

Phillips O'Brien

Chair of Strategic Studies and Head of the School of International Relations, University of St Andrews

An analyst and commentator during the Russo-Ukraine War



Biography

Professor Phillips O'Brien is the Chair of Strategic Studies and Head of the School of International Relations at the University of St Andrews. He has published widely on issues of conflict, politics, war and strategy in the 20th and 21st centuries. Amongst his books are: *How the War was Won: Air-Sea Power and Allied Victory in World War II* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and *The Second Most Powerful Man in the World: The Life of Admiral William D. Leahy, FDR's Chief of Staff*, (Penguin/Random House, 2015). He has also published multiple articles in major journals including *Foreign Affairs*, *Diplomatic History*, the *Journal of Strategic Studies*, and, *Past and Present*.

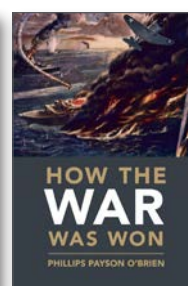
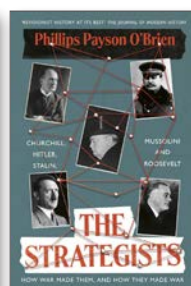
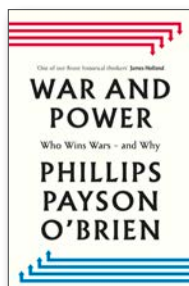
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Topics & Books

Military History

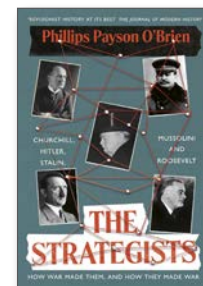
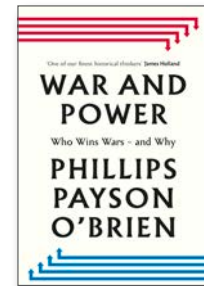
Geopolitics

Leadership



In 2024, he published a new multi-archival study of grand-strategy making in World War II with Penguin/Random House, entitled: *The Strategists: How Churchill, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini and Roosevelt were Made by and Made War*. His next book, *War and Power: Who Wins Wars - and Why*, explains how misunderstanding war and power has led to terrible, even preventable conflicts — such as the war in Ukraine (Viking, August 2025). He has also recently been appointed as a Senior Adviser (non-residential) at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC.

Professor O'Brien has been particularly active as an analyst and commentator during this most recent phase of the Russo-Ukraine War. He has worked with scholars and analysts in Ukraine and much the rest of Europe and across the Atlantic to try and digest some of the lessons of the war. His commentary has been published regularly in *The Atlantic*, *The Times*, *The Spectator*, *The Telegraph* and other major newspapers and journals, while he has made media appearances for outlets in more than 15 countries, including MSNBC, CNN, NPR, BBC, DW and L'Express. In research terms, he has been leading a project, part funded by the Office of Net Assessment (US DOD) trying to understand why the pre-war analysis of power and war was so fundamentally flawed, so that we do not make the same mistakes going forward when judging power and war in the Asia-Pacific region.



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