Flawed, yet Authoritative? Organisational memory and the future of official military history after Chilcot[1]

ANDREW HOSKINS[2]
University of Glasgow
Email: andrew.hoskins@glasgow.ac.uk
&
MATTHEW FORD
University of Sussex
Email: m.c.ford@sussex.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

Official Military History (OH) is a thorny subject. Despite a century of deploying British service personnel to conflicts all over the world, over the past 100 years the British government has commissioned very few OHs.[3] Offering an interpretation of military events that is typically based on early access to otherwise classified data, OH presents an opportunity for the political and military establishment to set out a perspective that aims at legitimacy but is typically criticised as being flawed. In this discussion paper we present the conflicting pressures and expectations that frame the writing of OH and ask whether such an activity will be possible in a world after the controversies associated with the Iraq War Inquiry of 2009-11.

Developing a written account of events has always presented challenges for the armed forces. Not only are memories clouded by time and circumstance but also, even if experiences are recorded accurately, developing accounts into an official

---

[1] The Report of the Iraq Inquiry, Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors, 6 July 2016 (aka the Chilcot Inquiry). Report available here: http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/247921/the-report-of-the-iraq-inquiry_executive-summary.pdf. Accessed 1 January 2017.

[2] Hoskins' contribution to this article was funded by an Arts and Humanities Research Council Research Fellowship: 'Technologies of memory and archival regimes: War diaries after the connective turn' (ref. AH/L004232/1).

position potentially involves allocating approbation and reward for actions taken in battle. The armed forces have long recognised the importance of capturing the ebb and flow of events so as to generate important insights that may lead to better military outcomes. That such an approach might also produce a politics of memory, which in turn affects the production of OH, is less readily discussed in a transparent manner.

These problems are especially challenging given the cycle time of contemporary news media and the apparently growing significance of "fake news" for shaping public opinion. Not only is this "fake" material quickly circulated via social media but it also takes considerable time to fact check. In these circumstances, the dilemma facing those who commission OH is one where the legitimacy of this type of publication is quickly undermined by the public who are already predisposed to distrust official material.

An Official History is the Services' official representation of events, derived from source material not available to the general public at the time of its writing. It is intended to be objective and balanced, enabling them to learn from both successes and failures. The tensions noted above, nevertheless, pose a number of questions about OH that we seek to address in this paper.

In the first instance it is important to ask how legitimacy in an OH is created. In the second, those commissioning OH need to consider the advantages and disadvantages associated with the length of time that should pass subsequent to an event being interrogated and whether this helps or hinders the creation of legitimacy. In this respect the notion of 'historical distance', as described by Mark Salber Phillips is relevant and may manifest itself 'along a gradient of distances, including proximity or immediacy as well as remoteness or detachment'.[4] This gradient of historical distance in turn is critical for shaping public and political perceptions of the legitimacy or otherwise of inquiry work.

Finally, and depending on the answer to question two, there are trade-offs to be considered when reflecting on historical distance as it relates to OH. Writing OH may be important to the armed forces as it seeks to shape on-going practices or have impact on policy and strategy, in which case the OH should be written shortly after the events being considered. Alternatively, a longer historical distance may be crucial for those seeking closure and or establishing accountability. In this short

---

[4] Mark S. Phillips, 'History, Memory, and Historical Distance' in Seixas, Peter. (Ed.) *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 89.

review article we seek to explore how these different dimensions evolve relative to each other and make suggestions as to how the controversies associated with the Iraq War may shape future OH.

Organisational memory and learning lessons
The function and effects of the various internal and public reviews, inquiries, and histories of military action need to be carefully contextualised if OH has any chance of being written at all. In this respect, the very belief in inquiry work shaping on-going and future practices, policy and strategy is embedded in the common phrase in military discourse of 'learning lessons'. But such a central feature of military progress and a critical component of inquiry work – including in the Iraq Inquiry – is actually often taken for granted. Consequently the exact process by which organisational learning takes place, and equally the reasons for organisational forgetting, is rarely made explicit. Similarly, it seems odd that there is no formalised British military strategy and a supporting process that draws widely upon theories and studies of institutional or organisational memory.

