



# PERSPECTIVES ON WARFIGHTING

Number Six

## CAPITAL "W" WAR

A Case for *Strategic Principles of War*

(Because Wars Are Conflicts of Societies, Not Tactical Exercises Writ Large)

by

Dr. Joe Strange

Marine Corps War College

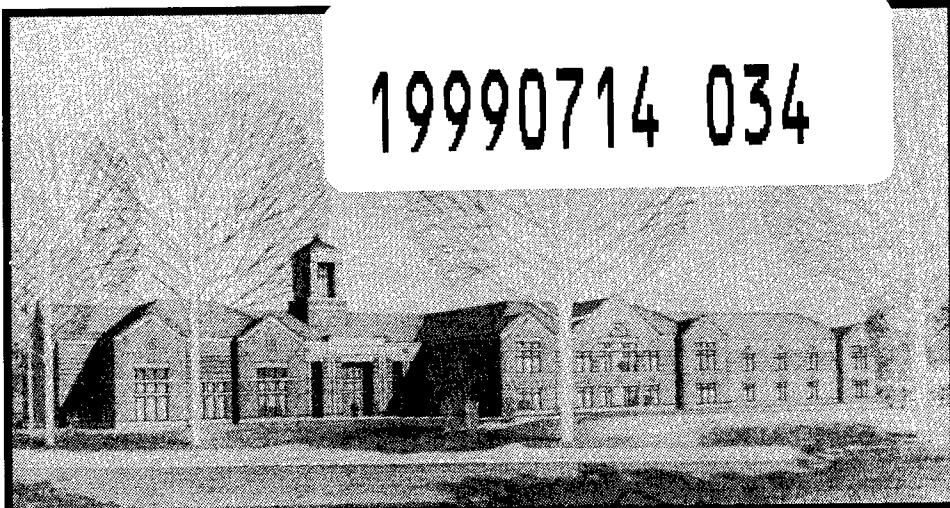
with a chapter on

**Non-Traditional Military Missions**

by

General Anthony C. Zinni, USMC

19990714 034



DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A

Approved for Public Release  
Distribution Unlimited

*Marine Corps University  
Perspectives on Warfighting  
Number Six*

# Capital "W" War

---

## A Case for *Strategic Principles of War*

(Because Wars *Are* Conflicts of Societies,  
*Not* Tactical Exercises Writ Large)

By

**Dr. Joe Strange**

Marine Corps War College

1998

with a chapter on

**Non-Traditional Military Missions**

By

**General Anthony C. Zinni, USMC**

---

Copyright 1998 by the Marine Corps University.  
This edition printed by contract via the  
Defense Automated Printing Service Center; Quantico, Virginia.

Printing of this edition of *Perspectives on Warfighting, Number Six* is funded by the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity; Quantico, Virginia. No portion of this manuscript may be reproduced or stored in any way except as authorized by law. Upon request, active and reserve military units will be freely given permission to reproduce this issue to assist in their training and professional military education.

## Acknowledgments

---

I would like to thank a few Marines and civilian colleagues who had a hand in the creation and improvement of this publication:

Dr. Jack Matthews, Professor Daniel W. Fitz-Simons, Professor Paul H. B. Godwin, Dr. Howard Hensel, and Professor Lawrence E. Grinter for their encouragement and constructive criticism.

Colonel Paul Kelly, my former boss, for his support and encouragement, and for three great years. Colonel David Lumsden, current Director, Marine Corps War College, for his support, encouragement, constructive criticism and assistance in securing funding for this publication.

Brigadier General R. R. Blackman, Jr. for his broad support and for giving this project the initial green light. Brigadier General James T. Conway, his successor and the current President of Marine Corps University, for keeping the light green, for his current support, and for the memories I have of the Air War College Class of 1989.

Professor Mike Rowse, Lieutenant Colonel Roy Chavallier, Colonel Peter T. Miller, and GySgt Terrence Hagerty for their roles regarding the special chapter by General Zinni.

My special thanks go to General Anthony C. Zinni for his invaluable contribution to this publication, in particular, and for his practice of capital W war, in general. And to Randi, my wife and editor in chief. Only those who read earlier versions of this manuscript will appreciate the difference she made.

Joe Strange  
Quantico, VA

**"No Mastery of Command  
Can Substitute for  
an Intelligent Comprehension  
of  
the Economic Goals,  
the Political Impulses,  
the Spiritual Aspirations,  
that Move  
Tens of Millions of People."**


Dwight D. Eisenhower

## Foreword

---

With this publication, the Marine Corps University offers its sixth work in the *Perspectives on Warfighting* series. In this edition, Dr. Joe Strange from the Marine Corps War College builds on his previous discussion on centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities. In Capital "W" War – A Case for *Strategic Principles of War* ..., he addresses the importance of strategic imperatives, or principles, that spring from an understanding of war as a struggle between societies. In that context, he stresses the critical importance of making sound strategic decisions and correctly points out that failure to make those sound decisions seriously handicaps actions at the operational and tactical levels of war. He makes heavy use of both Sun Tzu and Clausewitz with his admonitions to gather and carefully analyze as much (moral and physical) information as possible before entering a conflict.

Among his principles of capital W war are: know your enemy, yourself and your allies; determine the nature of the conflict; identify enemy and friendly centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities; and the criticality (and risk) of assumptions. He goes on to illustrate these principles through well developed case studies on Japanese thinking regarding the attack on Pearl Harbor, the concepts of legitimacy and the credible capacity to coerce in counterinsurgency warfare, and General Zinni's operations in Somalia. Dr. Strange's discussion of capital "W" war *strategic* principles makes a significant contribution toward our understanding of why some historical decisions were correct while others led to disaster.

  
JAMES T. CONWAY  
Brigadier General, USMC  
President, Marine Corps University

**"Nothing  
Doth More Hurt  
in a State  
than that Cunning Men  
Pass for Wise."**

Francis Bacon, 1561-1626

## Table of Contents

---

Chapter	Page
Preface: Why "Capital 'W' War"?	ix
1. Capital "W" War & Principles of War (W/w)	1
2. Pearl Harbor: Japan's First Step to Defeat	45
3. Legitimacy and the Credible Capacity to Coerce	185
4. Non-Traditional Military Missions: Their Nature, and the Need for Cultural Awareness and Flexible Thinking by <b>General Anthony C. Zinni, USMC</b>	247
About the Author	285



**What is of  
Supreme Importance in War  
is to Attack  
the Enemy's Strategy.**

**In Order to Attack  
the Enemy's Strategy,  
We Must Understand  
the Enemy  
and We Must  
Understand War.**

Sun Tzu

## Preface

---

### Why "Capital 'W' War"?

#### Why is the Main Title of the Book "Capital 'W' War," instead of "Strategic Principles of War"?

I think that, collectively, we need to be more careful and precise in our use of the word "war." The traditional principles of war (objective, mass, maneuver, surprise, etc.) are not really principles of "war." They are, instead, principles of 'grand tactics.' Some folks have made truly impressive attempts to apply these traditional principles of war to national and coalition strategy; the notable critique of American strategy during the Vietnam War by Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., USA (Ret.) comes quickly to mind.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, these traditional principles are ill-suited to address and explain the range of dynamics that characterize a war, or conflict, between nations, i.e., between opposing societies. War involves all the elements of national power, not just military power; and it cannot be adequately analyzed by using terms more appropriate to the realm of 'grand tactics.'

