pigeons, and unreliable

1. Where he is in the master's degree program in national security and strategic studies. He wrote the present book while serving as a field artillery officer in the US Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

radios, the modern staff officer must juggle numerous computers, tactical chat rooms, image displays and radios that perform much better than they did in 1918” (35).

In 1921, the Marine Corps reprinted four papers Ellis wrote on advanced bases while he was at the Naval War College. Friedman includes two of them in chapter 3; he sees the first, “Naval Bases: Their Location, Resources, and Security,” as proposing the first precursor of today’s expeditionary Marine Corps. In it, Ellis identifies Germany as America’s most likely opponent in the Atlantic and Japan in the Pacific. He more accurately predicted the future war with Japan than the more imminent one with Germany. Friedman points out that the Pacific geography Ellis analyzed remains relevant today in determining the nature of any potential war against an East Asian enemy. The second paper in chapter 3, “The Advanced Base Force,” outlines recommended Marine Corps organization in small units, now called combat units, integrating ground, air, and support assets under one commander.

Ellis’s best known report, “Advanced Base Operations in Micronesia,” written in 1921, comprises chapter 4. With Commandant Lejeune’s approval, it became the Marine Corps’ contribution to Plan Orange. In his introduction to the paper, Friedman exaggerates in stating that Ellis “again predicts that Japan will initiate a war and that they [*sic*] will attempt to reduce U.S. battleships at the outset. (Twenty years later, Pearl Harbor would bear out this forecast)” (83). Ellis’s exact wording is “Considering our consistent policy of non-aggression she [Japan] will *probably* initiate the war” (94, my emphasis). The Orange plans and most observers of Japanese warfare during the interwar years anticipated a surprise attack. If Friedman’s “again” refers to the first Advanced Base paper, his claim is even more puzzling, because Ellis does not refer to the start of the war except to state that the US Navy must assume the strategic offensive in the event of war. His Micronesia paper does not mention Japan’s attacking battleships at the start of the war, but states that “upon our entry into the theater of operations, the enemy will endeavor with his torpedo, mine and bomb crafts to reduce our superiority in gun and torpedo ships” (94).

Friedman otherwise astutely compares the findings of the Micronesia paper with the warfare the Japanese would use in today’s anti-access/area-denial environment.² He states that analysts today think that China, like Japan in 1941, may be discounting the superiority of American forces in the expectation that time and attrition will induce the United States to sue for peace. He observes that the AirSea Battle operational concept is meant to counter just such an approach.

The editor repeats the conventional wisdom that Ellis’s detailed plan to seize Eniwetok Atoll in the Marshalls with four thousand men was proved true in the 1944 battle, but the actual landing force was 7997³—almost twice what Ellis had stipulated.

The conclusion in chapter 5 praises Ellis’s mastery of strategy and tactics and extends his analysis into the twenty-first century and a possible engagement with China. Friedman recognizes major changes in geopolitics and warfare over the past century but detects similarities between Japan then and China now. He assesses the expansion of China’s navy and army with special attention to the Second Artillery’s anti-ship missile capabilities. He also cautions that China’s cyberwarfare capabilities have become ever more alarming. He makes a persuasive case that both junior officers and senior strategists should read Ellis’s analyses.

The book’s ancillary materials include thirteen photographs or drawings, ranging from a picture of Ellis’s mentor to an amphibious assault somewhere in the Marshalls; only the cover photo shows (camera shy?) Ellis himself. Two pages of notes and a one-page bibliography⁴ will aid both casual and scholarly readers.

In this thoughtful selection of Earl Hancock Ellis’s publications, B.A. Friedman shows how pertinent they remain for today’s officers. *21st Century Ellis* certainly fulfills its publisher’s laudable goal of preparing readers to ask the right questions to solve future military challenges.

2. See Sam J. Tangredi, *Anti-Access Warfare: Countering A2/AD Strategies* (Annapolis: Naval Inst Pr, 2013).

3. See Philip A. Crowl and Edmund G. Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and the Marshalls* (Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1955)—Kindle edition, loc. 8357.

4. Which, oddly, omits some of the cited sources but includes items not cited. It also reverses the order of author names for Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl’s classic study *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War: Its Theory, and Its Practice in the Pacific* (Princeton: Princeton U Pr, 1988).