This is even more surprising given that the UK's Ministry of Defence (MOD) has itself developed a useful working definition of organisational memory. Developed by what was known as the MOD's Corporate Memory Branch[5], organisational memory is defined as, 'the ability to draw on and use information and knowledge that is embedded in people, processes and records. This is comprised of explicit knowledge (records and processes) and tacit knowledge (staff knowledge and experience)'.[6] The key to creating organisational memory according to the MOD was, therefore, related to capturing the interplay between people, processes and records in a holistic fashion.

Given this definition, then, it is evident that organisational memory directly and indirectly shapes the military's capacity to learn, adapt, and to be more effective in combat. More than this, organisational memory also informs the way that acceptable and unacceptable norms of behaviour are codified and propagated. One of the fundamental errors of the Iraq Inquiry, however, was its failure to grasp the significance of the difference in the approaches to organisational memory between the British Army as compared to the mostly civilian staffed MOD. In particular, the Iraq War demonstrated how a lack of resources dedicated to capturing and maintaining explicit and tacit knowledge within the MOD hampered the coordination

---

[5] The MOD's Corporate Memory Branch was dismantled in 2012-13 with those parts that dealt with the Army forming a new Army Historical Branch. These changes occurred as part of the Lord Levene Reforms.
[6] UK MOD Corporate Memory scoping study 2006.

of organisational memory within the British Army. This became very obvious after the publication of the Gage Inquiry into the death of Baha Mousa.[7] Held in custody by the Army in Basra in 2003, Mousa had been subject to intolerable treatment and illegal torture and had subsequently died. In his report into the incident Gage noted that the British Army had been banned from using five techniques (hooding, white noise, sleep deprivation, food deprivation and painful stress positions) on prisoners since the Parker Inquiry of 1972. Lacking any significant means for sustaining that knowledge within the MOD the notion that these techniques had been prohibited had largely been lost.[8] Consequently, at the time of the Iraq War there was 'no written policy or doctrine banning the practices'.[9] It is fair to say, then, that before Baha Mousa, the MOD's lackadaisical approach to organisational forgetting represented something of a 'corporate failure'.[10]

Following the Gage Inquiry, however, the MOD's approach to organisational memory improved. This is evident in the 2014 Al-Sweady Public Inquiry that dismissed allegations that UK soldiers mistreated and unlawfully killed Iraqis in 2004.[11] The conscientious effort to put in place the ability to quickly mobilise the Army's organisational memory taking advantage of the Army Historical Branch's resources and expertise has been critical in this respect. Nonetheless, if robust processes are to be put in place that consciously balance decisions favouring organisational forgetting with those promoting organisational memory then these activities need to be sustained for emergent and ongoing campaigns. If managed carefully, not only will this help to sustain the Army's internal, political and public legitimacy it will also help the MOD deal with the various of inquiries into the conduct of Britain's armed forces in times of war.

---

[7] Sir William Gage, The Report of the Baha Mousa Inquiry, volume 1, 2011. Official report available here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/279190/1452_i.pdf. Accessed January 1, 2017.

[8] Huw Bennett argues that the process of organizational forgetting was purposeful when it came to the five techniques and was not simply a matter of lacking the capacity to remember. See Huw Bennett, 'Baha Mousa and the British Army in Iraq', in Paul Dixon (Ed), *Hearts and Minds in British Counter-insurgency*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[9] The Report of the Baha Mousa Inquiry.

[10] The Report of the Baha Mousa Inquiry.

[11] Sir Thayne Forbes, The Report of Al Sweady Inquiry, December 2014. Official report available here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388292/Volume_1_Al_Sweady_Inquiry.pdf. Accessed 1 January 2017.