We obviously cannot avoid continuing to use the word "war" in reference to campaigns, operations, battles and tactics. But perhaps we could begin to think of those activities as "*small 'w'* war," i.e., the lower levels of war, and as subsets or components of the totality of war. In that case, the term "capital 'W' war" could be used in reference to the dynamics and activities of war at the strategic level, and to the *total phenomenon* of war.

---

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., USA. On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context. Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA., April 1981.

## **"Big W" and "little w."**

This leads to the use of terms "Big W" and "little w." "Big W" refers to decisions, activities and principles relating to the strategic level of war. "Big W" analysis and "Big W" decisions by national political and military leaders set the table, so to speak, for military commanders at the lower levels of war. When national leaders handle their "Big W" responsibilities well, they make it easier, and/or possible, for the practitioners of "little 'w' war" to do their jobs. Poor "Big W" thinking makes it harder for the practitioners of "little 'w' war" to prosecute successful campaigns, operations and battles. Sometimes, poor "Big W" thinking can make it impossible for "little w" campaigns, operations and battles to achieve national political objectives – even when those campaigns, operations and battles are *seemingly* successful within their own narrow operational and tactical parameters of success. When one side wins all the battles, yet still loses the war, there is an obvious explanation: When capital W war (or "Big W") is out of whack, success in small w war (or "little w") is irrelevant.

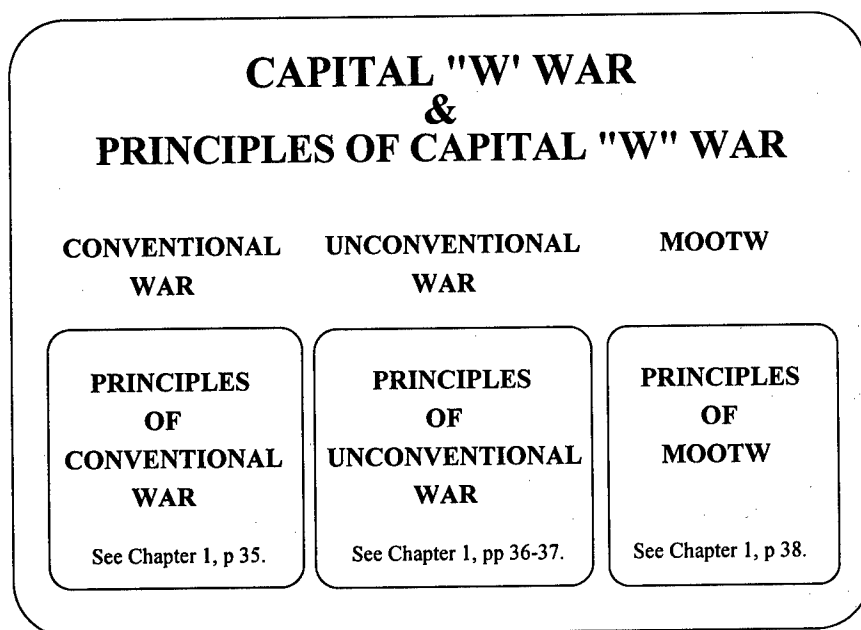
### **"OBJECTIVE" –**

#### **Where Principles of Capital "W" War and the Traditional Principles of War Overlap.**

Skilled practitioners of capital W war select appropriate national political objectives and strategic military objectives. They also determine the quantity and character of military power that should be brought to bear and *generally* how it should be employed. Theater-strategic alternatives – such as "Search and Destroy" and the "Ink Blot strategy" during the Vietnam War, for example – should not be left solely to the discretion of theater-strategic and operational commanders, who may or may not be sensitive to the dynamics and imperatives of capital W war. However, within that political-strategic context, theater-strategic, operational and tactical commanders should be left free to determine how best to accomplish the objectives assigned to them.

## The Relationship of Principles of Capital W War and the Traditional Principles of War.

The concept and principles of capital W war are relevant to all types of conflict: conventional, unconventional or MOOTW/OOTW. Regardless of the type of conflict, broad knowledge about the moral and physical characteristics of the enemy (or potential enemy) is essential. It is essential to determine the precise nature of *any given* conflict, to determine centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities, and to determine generally what can and cannot be accomplished with military power in *that particular* conflict. The latter is heavily influenced by moral factors and dynamics stemming from popular perceptions of political legitimacy and military legitimacy (i.e., the perceived legitimacy of political actions and military acts of coercion). In any type of conflict, it is desirable (if not essential) to envision and achieve a high degree of synergy in the orchestration of all relevant elements of national power.



### **Orchestrating "Big W" and "little w" War is Similar to Playing a Single Game of Chess on Multiple Chessboards.**

To the degree that war is anything like a game of chess, it does not resemble a game of chess played on a single chessboard. War is more like a team of chess players playing an opposing team on several boards (i.e., levels) simultaneously. Whichever team wins on the highest level wins the game. Moves on each board (at each level) impact play on higher or lower levels. Once more, different rules and dynamics govern each board/level. In this multi-level chess game, players at each level must appreciate the rules and nuances of the entire game as it is being played at all levels. When this is not the case, a player on a lower board/level may make a seemingly brilliant move from his perspective, which in fact does produce immediate positive results on his board (at his level), but which *ultimately* contributes to his team being checkmated on the highest board/level (i.e., he won his battle, but his team lost the war). That player would receive a poor evaluation from a capital W war perspective – the only one that matters in the end.

**Finally, the terms "Capital 'W' War," "Big W" and "little w" have Absolutely Nothing to do with the Size of the War or Conflict at Hand.**

"Big W" does not mean World War II, and "little w" does not mean Lebanon or Grenada. "Big W" refers to (1) the strategic level of war in any given war or conflict, or (2) the conflict as a whole in any given conflict. "Little w" and/or "small w" refer to the operational and tactical levels of war, or at most, to the theater-strategic level in any given war or conflict.

## Chapter 1

---

# Capital "W" War & Principles of War (W/w)

Napoleon's armies won a string of spectacular military victories against their Spanish and British opponents in 1808; yet Napoleon lost the Peninsular War. Napoleon invaded Russia with an army of 600,000 men and won all of the major battles en route to capturing Moscow; yet he was compelled to retreat and his 1812 campaign ended in utter defeat. Hitler's armies crushed France in 1940 and inflicted millions of casualties on the Russian Army in the summer and fall of 1941; yet Nazi-Germany was totally defeated in World War II. Japanese forces initiated World War II in the Pacific with a series of impressive feats of arms from Pearl Harbor to Singapore; yet Japan shared the fate of Nazi-Germany. During the Chinese Civil War which continued after the end of World War II, Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist armies at first greatly outnumbered and were better equipped than their Communist foes; yet in three years Chiang and his armies were utterly defeated. The United States never lost a major battle during the Vietnam War; yet in 1972 a dispirited America withdrew from that frustrating Asian war, and three years later did nothing when North Vietnam drove all the way to Saigon.