To do this sustainably, however, the MOD needs to recognise that there are at least two distinct cultures that shape organisational memory and military strategy, reflecting the perspectives of the Services themselves and that of the MOD more broadly. In this respect the tensions between these cultures and their modus operandi were rendered apparent in evidence given to the Iraq Inquiry. For example, Major-general Albert Whitley[12] argued:

> In WW II when the leaders met they brought along their military Chiefs of Staff and planners to prepare options jointly for strategy and strategic decisions. There are books and books relating the matters they wrestled with - this time most were not even considered.
>
> It should be a duty for political and civil leaders to prepare themselves to frame strategic direction. How many of them have read our military doctrine, or understood it or even able to define Grand Strategy or Strategy? Perhaps there should be study periods or workshops?
>
> MOD is not fit for purpose if that purpose is to equip, prepare and where necessary direct national forces at war.[13]

But a key difference between the various cultures within defence relates to their capacity to work historically. This develops out of a number of distinct organisational challenges and operations within and between the MOD and the Services and reflects modes of working that have very different temporalities. In the case of the Army, for example, it is clear that officers and men are highly effective at swift action and achieving clear short-term objectives.[14] However, it is less effective in medium and long-term decision-making. This contrasts with the British Civil Service which operates to a much more extended timeframe. The continuity and longevity of the archival record of operations that are conducted by the Army is ultimately the principal responsibility of the Civil Service.

On top of this, the British Army adopts a policy of limiting an individual's service time

---

[12] Senior British Land Advisor to the Commander the Coalition Forces Land Component Command Kuwait and Iraq from November 2002 to May 2003.
[13] Official website of the Iraq Inquiry:
http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/96166/2011-01-25-Statement-Whitley.pdf
Accessed 1 January 2017.
[14] Anthony King, 'Unity Is Strength: Staff College and the British Officer Corps', *British Journal of Sociology* vol. 60, no. 1 (2009).

in a role or while on operations via a tour of duty. The notion of a 'two year tour' was developed to maintain the effectiveness of a fighting force as well as morale during times of peace. At the same time by moving officers around the Army it became possible to build organisational resilience and provide enough opportunity to gain the requisite experience for career progression. The flip side of this mode of utilising human resources has been a decline in the continuity of record-keeping for an organisation whose records are typically created in different locations across the world (in effect, the MOD has many thousands of sites, significantly more than most UK government departments). In Iraq, this challenge to organisational memory was further constrained by the short tour duties of some civilians, as summarised in the conclusions to the Chilcot Report which stated:

> The difficult working conditions for civilians in Iraq were reflected in short tour lengths and frequent leave breaks. Different departments adopted different arrangements throughout the Iraq campaign, leading to concerns about breaks in continuity, loss of momentum, lack of institutional memory and insufficient local knowledge.[15]

In evidence given to the Inquiry on 21 July 2010, Lieutenant-general Sir Alistair Irwin (Adjutant General from 2003-2005) underlines the challenge of the rapid dissipation of Army organisational memory:

> in respect of an institution, the only lessons that are learned and put into effect are the ones that are put into effect immediately, because the nature of an institution, with the individuals in it passing in and out and changing jobs and so on, is that unless the lesson is applied immediately, it will never be remembered. That's one of the real difficulties about lessons learned.[16]

By comparison, lengthy periods of fighting focused on one type of war require significant organisational relearning when suddenly confronted with another, as with the shift to fighting insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan this century, compared with the preparations that had been made to engage in conventional combat during, for instance, the 1991 Gulf war. Despite the fact that the British had more, and more recent, experience than their American counterparts in fighting insurgency style

---

[15] Official report of the Iraq inquiry: Section 152, p. 423, para. 86. http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/246651/the-report-of-the-iraq-inquiry_section-152.pdf. Accessed 1 January 2017.