**"Wars are not tactical exercises writ large."**

Explanations for all of these defeats are rooted in the following admonition from the renowned British military historian, Sir Michael Howard:

*Wars are not tactical exercises writ large. They are ... conflicts of societies, and they can be fully understood only if one understands the nature of the society fighting them. The roots of victory or defeat often have to be sought far from the battlefield, in political, social, and economic factors.*<sup>1</sup>

The traditional "Principles of War" (Mass, Maneuver, Surprise, Economy of Force, etc.) are time-honored guides and prods to the study, planning and execution of military strategy and operations in small "w" war. Through the ages they have amply rewarded military leaders wise and skillful enough to apply them with flexibility and common sense. However, even a brilliant application of the traditional principles of war is no magic elixir<sup>2</sup> for a poor national strategy (historically called grand strategy) which is based upon false assumptions about an enemy's moral and physical qualities – his national character, his will to fight, and his ability to fight – and the nature of the conflict at hand. German operational brilliance in World War II was not sufficient to rescue a badly flawed national strategy and strategic vision.

## ***CAPITAL "W" WAR***

### **Let's "Play Ball!"**

Let's consider the professional sport of baseball. Every year millions of fans anticipate opening day and the umpires' commands: "Let's PLAY BALL!" Yet every hard-core fan knows about the "off-season" decisions, preparation and activity that precedes opening day. The "off-season" is when the management

<sup>1</sup> Sir Michael Howard, "The Use and Abuse of Military History," Parameters, March 1981, p 14.

<sup>2</sup> Elixir: 2. A medicine regarded as a cure for all ills. (Webster's II.)

team (owner, general manager, coach) of every team considers an array of critical factors before making crucial decisions for the "next season." The management team begins by considering the team's strengths and weaknesses (relative to the competition) at the end of the last season, and considers the goals of the team for the "next season" – a respectable third place finish during a 'building year,' or going all the way with the Pennant and the World Series? They contemplate strengthening the team roster by trades, acquisition of free agents, and calling up younger players from their farm system. Should they focus their uncommitted salary money on reinforcing team strengths, fixing weaknesses, or both? That depends on the list of available 'free agents,' trades other teams might make, and the young players who are ready (or not) to be called up from 'Columbus.' The team goal is determined by the ambition and personality of the team owner, by the coach, by the players, by the fans, by team heritage and tradition – and by where the team finished last year.

It is understood (as a given) that the team management knows that its business is the game of baseball (not football, not hockey, not basketball). They know they are in the American League which has the designated hitter rule and where the game seems to be played with a chemistry different than the National League. They are keenly aware that important particulars of the game have changed over the last few years – the umps don't call the high strike around the letters anymore (despite the rule book), the ball seems to be juiced, and that quality pitching has not kept pace with the addition of expansion teams.

In summary, well before its starting line-up takes the field on opening day, team management's decisions were governed by the game being played, the rules of the game as they are likely to be practiced (enforced), recent changes in the game, team strengths and weaknesses relative to the opposition, and team goals as determined by management, players and fans.



**It works (or should work) the same way in war.<sup>1</sup>** No national top management team in their collective right minds sends their nation's team to war without knowing their competition, what game and version of it is being played, the goals of all the teams and the lengths to which each team is likely to go to achieve them, and their strengths and weaknesses – moral and physical – relative to the competition.

**'Calculations in the Temple' Before going to War.**

*Now if the estimates made in the temple before hostilities indicate victory it is because calculations show one's strength to be superior to that of his enemy; if they indicate defeat, it is because calculations show that one is inferior. With many calculations, one can win; with few one cannot. How much less chance of victory has one who makes none at all! By this means I examine the situation and the outcome will be clearly apparent.*  
(Sun Tzu)<sup>2</sup>

A footnote associated with the above quotation states that:

It appears ... that two separate calculations were made, the first on a national level, the second on a strategic level. In the former the five basic elements named in v. 3 ["moral influence," "weather," "terrain," "command," and "doctrine"] were compared; we may suppose that if the results of this were favourable the military experts compared strengths, training, equity in administering rewards and punishments, and so on (the seven factors).<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Or any type of conflict, including MOOTW (or OOTW).

<sup>2</sup> Sun Tzu: The Art of War. Translated and with an Introduction by Samuel B. Griffith. With a Foreword by B. H. Liddell Hart. Oxford University Press Paperback edition, 1971 [1963], p 71.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

In terms of today's strategic terminology, the wording of the foregoing passage is somewhat confusing; in fact, both estimates discussed involve the strategic level – the first estimate involving all elements of national power and the second focusing just on the military elements. But there is no confusion regarding the sequence of the comparisons: **all elements of national power – economic, financial, moral (psychological), diplomatic and physical (geographical, meteorological and military) – FIRST**, followed by (just, and more detailed) military comparisons. This is the correct order and relationship. Mistakes (grievous mistakes) at the first level doomed Napoleon, Hitler, Japan, Chiang Kai-shek, and the United States to failure. Such comparisons, calculations and decisions regarding comparative national strengths and weaknesses conducted at the highest national political and military command levels involve and address what I call "capital W war." These calculations include all elements of national power – moral and physical – to include psychological, diplomatic, economic, financial, and military power. This national strategic calculus is the foundation for the national strategy and a national war plan designed to achieve national political objectives. These include decisions regarding:

- national and coalition war aims,
- national and coalition grand strategy and military strategy,
- military objectives and rules of engagement,
- mobilization of public opinion,
- mobilization of resources (material and human) into military power/assets,
- allocation of national military assets to multiple theaters of war, and
- transportation of national military assets to multiple theaters of war.

### **Winning Battles versus Winning Wars.**

It is possible to win most of the battles yet still lose a war. This is particularly true of unconventional wars. Sometimes winners and losers of a given battle are perceived and proclaimed according

to narrow operational and tactical parameters which may be deceptive indicators of strategic success. Diligent practitioners of capital W war seldom fight battles in vain or fight them in a strategic vacuum. To the contrary, they envision and orchestrate a series of battles within the framework of a national strategy designed to achieve national political objectives. Disciples of capital W war seek first and foremost to stack the deck in their favor at the *strategic* level of war – to set the table (so to speak) for the conduct of campaigns, operations and battles which comprise small "w" war. They understand that when capital W war is out of whack, <sup>1</sup> small "w" war seldom works (meaning that successes in the latter are either elusive or irrelevant). Sound judgment in the conduct of capital W war is indispensable for final victory. <sup>2</sup>

## PRINCIPLES OF CAPITAL "W" WAR

What makes for sound judgment in capital W war? A partial answer to this question is offered by the intellectual process depicted on pages eight and nine – factors which should *always be considered* in each and every conflict *as a matter of general PRINCIPLE* – hence the label "**Principles**" of capital W war. <sup>3</sup> Each

---

<sup>1</sup> Out of whack: Not functioning correctly. – whacked out: Insane : crazy. (Webster's II.)

<sup>2</sup> Sound: Based on valid reasoning : sensible. Thorough : complete. Marked by or showing common sense and good judgment : levelheaded. Synonyms: based on good judgment, reasoning, or evidence. (Webster's II.)