[16]Official website of the Iraq Inquiry: http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/95382/2010-07-21-Transcript-Irwin-Palmer-S3.pdf#search=lessons. Accessed 1 January 2017.

warfare in Northern Ireland, the Chilcot Report clearly recognised that the Army's organisational memory had faded quickly. Indeed as Lieutenant-general Jonathon Riley describes in his evidence to the Iraq Inquiry on the 14 December 2009:

> it was borne in on me very strongly how much the collective experience of the army of dealing with the IED threat had wasted out during the long period of ceasefire in Northern Ireland. We had forgotten institutionally how to deal with this… not just as a series of devices but as a system and how to attack the device and attack the system behind it.[17]

And it is this idea of 'collective experience' that could be usefully made more tangible through more focused studies of organisational memory that explicitly tracked the different forms and temporalities of Army and MOD learning. By making it clear when, where and how Army and MOD cultures are in conflict it becomes easier to reduce the risks of losing organisational knowledge.

Official History
In contrast to the more time limited and sometimes opaque workings of contemporary organisational memory, the learning or failing to learn military lessons in an institutionally sanctioned form was once made visible through the publication of official histories. This represented an opportunity for a Department of State to come a formal and departmentally agreed position on its role in a particular set of events. Such a position would allow the entire organisation to undertake institutional level change. As such it demanded a greater deal of scrutiny, objectivity and balance than might be found in those modes of organisational learning that demand faster cycle times and that are typically associated with military adaptation.[18]

Nevertheless it can take a considerable amount of effort to produce a report that is both balanced and has some capacity to help drive change within and across a Department of State. There can be a number of reasons for this but one of the essential challenges to overcome relates to the relationship between the author of

---

[17] Official website of the Iraq Inquiry:
http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/media/236689/2009-12-14-transcript-riley-wall-s2.pdf. Accessed 1 January 2017.
[18] There is huge amount of literature on military adaptation. A good example of contemporary studies include: Theo Farrell, 'Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006-2009', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4. (2010); Sergio Catignani, '"Getting COIN" at the Tactical Level in Afghanistan: Reassessing Counter-insurgency Adaptation in the British Army', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 35, no. 4, (2012).

the OH and those who are being observed. Typically OH authors have 'had access to classified official documents and to a variety of authoritative persons, have had financial or other support, and that in many cases they have written from within an official office'.[19] At the same time, however, the proximity to the source material and its sponsors opens up the possibility that the authors of OH lack sufficient independence to be capable of composing a publication that has the meaningful capacity to produce change.

In this respect, one prominent counter-factual test of the potential value of official military history lies in the emergence of FCO documents supporting claims of British forces' torture of Kenyan prisoners held during the Mau Mau uprising in the 1950s. These documents only emerged in 2012 after the British government finally admitted their existence during a court case brought by some of the elderly survivors. Known as the Hanslope Archive, these records were retained by the FCO for years. Yet their rediscovery decades after the Kenya Emergency fuelled widespread claims of a government cover-up. Of course if an OH of the Kenya Emergency had been sanctioned and had subsequently failed to make use of these FCO documents then it would have been hard for the Government to escape the accusation that they had attempted a cover-up. However, no OH of the conflict in Kenya was authorised and consequently the archive remained hidden.

Such a state of affairs raises questions of policy in relation to OH. Who decides to do an OH and what are the conditions imposed on its writing? If an OH is to be of any value then its authors have to have access to all the relevant documentary evidence. If that had been available in Kenya then it would have enabled the victims' claims to have been properly heard many years earlier: most victims had died before the revelations of the 2010s. In principle, this would have protected the British government from claims of a conspiracy through the deliberate concealment of records and also resolved any outstanding legal and humanitarian concerns.

This counter-factual scenario nevertheless exposes the problems that immediately present themselves when thinking about the way that OH is conceived and written. As Higham recognises, however, these problems are far from new as in many respects, 'Official history is in itself a contradiction in terms'.[20] From the military's standpoint, OHs are not intended as independent or objective but as offering a perspective weighted towards the specific records set being used and the privileged

---

[19] *R. D. S., Higham, ed., Official Histories: Essays and Bibliographies from Around the World. Kansas State University Library Bibliography Series. (Manhattan, KS: Kansas State University Library, 1970), p. 1.*
[20] Higham, Official Histories, p. 1.

access being afforded to them. Obviously this is further limited by the military's willingness to sanction an official account that could damage its work or its reputation. In this context, OH represents a negotiation between the ambition to write a balanced history based on an expert and objective use of sources and the immediate demands of the organisation to protect itself from unhelpful scrutiny.