<sup>3</sup> I wish to stress this meaning of the word "principle," instead of the meaning historically associated with the traditional concept of "Principles of War" which was that one should always **do** mass, maneuver, surprise, etc. That said, today it goes without saying that all enlightened practitioners of war **consider whether and how** these traditional principles apply in a given situation – thus they apply the same meaning of the word "principle" (to always consider) to **both** the traditional concept of principles of war (mass, maneuver, surprise, etc.) and the complementary concept of "Principles of Capital W War."

factor (and sub-factor) demands intelligent and objective consideration. What follows are explanations, elaboration and examples for each of the principles of capital W war.

## KNOW YOUR ENEMY AND YOURSELF

*Those who know the enemy as well as they know themselves never suffer defeat. (Sun Yat-sen)*

*Some people are intelligent in knowing themselves but stupid in knowing their opponents, and others the other way round; neither can solve the problem of learning and applying the laws of war.*

(Mao Tse-tung)

This is the first principle of capital W war. Failure here makes it extremely difficult to apply the remaining principles and seriously jeopardizes chances for ultimate national success. This principle includes potential allies for both sides and goes beyond traditional Orders of Battle and related calculations regarding military and economic power. "Know Your Enemy" includes history, culture, religion, society, politics – everything that makes a nation tick. A complete dossier, if you will, on a nation/country similar to that commonly prepared on enemy commanders. In the popular movie "Patton," an impatient Field Marshal Rommel demands of his aide: "Enough! Tell me about the man" (referring to General Patton). Rommel wanted to know about Patton's personality: Was he a gambler? Would he attack sooner, rather than later? His style of warfare and leadership? What his troops thought of him? And so on. A psychological profile of the opposing commander. (continued on page 10).

## PRINCIPLES OF WAR (W/w)

### □ Capital "W" War:

- ◆ Know Your Enemy, Yourself and Allies  
(also potential enemies and allies for both sides).
- ◆ Determine and (if necessary) Shape the Nature of the Conflict.
- ◆ Identify Enemy and Friendly Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities.
- ◆ Know and Respect the Limits of Military Power:
  - Legitimacy and the Credible Capacity to Coerce,
  - Strategic Culminating Points.
- ◆ Ponder:
  - Relationship between Military Victory and End State,
  - Assumptions (their validity and criticality),
  - Alternative Strategies in case of Failure at any point,
  - Odds for Victory.
- ◆ Proceed – or Not – with or without modifications.
- ◆ Operate IAW Holistic National Strategic and Military Effectiveness (i.e., Coherent and Synergistic Actions *At and Among* All Levels of War: Strategic, Theater-Strategic, Operational and Tactical – *Simultaneously*; to include
  - An Effective Military Strategy of Perception Control.

## PRINCIPLES OF WAR (W/w)

(continued)

### □ small "w" war:

- ◆ Operate IAW the appropriate small "w" Principles of:
  - Conventional War (the "traditional" Principles of War),
  - Unconventional War  
(including Small Wars and Counterinsurgency),
  - or Military Operations Other Than War  
(MOOTW or OOTW).



**Ponder:** To weigh or appraise carefully. To think about : consider.

**Holistic:** Emphasizing the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts.

**Holism:** The theory that reality is made up of organic or unified wholes greater than the simple sum of their parts.

**Coherent:** Sticking together : cohering. Marked by an orderly or logical relation of parts that affords comprehension or recognition.

**Cohere:** vi. To be logically connected. vt. To cause to form a united or orderly whole.

**Synergism:** The action of two or more substances, organs, or organisms to achieve an effect of which each is individually incapable.

The successful application of capital W war is predicated on a comprehensive psychological profile of an enemy nation (or the nation or area where operations are taking place, when the word "enemy" does not apply). This requires an appropriate mind-set by the highest civilian and military leaders, and the inclusion of a wide range of civilian and military experts on their political-military teams.

And don't forget "Yourself" (and potential allies for both sides).

## **DETERMINE AND, IF NECESSARY, SHAPE THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT**

*Arafat and his colleagues were looking at their watches and making their own calculations. Whereas on mine the dial was in minutes and hours, on theirs the dial seemed to be marked in decades and centuries.*<sup>1</sup>

What is the object of the war? What value do both sides (both nations, both opposing societies) attach to the object? What costs are both sides willing to pay? What is the 'value compared to cost' equation? What material, economic, and human sacrifices will both nations (societies) endure? For how long? Under what circumstances? Will our own society expect regular, measurable progress? Will they patiently endure setbacks and frustration? How about the enemy? How hard will he (and his soldiers) fight? Our own? Can we effectively galvanize, mobilize our public in support of the war (or operation)? Will the American people see it

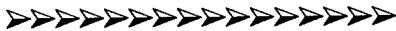
<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, From Beirut to Jerusalem (New York: Anchor Books (Doubleday), 1990 edition), p 170.

as a 'just war' (or operation)? Does the enemy (or people/country acted upon) also see it that way? With what potential consequences?

What type of war are we entering? Will the enemy perceive it as an imperialist-colonial war? What kind of war are we getting into: Civil war? Guerrilla war? Both? Standard conventional war? Are their racial factors involved? Are we intervening in a guerrilla-type, civil war in Asia? Are the motivations of the enemy in this civil war rooted in decades, even centuries, as opposed to merely years?

What are the implications of traditional military and economic power calculations? Is the war/conflict likely to be a long, drawn-out affair? A dirty war of attrition? A dirty, messy, frustrating, civil and guerrilla war of physical and psychological attrition? Is there anything we can do to make it otherwise? Will the enemy quit when we think we've won? Is his definition and concept of defeat the same as ours?

Once the likely nature of a given conflict is *determined*, along with the probable consequences thereof given this or that national strategy and national military strategy, practitioners of capital "W" war might not like what they see (or more correctly, *foresee*). In this case, they will have to either reconsider entry into the conflict (if they have a choice), or consider ways and means of altering, or *shaping*, the nature of the conflict more to their advantage by adopting an alternative/different national strategy and/or supporting national military strategy, and/or associated campaigns, operations and tactics.





## **IDENTIFY CENTERS OF GRAVITY AND THEIR(?) CRITICAL VULNERABILITIES**

Without knowing the enemy and self, and without determining the nature of the conflict, it is impossible to intelligently identify enemy and friendly centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities.

National power is a combination of national moral and physical strength. A **center of gravity** is a primary source, or agent, of moral or physical strength. **Centers of gravity involve people (civilian populace, political leaders, military leaders, or people in military organizations/units). Centers of gravity offer resistance.** At the national level, a notable exception could be financial power or industrial strength – but these two entities could just as easily be called "critical requirements" necessary to support a more straightforward center of gravity (see the Critical Requirements paragraph on the next page). Moral strength means will-power (personal, organizational, national). Physical strength stems from a wide range of tangible assets: military, industrial, financial and economic. Physical strength is influenced by geographical and terrain features, climate, and traditional force multipliers.

Frequently, centers of gravity are interrelated and interdependent. If an enemy air force and army are both considered centers of gravity, the defeat or neutralization of the air force (or air defense system) will affect the strength and capabilities of the army. Multiple centers of gravity may exist at any level of war, in any type of conflict. If it is possible, Clausewitz recommends that multiple centers of gravity be narrowed down to a single center of gravity ("the" critical center of gravity). Good advice, but not always practical.

Critical Capabilities. Centers of gravity and critical vulnerabilities (weaknesses associated with a center of gravity) are linked by "critical capabilities" and "critical requirements." Critical capabilities are the inherent abilities which enable a center of gravity to function as such. To be an effective center of gravity, a national leader, for example, must have the ability to stay alive, stay informed, communicate with government officials and senior military leaders, and remain influential. A national defense industrial base requires the ability to obtain essential physical resources, transport them to manufacturing centers, and process them into effective weapons and related essential supporting products. At the lower levels of war an armored force must have the ability to move, shoot, and kill. The critical capabilities for a military commander identified as a center of gravity are similar to those of a national leader.

Critical Requirements. All critical capabilities require essential conditions, resources and means to make them fully operative. These are called "critical requirements." An armored force requires POL and a flexible logistics system. Elite units require *esprit de corps*. Military commanders need intelligence and the means to communicate. We examine critical requirements to discover enemy critical vulnerabilities – actual or potential – which we can exploit to undermine, neutralize and/or defeat his center(s) of gravity.<sup>1</sup>

Critical Vulnerabilities are weaknesses which help one side undermine, neutralize and/or defeat an enemy center of gravity. "Critical Vulnerabilities" are those critical requirements or components thereof which are deficient, or vulnerable to neutralization, interdiction or attack (moral/physical harm) in a manner achieving decisive or significant results, disproportional to

<sup>1</sup> For a more complete discussion of "Critical Capabilities" and "Critical Requirements," see Joseph L. Strange, Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities: Building on the Clausewitzian Foundation So That We Can All Speak the Same Language (Quantico, VA: USMC Command and Staff College Foundation, Second Edition ©1996), Chapter 4: "The Fix: The CG-CC-CR-CV Concept," pp 43-91.

the military resources applied. **Within the context of pitting friendly strengths against enemy weaknesses**, commanders will understandably want to focus their efforts against those objects which will do the most decisive damage to the enemy's ability to resist. **But in selecting those objects we must compare their degree of criticality with their degree of vulnerability and to balance both against our capabilities.** Friendly capabilities to extend offensive efforts throughout the theater, including deep penetrations of enemy territory, can increase the number of enemy critical vulnerabilities.

**By definition, a center of gravity cannot also be listed as a critical vulnerability.** Take, for example, an enemy air defense system that is well-developed and equipped, robust, and manned with well-trained crews. It has been prudently identified as an enemy center of gravity – it is indeed an instrument of strength and power. But it also may be vulnerable for any number of reasons: its power supply or command and control net may be vulnerable, or the friendly side may have a black-world advanced technology missile that can home in and destroy the supporting radar sites. In such cases, the radar sites, the power supply, or the command and control net would be identified as a "critical vulnerability" as a component of the whole air defense system. **The air defense system itself does not become a "critical vulnerability." The vulnerability is the thing which makes the Center of Gravity vulnerable, not the Center of Gravity itself.** It can be just that simple. In cases when Centers of Gravity contain Critical Vulnerabilities they (the former) do not then become Critical Vulnerabilities – as long as they (the former) retain the characteristics which merit their status as a Center of Gravity.

An enemy navy in World War II provides another example. It is strong and a source of great strength. It is dangerous, trust me. Yet the friendly side has a weapon or has developed a strategy that can neutralize or destroy the oil tankers which refuel enemy battle fleets ranging far out to sea. The oil tankers (or the fleet's dependence on oil tankers) are/(is) the critical vulnerability; but even when the latter are successfully attacked or neutralized, the

enemy battle fleets may still be dangerous and may still be a CG, albeit one with a restricted range and/or battle loiter time.

Only vulnerabilities related to centers of gravity are "critical" vulnerabilities. If something is vulnerable but irrelevant to the war effort, then so what? We can list it as a vulnerability, but not as a "critical vulnerability."

Critical vulnerabilities are not always necessary to neutralize or defeat a center of gravity. Sometimes the job can or must be done simply through sheer brute strength – a bigger or more durable club breaking a smaller, weaker club (or shield). This is attrition warfare. We should avoid it when possible, but should be prepared to wage it when necessary.

Maneuver warfare. Maneuver warfare takes advantage of enemy critical vulnerabilities by using advantages of superior technology, mobility, command and control capabilities (quicker decision making cycle inside the enemy's "OODA loop"), training, or *esprit de corps*. The practical object of maneuver warfare is not normally to 'rope-a-dope' or 'razzle-dazzle' a credible enemy into surrendering without a fight; it is to place superior, overwhelming firepower against key enemy units or assets at critical locations, thereby defeating an enemy in detail.

## **KNOW AND RESPECT THE LIMITS OF MILITARY POWER**

*To know what one can do on the basis of the available means, and to do it; to know what one cannot do, and refrain from trying; and to distinguish between the two – that, after all, is the very definition of military greatness, as it is of human genius in general. <sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Martin Van Creveld, Command in War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p 102.

**'Hearts and minds,' and moral limits of military power.** In some conflicts and scenarios there are **political and psychological limits** to what can be done/accomplished with military power. In the early years of the Peninsular War, 1808-1814, Napoleon's army easily defeated one Spanish army after the next. But he could not extinguish the flame of Spanish nationalism and pride. The result was six years of bitter guerrilla warfare against thousands of Spanish partisans, in which the French lost 50,000 dead each year! Napoleon referred to the experience as his "Spanish Ulcer." He blundered badly because he did not know his enemy (the Spanish nation) and thereby badly misjudged the nature of the conflict.

Vietnam provides another controversial example as debate still rages regarding the employment of superior American firepower to secure the safety and loyalty – hearts and minds – of the South Vietnamese population to a corrupt, alien Saigon government.

The Israeli invasion and military occupation of Lebanon, 1982-84, is another classic example of limits (or limitations) of military power to achieve long-term political and psychological objectives.

### **Legitimacy and the Credible Capacity to Coerce.**

Legitimacy and the credible capacity to coerce are two concepts which share an inverse relationship.<sup>1</sup> The greater the legitimacy of an act, **as defined and perceived by the target** of an act of coercion, the lesser the amount of force that will be required to make that act of coercion effective. This is nothing more than common sense. During the Peninsular War, 1808-1814, for example, Napoleon's (and his brother Joseph's) legitimacy factor was close to zero among most of the Spanish and Portuguese population. The Spanish and Portuguese will to resist was high, and Napoleon's armies suffered dreadful losses for the duration of the conflict. A French garrison numbering 300,000 troops was not

---

<sup>1</sup> Larry E. Cable, "Reinventing the Round Wheel: Insurgency, Counter-insurgency, and Peacekeeping Post Cold War" (Undated Manuscript), p 2.

large enough to serve as a credible instrument of coercion, despite widespread brutality by both sides. The Malayan Emergency of 1948-1960 is a far different example. The British promised national independence early on, consulted with and worked with native political leaders, applied minimum force against carefully selected (i.e., legitimate) targets, and orchestrated social and economic reforms. These British political and military acts were perceived to be legitimate by the vast majority of the ethnic Malayan and Chinese population; thereby, the combined British and Malayan military, paramilitary and police forces (which totaled relatively modest numbers compared to contemporary conflicts in Indochina and Algeria) functioned as credible and highly effective instruments of coercion among the dwindling number of enemy guerrillas (or Communist Terrorists, as they were branded by the government).

**Physical limits of military power.** There are several dimensions to the physical limits of military power:

(1) Don't send a boy to do a man's job. A division, for example, should not be given a task requiring a corps, etc.