To this end, the principal function of military OH is to provide a sober, well researched manuscript which lays out the official version of events and acts as the point of departure for academic discussion going forward. Any interpretation and critique of events must be based upon high quality evidence and be balanced and objective. Securing that objectivity is difficult but important. One common, if informal, strategy for attaining greater objectivity involves sharing for comment key draft passages with participants in the events being documented, thereby facilitating a more negotiated account, although one not usually evident in the final product. In this respect there is precedent.

For example, Brigadier-general C.F. Aspinall-Oglander's (1932) *History of the Great War: Military Operations Gallipoli (Vol.II) May 1915 to the Evacuation* was 'based on official documents by direction of the Historical Section Committee of Imperial Defence'.[21] A letter from Major-general Sir John Duncan (also serving in the British Army in Gallipoli) to General Aspinall dated 15 February 1931 (recently discovered by HB(A)) comments on a full draft of this manuscript, recommending a series of changes to the text (including some based on his own memories of events of the day). In this instance, General Duncan writes: 'In discussing the operations you have naturally found it necessary to criticise individuals. I agree with most of your remarks, but it is to me questionable whether it is wise to be quite as frank as you have been'. He continues: 'I think I would omit such a sweeping statement as "there can be little doubt that the situation was aggravated by a total absence of higher leadership". There is sufficient in the remainder of the para. to indicate this without stating it so brutally and frankly'.

This sentence (along with a numerous others identified by General Duncan) did not make their way into the published official history. However, it clearly points to the way in which the military themselves seek to moderate OH and demonstrates the possibilities and limitations of this form of publication.

---

[21] C.F. Aspinall-Oglander, *History of the Great War: Military Operations Gallipoli (Vol.II) May 1915 to the Evacuation,* (London: William Heinemann, 1932).

Official History after Chilcot
Bearing all of that in mind, and in light of the controversy associated with the British Government's decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003, there will be a number of challenges to overcome before an official history of that conflict is written. The first will relate to the amount of time needed to do the research and the timing as to when to start and by when to finish. In the past all military official histories have been published before the departmental records, which provide the bulk of the evidence base, have been opened to the public at the National Archives. This meant that the authors had the relative luxury of fifty and more recently thirty years before that threshold was reached. Today the release of public records threshold has been reduced to twenty years. In theory then, the MOD's Operation Telic papers will begin the transfer to the National Archives in 2023, about six years from now.[22]

In terms of simple writing time this does not present an insurmountable problem; the problem occurs because, depending on the circumstances, it becomes harder to write a balanced, complete and objective manuscript when this is done so close to the events. So as we have alluded to in the previous sections it is probably necessary that the principle military participants are no longer serving and unable to exert any influence on the writing of an Iraq campaign history. If they are still serving then it is unlikely that an OH would pass even a basic credibility test with the public. At the same time of course, it is precisely those who remain in the Service that very much need to access recent OH if they are to have a shared and agreed starting place for framing future policy.

In terms of time taken, it should be noted that the campaign histories of the Second World War were published over 36 years between 1952 and 1988. Nevertheless, in light of recent publications (by for example David French, John Buckley, Jonathan Fenell, Ian Gooderson and Niall Barr), close examination of these OHs could lead to the broad generalisation that the earlier a volume was completed, the less well the manuscripts have withstood the test of time.[23] And, of course, if an official publication cannot withstand the test of time then what would be the point of writing it? Bearing

---

[22] As an aside, the Operation Granby papers from 1991 are already being transferred.
[23] David French, *Raising Churchill's Army: The British Army and the War against Germany, 1919-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Ian Gooderson, *A Hard Way to Make a War: The Italian Campaign in the Second World War* (London: Anova, 2008); John Buckley, *Monty's Men - the British Army and the Liberation of Europe* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2013); Niall Barr, *Pendulum of War: The Three Battles of El Alamein* (London: Pimlico, 2005); Jonathan Fennell, *Combat and Morale in The North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

in mind the ambition to wait until senior personnel have retired combined with the challenge of releasing documents after 20 years, 2020 would be the earliest one could begin to assume that the principal military actors of Operation Telic were no longer be serving. If the ambition is to complete an OH before the records are released to the public, then this would leave just a three-year window to fully explore a six-year campaign.