(2) Military forces/units require logistical support and sustainment and cannot effectively or safely exceed their 'operational reach.' The defeat of Japan in WWII was accomplished in part by an island-hopping campaign designed to seize a series of stepping-stone logistical and support bases. Even in early 1944, the U.S. Pacific Fleet simply could not sail from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo and accomplish anything meaningful without support from intermittent bases. British and American armies breaking out of Normandy in August 1944 raced across France until they ran out of gas – the Red Ball Express could stretch only so far.

(3) More than one famous American general remarked, "Don't fight a land war in Asia." Entire armies can get sucked into vast countrysides without achieving anything decisive.

British Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery once remarked that "Military history teaches us not to try to walk to Moscow."

Napoleon's Grand Armée of 600,000 men could not defeat Russia in 1812 (despite having captured Moscow). Hitler failed in World War II. Similarly, a Japanese army of two million men could not defeat China in an eight-year war from 1937 to 1945.

### **Strategic and Operational Culminating Points.**

Strategic and operational culminating points are reached for reasons pertaining to terrain (bumped into the Alps or a 500-mile-wide desert), exhaustion, unfavorable combat power ratios, and logistics. When units or armies must stop to regroup or for logistic support structures to move forward, they are said to have reached a culminating point – i.e., a particular operation or perhaps a phase of a campaign has "culminated." Most operational culminating points are temporary. Combat and progress are resumed when reorganization, refitting, rest, and the forward movement of logistic bases, air bases, etc., have been completed.

However, some culminating points are strategic in nature. In World War II the Wehrmacht (German Armed Forces) defeated France quickly in 1940 but reached a huge culminating point at the English Channel. Even had the Luftwaffe gained air superiority over southern England, the planned German invasion (Sea Lion) probably would still have ended in disaster – i.e., by attempting to execute Sea Lion in 1940 with inadequate and untrained resources, the Wehrmacht (especially the Army and Navy) would have exceeded a strategic culminating point, with serious adverse material and psychological consequences.

In June 1941, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. Prior planning and war games indicated that the German Army and its panzer spearheads would rapidly advance 400 miles to Smolensk before having to halt for logistics and regrouping – the culminating point of the first phase of the BARBAROSSA campaign plan. The Germans reached the Smolensk culminating point in three weeks. Supplies, logistics support structure, and Luftwaffe air bases moved forward. Panzer spearheads licked their wounds, repaired

tanks and overhauled worn engines. Meanwhile Hitler dithered and diverted forces to objectives south and north of the great advance in the center. As the time approached to resume the main drive to Moscow 200 miles away – and with winter looming on the horizon – logistics requirements compelled the German High Command to choose between bringing up either (1) supplies to drive to Moscow (gas, ammo, etc.) or (2) clothing, lubrications, and other materials required to prepare the Army for winter.

The choice was between the drive to Moscow or winter quarters. The former risked an immediate 200-mile extension of already tenuous supply lines and exposure of the Army to winter elements, in a gamble that the capture of Moscow and destruction of its defending armies (if achieved) would end the war with complete German victory. But the latter would mean failure of BARBAROSSA in 1941 and the specter of a second great effort in 1942 to finish a job left half done. The Army (not Hitler) chose Moscow, and thereby (in the next few weeks) dangerously exceeded its operational culminating point. Weakened advance elements were attacked by fresh Soviet reserves transferred from Siberia. The harsh winter caught the Wehrmacht unprepared. The German Army suffered 900,000 casualties during the winter of 41-42, mostly from frostbite and freezing to death. No succeeding German summer offensive was nearly as strong or as threatening to Soviet Russia as was Operation BARBAROSSA. Although the German Army still retained an offensive punch right through to the end of the Battle of Kursk in July 1943, it can be argued that – barring some really big Soviet military blunder (which Stalin and STAVKA, the Red Army High Command, did not make) – in the grand scheme of relative military and national power the Wehrmacht and Hitler's Germany were on the downhill slide after early December 1941.

### **Culminating Points Short of Victory.**

When the maximum war effort, progress, and/or success of a country/coalition (or the maximum effort that it is willing to make)



reaches its peak short of victory, that country or coalition has reached a "culminating point short of victory." Unlike normal strategic or operational culminating points, this type usually is permanent and occurs only once (unless the opponent in turn makes a monumental strategic blunder). Exceeding (or violating) a culminating point short of victory not only jeopardizes the violator's ability to defend what he has already won up to that point, it also places at risk his ability to defend territory and assets that belonged to him *at the start* of the war. History is full of leaders and strategists who approached and exceeded their culminating point of victory. Comforted by false assumptions and miscalculations, and deceived by vivid and compelling illusions of further progress and even final victory, they ordered their armies onward – to disaster and ultimate (and sometimes total) defeat. Consider the following two examples:

(1) Returning to Hitler. After defeating France in 1940, Hitler could have stopped, declared the war over, and left the British to fret and contemplate their strategic weaknesses. Instead, he committed his prestige and his Luftwaffe to a battle for air superiority over southern England during which it operated under serious handicaps. Even had the Luftwaffe won that battle, an amphibious invasion would probably still have been a disaster. A year later Hitler compounded this error by invading the Soviet Union. Here, he could have stopped at Smolensk, gone into winter quarters, and kept his options open for 1942. On 11 December 1941 – four days after Pearl Harbor – Hitler declared war on the United States. In the summer of 1942 he ordered his army onward to Stalingrad, where he lost a quarter of a million of his best troops. This set in motion a train of events leading to the ultimate defeat of Nazi-Germany by an overwhelming Anglo-American-Soviet coalition and the Red Army's capture of Berlin in 1945. (Your assessment of precisely when Hitler exceeded his culminating point of victory will, of course, depend on your assessment of Nazi-Germany's capabilities relative to her opponents at given points along the 1940-1942 time continuum.) This is a classic example of the draconian risks and consequences associated with

violating a culminating point of victory. Had Hitler reached, but not exceeded, his culminating point, he could have made it vastly more difficult for the Allies to defeat him. In that case, the war in Europe might have settled into a stalemate or ended in a negotiated settlement.

(2) General MacArthur in the Korean War. Following the landing at Inchon in mid-September 1950, UN forces drove north through Pyongyang and on toward the Yalu River and the border of Communist China. Ignoring Chinese warnings and the approach of winter, General MacArthur continued the UN offensive, which by 24 October had reached the narrow neck of the peninsula – roughly a line from Sinanju (on the west coast) part way up the Ch'ongch'on River thence due east to the area Hamhung-Hungnam (on the east coast above Wonsan). Meanwhile, 200,000 (ultimately to grow to 300,000) Chinese troops had sneaked across the Yalu (U.S. intelligence believed 100,000 maximum). On 25 October the Chinese struck advanced elements of the Eighth Army, then quietly pulled back on 1 November. On 6 November General Walker issued an Eighth Army operational plan for General MacArthur's 'Home by Christmas' offensive. On 24 November Eighth Army and X Corps (in the east) advanced. Soon several U.S. and South Korean divisions were at the far end of flimsy LOCs, dangerously isolated, and exposed to counterattack by the greatly underestimated and underrespected Chinese enemy. The results are well known and legendary: the rapid (but sometimes heroic) retreat of Eighth Army and X Corps back down the peninsula below Seoul; two more frustrating years of see-saw attrition warfare and drawn-out negotiations at Panmunjom; and the erosion of U.S. public support for a 'bad' war which ended in an armistice along a line close to the original North-South Korean border.

MacArthur's renewed offensive on 24 November 1950 exceeded an operational culminating point created by climate, terrain, logistics, and unfriendly combat power ratios. In the long run this also became a culminating point short of victory. For better or worse the Truman Administration – with the support of

the JCS – decided not to commit forces and weapons in Korea to the degree generally believed necessary to win all-out victory against the Chinese. In retrospect at least, MacArthur's 24 November offensive put at risk, and then lost, the considerable gains already won. Greater awareness and respect for the Chinese Communist Army might have led to a decision to stop at the narrow neck with the following advantages/considerations:

- UN forces in prepared, defensive positions with secure LOCs;
- UN signal (and statement) to Communist China that it will not advance to Yalu River – thus recognizing the sensibilities of a large nation (large 'Asian' nation) and offering it a face-saving gesture;
- De facto ending the war short of unconditional total defeat and occupation of all of North Korea, but in possession of all of the Korean peninsula worth occupying and with the North Korean 'aggressor' state severely punished;
- UN proclamation of elections leading to the unification of the whole of the UN-controlled portion of the peninsula;
- What remained of North Korea would be little threat to the newly enlarged South Korea, and would serve as a useful buffer between the latter and Communist China.

The above scenario would have represented a spectacular military and political success for the United States and the United Nations. That it failed to materialize can be explained by mistakes and miscalculations regarding principles of capital W war, the greatest of which was disrespect for and disregard of a potential Asian enemy – Pearl Harbor déjà vu all over again.



**PONDER**  
**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN**  
**MILITARY VICTORY**  
**AND END STATE**

Will military victory achieve the political end state? If so, by what kind of military victory? During World War II Allied answers to these questions were easy: 'Yes,' and 'Total Military Victory resulting in Unconditional Surrender.' But the answers came harder for the Union during the American Civil War. By 1864 the possibility existed that the defeat of all major Confederate field armies might not be sufficient to break the spirit and will of the Confederacy; and Union political and military leaders faced the specter of long-term military occupation of a geographically vast and hostile nation, perhaps even protracted partisan warfare with an unknown duration and end. Not until the advent of the Grant-Sherman strategy of destruction and exhaustion in 1864 – in which Sherman (principally) took the war directly to the people supporting the Confederacy – coupled with Lincoln's "with malice toward none" carrot, did a "military victory" seem sufficient to break the will of the Southern people supporting the Confederacy.

The question was still more problematical during the Vietnam War – and remains so to this day. Could military victory over North Vietnam (even if achievable) produce a lasting, stable peace and a relatively secure noncommunist South Vietnam? Massive bombing (the 'military victory' of the Christmas bombing) did produce an agreement in 1972-73; but its purpose was to enable the U.S. to disengage from the war with a semblance of 'honor,' which Hanoi viewed as an inconvenient postponement of the inevitable final victory. But had the United States been really determined to "win" the war in such a manner as to leave little doubt regarding

the long-term viability and security of a noncommunist South Vietnam, could any type of military victory have achieved that aim? Could U.S. forces have occupied major portions of North Vietnam? How would North Vietnam have reacted? By reverting back to phase three or two of protracted people's war, back to where they were against the French during the Indo-China War of 1946-1954, or where they were against numerous Chinese invasions and occupations a thousand years before that?

At the very least a government has to define and articulate clearly and persistently the national objectives, "war aims" and desired political "end states" – seemingly easy, yet not always done well. The concept of "winning" needs to be both understandable and acceptable to military strategists and commanders, as well as civilian politicians and the general public.

Given our knowledge of the enemy and ourselves, are the objectives, aims and end states reasonable? Can they be achieved? If not, what adjustments, compromises are required? Are they acceptable to the American people? What is required to maintain public support?

## **PONDER YOUR ASSUMPTIONS (THEIR VALIDITY AND CRITICALITY)**

Critical assumptions which prove to be wrong can kill you. In 1807 Napoleon assumed the Spanish middle (bourgeois) class to be larger than it was, and that it – bearing some resemblance to that which existed in France – would welcome the reforms of the French Revolution as the French middle class had during the French Revolution. Napoleon greatly underestimated the negative reaction from the leaders (from top to bottom) of the Catholic Church in Spain to his imposition of a non-Spanish, non-Bourbon monarch (his brother Joseph) on the Spanish throne; and he greatly underestimated the influence of the Church and the conservative

nature of Spanish society. He also misread the strength of Spanish nationalism – as it was manifested nationally and regionally during the six-year-long Peninsular War. This series of invalid assumptions would make a series of seemingly impressive French military successes ultimately irrelevant.

Hitler and many of his Nazi political and military advisors assumed in 1940 that the British would respond to the threat of invasion and German air superiority (if achieved) over southern England by negotiating with Hitler and recognizing his European conquests. But they knew nothing about Winston Churchill, and precious little about the change in Britain's national mood since Hitler's betrayal of the Munich agreement by the seizure of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, and his subsequent invasions of Poland and the West. Nor did Hitler later ponder the true significance of Churchill's statement to the House of Commons upon the Nazi invasion of Soviet Russia in June 1941: "Should Hitler's legions attack the gates of Hell, I would at least give the devil a favourable mention in the House of Commons."

In 1941 the would-be Nazi conquerors of Soviet Russia assumed that there was weak popular support for Stalin and communism. In this they were probably right, but they also assumed that the weak support would continue amid activities of Einsatzgruppen and other manifestations of Nazi-Germany's twisted, demented, racial policies to gain Lebensraum (Living Space) through the elimination or enslavement of the Untermenchen ('subhumans') in Hitler's New Order in Europe. We saw above that General MacArthur assumed that Communist China was bluffing in October 1950 and would not dare wage war against UN/U.S. forces in Korea.

We should consider carefully the credibility of the information and sources upon which we base our assumptions. For example, the decision to conduct the "Bay of Pigs" operation was based in part on "intelligence" from Cuban refugees fleeing Castro's Cuba in the early 1960's. We should have been a little more circumspect about placing too much credibility and reliance upon

proclamations of widespread disaffection with Castro from people who had much to gain personally by promoting anti-Castro U.S. sentiment, policies, and actions. In many cases, so-called fleeing refugees are not typical of the folks left behind.

If assumptions are based on nothing more than educated guesses and deductive reasoning, then admit it up front and ponder the consequences of error. For example, given what General MacArthur supposedly knew about oriental psychology and behavior, and given the traditional sensibilities of large (great) nations, why did he (how could he) assume that the government of Communist China could afford to allow an army led by a vocal anti-Communist (MacArthur) to advance to its borders without a response? How could the Chinese Communists know that MacArthur's army would stop at the Yalu? What difficulties would such an event pose to a Chinese Communist government actively engaged in consolidating their recently won victory over Chiang Kai-shek? Prestige and loss of face are strong factors worldwide, but especially in the Orient. Would the U.S. allow a potentially hostile power to approach its border through Canada or Mexico – even if Canada or Mexico were guilty of starting the affair/conflict? If not, why should Communist China have reacted any differently, especially when MacArthur was actively and visibly supporting and consulting with General Chiang on Taiwan? What is the cause of such misassumptions and miscalculations? (To say nothing of MacArthur's belief that Communist China could be defeated and a non-communist government restored in Peking – despite the complete and utter defeat of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Government and armies just a year or so earlier.)