Sufficient time will grant the opportunity for greater objectivity and balance. How much time writers will have to complete an OH is also a function of the circumstances surrounding the subject matter. The war in Iraq is arguably the most contentious war that the United Kingdom has ever fought. Other wars (Suez in 1956 for example) have been divisive at the time and some have been divisive over many years (Northern Ireland for example) but no other war can match the 2003 war in Iraq for the intensity and endurance of the emotion it still arouses in British society. For some conflicts it is simply not possible to achieve the correct perspective and detachment until a considerable period of time has passed. Telic is one of those wars and the 2016 publication of the Chilcot report demonstrated how raw those emotions are thirteen years after the start of the operation and seven years after its completion.

Within Whitehall, contention will also lead to delay and distortion of the OH publication timeline. Once an OH manuscript has been completed it must be cleared by all relevant government departments. This is far from straightforward. A prematurely written OH will attract objections and calls for amendments which then have to be further negotiated with the author. The clearance process will take longer the more contentious a conflict, the closer the writing of the OH is to the event and the more government departments there are involved in the process. The Iraq war and the campaign in Northern Ireland will be at the far end of this clearance timescale.

Other government activity and ongoing litigation will also impede the initiation of an official history. It would, for example, have been inconceivable that an Iraq OH could command any significant consideration within Whitehall until sometime after the publication of Chilcot's report. Moreover it would not be politically or institutionally acceptable for an OH manuscript to disagree with or contradict a Chilcot finding. Even after the publication of the Iraq Inquiry government will be occupied with absorbing its contents and implementing its recommendations.

Future Official Historians will also face a significant challenge in determining when their research is complete. In the past, the author of an OH would have been given access to the body of official records. This would have been a carefully structured body of paper files containing multiple documents. Whilst there may have been a

great deal of them it was possible to assimilate their contents and also browse through them as well as the file title. That will no longer be the case. There are likely to be relatively few paper files relating to Telic as the majority of records are now electronic files containing single documents (e-mails, text documents, presentation slides etc.). It is also unlikely that these files will have anything like the structure and 'browsability' of their paper ancestors. Ease of interrogation and analysis will therefore depend on the availability of and the ability to use sophisticated data mining tools.

Historians also need to consider the impact of the digitisation of military command and control which took place in the first decade of the new millennium. This has led to a vast increase in the number of electronic files created, further compounded by the ever-increasing complexity of modern military operations. Combined, the lack of structure and the large number of electronic records will mean that any author will have to work far harder (and longer) to come to a meaningful understanding of the record set. Analysing the records and working the results into a complete and digestible manuscript will likewise be harder than anything which has gone before. It may even be the case that the task of writing an OH within a reasonable timeframe becomes impossible for a single author to achieve and that the norm will be for a team of authors to work on different aspects of the history.

The longer lead times and additional people required to prepare an OH will all add up to greater cost at a time when the Government's finances are precarious. This will mean that an activity which is already underfunded is likely to fall even further down the resource priority list. The Cabinet Office is responsible for the Government's OH program but it is unclear how active it is and what future plans it has for addressing the military campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Conclusion
Official History gains legitimacy when it is balanced and aims at developing an objective record of events. Trade offs are inevitable depending on the campaign under consideration and the politics of memory associated with that conflict. Scrupulous attention and a willingness to write about those campaigns that are politically or organisationally contentious is important if the legitimacy of OH as a form of publication is to be sustained over the longer term. It is no surprise, however, that OH has the potential to open up difficult debates that are impossible to resolve satisfactorily for all those involved. In the circumstances, the real indicator of the armed forces' willingness to learn is related to their willingness to ask and then answer those questions that might otherwise be taboo or organisationally and politically difficult.

At its best, then, OH offers an agreed starting place for initiating or framing a wider public debate. As we have seen, however, whether OH can do this given the challenges associated with writing and releasing a history before classified documents are released to the National Archives is another matter. Nevertheless, if OH stimulates debate and helps to generate understanding about the armed forces and their uses then it will have served a worthwhile social purpose.

The list of British Official Military History includes:

United Kingdom Military Series, Grand Strategy
Volume I, N. H. Gibbs, 1976
Volume II, Sir James Butler, 1957
Volume III, Part 1, J. R. M. Gwyer, 1964
Volume III, Part 2, Sir James Butler, 1964
Volume IV, Sir Michael Howard, 1970
Volume V, John Ehrman, 1956
Volume VI, John Ehrman, 1956

The War at Sea
Volume I: The Defensive, Captain Stephen Roskill, 1954
Volume II: The Period of Balance, Captain Stephen Roskill, 1956
Volume III, Part 1: The Offensive, Captain Stephen Roskill, 1960
Volume III, Part 2: The Offensive, Captain Stephen Roskill, 1961

The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany
Volume I: Preparation, Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, 1961
Volume II: Endeavour, Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, 1961
Volume III: Victory, Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, 1961
Volume IV: Annexes and Appendices, Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, 1961

Defence of the United Kingdom, Basil Collier, 1957
The Campaign in Norway, Thomas Derry, 1952
The War in France and Flanders, 1939–40, Major L. F. Ellis, 1954

Victory in the West
Volume I: Battle of Normandy, Major L. F. Ellis et al., 1962
Volume II: Defeat of Germany, Major L. F. Ellis et al., 1968

War Against Japan
Volume I: The Loss of Singapore, Major-General Stanley Woodburn Kirby et al., 1957

Volume II: India's Most Dangerous Hour, Major-General Stanley Woodburn Kirby et al., 1958

Volume III: The Decisive Battles, Major-General Stanley Woodburn Kirby et al., 1961

Volume IV: The Reconquest of Burma, Major-General Stanley Woodburn Kirby et al., 1965

Volume V: The Surrender of Japan, Major-General Stanley Woodburn Kirby et al., 1969

The Mediterranean and Middle East

Volume I: The Early Successes Against Italy, to May 1941, Major-General I. S. O. Playfair et al., 1954

Volume II: The Germans Come to the Help of Their Ally, 1941, Major-General I. S. O. Playfair et al., 1956

Volume III: British Fortunes Reach Their Lowest Ebb, Major-General I. S. O. Playfair et al., 1960

Volume IV: The Destruction of the Axis Forces in Africa, Major-General I. S. O. Playfair, Brigadier C. J. C. Molony et al., 1966

Volume V: The Campaign in Sicily, 1943 and the Campaign in Italy, 3 September 1943 to 31 March 1944, Brigadier C. J. C. Molony et al., 1973

Volume VI, Part 1: Victory in the Mediterranean: 1 April to 4 June 1944, General Sir William Jackson et al., 1984

Volume VI, Part 2: Victory in the Mediterranean: June to October 1944, General Sir William Jackson et al., 1987

Volume VI, Part 3: Victory in the Mediterranean: November 1944 to May 1945, General Sir William Jackson et al., 1988

Civil Affairs and Military Government

Central Organisation and Planning, Frank Donnison, 1966

North-West Europe, 1944–46, Frank Donnison, 1961

Allied Administration of Italy, Charles Harris, 1957

British Military Administration in the Far East, 1943–46, Frank Donnison, 1956

The Official History of the Falklands Campaign,

Volume 1, The Origins of the Falklands War, Laurence Freedman, (London: Routledge, 2005)

Volume II, War and Diplomacy, Laurence Freedman, (London: Routledge, 2005)