**PONDER  
ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES  
IN CASE OF FAILURE  
AT CRITICAL DECISION POINTS**

With the Vietnam War in mind, in October 1977 Professor Philip A. Crowl discussed strategy in a special lecture before the Cadet Wing at the USAF Academy. He offered a series of questions – or more correctly, sets of questions – which strategists should consider before going to war. One set of questions was:

- What are the alternatives?
- What are the alternatives to war?
- What are the alternative campaign strategies, especially if the preferred one fails?
- How is the war to be terminated gracefully if the odds against victory become too high? <sup>1</sup>

Professor Crowl emphasized "uncertainty" and "chance" as elements contributing to the "climate of war." "What happens then if events roll differently than expected? The wise strategist will, of course, have prepared contingency plans. But even these may not exactly suit the case. Here, as Clausewitz says, is where military genius may enter the picture. The really superior strategist will above all else be flexible, will adapt quickly to changed circumstances, ...." <sup>2</sup>

Sounds good. But how does one (a nation, a government, a leader) remain flexible, yet resolute? Hitler, for example, often

---

<sup>1</sup> Philip A. Crowl, "The Strategist's Short Catechism: Six Questions Without Answers," The Harmon Memorial Lectures in Military History, 1959-1987, edited by Lt Col Harry R. Borowski, USAF. (Washington, D. C.: Office of Air Force History, 1988), p 384.

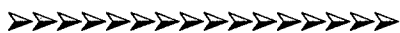
<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p 385.



had mixed feelings about the preparation of fallback defensive lines because he believed that his generals would be (too) quick to quit the battle at hand and retreat to them. What are the disadvantages, as well as advantages, of considering alternative strategies and operational concepts beforehand, to asking questions like 'how do we transition from one (failed) strategy or operational concept to another?' or 'how do we exit this thing gracefully if it turns sour?' If you are prepared for defeat, or are prepared to quit when the going gets too tough, are you not courting a self-fulfilling prophecy? (Witness our recent experience in Somalia.) What is the proper balance?

How will we know if we are winning? What are our measures of effectiveness? What factors will suggest switching from one phase to another, or to alternative courses of action? How will we attempt to respond to unforeseen factors? What are the signposts, where are they, how reliable are they? What type of data are we prepared to accept regarding the (in)validation of our prehostilities assumptions? How long will we cling to preconceived notions? How can we avoid being dogmatic?

Is it practical to consider such things in advance calmly, deliberately and with an open mind before a crisis is reached and egos, prestige, careers and fatigue adversely affect our judgment and motivations? What are the advantages in considering in advance the consequences of possible unknowns or miscalculations relevant to 'branches and sequels' which lie ahead in capital "W" war?



**PONDER  
THE ODDS FOR VICTORY  
AND THEN  
PROCEED – OR NOT –  
WITH OR WITHOUT MODIFICATIONS**

Adequacy, feasibility and acceptability. These words apply to capital "W" war, national strategy and national military strategy as well as they do to specific military operations. Is the nation's military power (existing and potential) adequate to achieve military victory? Are the policies and strategy feasible – will they work; will military victory achieve the political end state? Will the policies, strategies, and associated military operations be acceptable to the American public, and/or to other relevant national or world publics? Acceptable in terms of material and human cost, and according to norms and tenets of civilized and 'just' war? If these questions can be answered positively, then proceed with or without modifications to policy, strategy or operational concepts.

On the other hand, what if the odds for or against victory depend heavily on the validity of a single assumption, or a group of them, based on wishful thinking or little verifiable data? What if there are too many critical unknown factors? In such circumstances, if there is a choice is it best not to proceed at all – if you are not facing a direct or indirect attack against the nation's vital interests? Ah! Therein lies the trap: the definition and interpretation of the word 'vital.' Another judgment call in which 'vitalness' must be measured alongside the "odds" for victory and the cost of failure. High "vitalness," low "odds" for victory, and a high cost of failure make life difficult.

**OPERATE IAW  
HOLISTIC NATIONAL STRATEGIC  
AND MILITARY EFFECTIVENESS  
(I.E., COHERENT AND SYNERGISTIC ACTIONS  
AT AND AMONG ALL LEVELS OF WAR  
SIMULTANEOUSLY  
WITH AN EMPHASIS ON SYNERGISM**

'Holism' stresses that the whole is greater than the simple sum of its parts. 'Holistic' emphasizes the importance of the whole and the interdependence of its parts. "Synergistic" technically means that two or more forces can accomplish something that each cannot do alone. But the latter part of the definition has been largely forgotten. Today, the word "synergistic" is commonly used to convey the simple concept that  $1 + 1$  equals more than 2, and that the capabilities of forces X and Y working together are more effective than the arithmetic addition (computation) of their individual capabilities. The validity of the concept has been amply demonstrated; time and again, enemy sensors (human and gadgets) and forces have been overloaded/overwhelmed by the combination of threats/capabilities brought to bear by X and Y. Irrespective of whether each force by itself can do the job, synergism/synergy is desirable for reasons other than sheer necessity: for cost effectiveness and for reduction of friendly casualties and the time required for mission accomplishment.

There are four levels of war: strategic, theater-strategic, operational and tactical. Decisions and actions at one level of war affect perceptions, capabilities and results at the other levels.

**Political judgment.** Strong moral power and authority makes the application of physical power more efficient and effective. Sound political judgment at the strategic level invariably enhances the effectiveness of military power at all levels of war. To be politically effective at the strategic level, national leaders (political

**and military)** must comprehend important domestic and international moral and political factors/dynamics (popular fears, hopes, expectations, national character, national will, etc.) and appraise their relevance to the conduct and outcome of the conflict at hand. National leaders must appreciate the broad dynamics of war in the tradition of Karl von Clausewitz and Michael Howard – i.e., that wars are conflicts between societies, not tactical exercises writ large.

**Strategic judgment (and effectiveness).** Next, national political and military leaders must consider friendly and enemy physical power (military, industrial, financial and economic), including the effects of geography, terrain and climate. All calculations of friendly and enemy moral and physical strength must be considered in the context of friendly and enemy political objectives. Strategic judgment is the ability to distinguish the possible from the impossible. It all boils down to ends and means.

The process of selecting national political goals and strategic objectives should be interactive. Strategic objectives chosen in a political vacuum possess no meaning. Political goals chosen without reference to what is strategically possible are futile at best and disastrous at worst. The military must communicate effectively to political leadership what is militarily possible and thereby influence the choice of national goals. A military that performs this task badly is strategically ineffective.<sup>1</sup>

Political goals should inform strategy, but the limits and capabilities of available military power, as enunciated by the military, must simultaneously shape those goals. Strategic effectiveness depends on this reciprocity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, Eds. Military Effectiveness. Vol I: The First World War. Mershon Center Series on Defense and Foreign Policy. Boston, MA: Unwin Hyman, 1989 paperback edition (1988), p 8.

<sup>2</sup> Inspired from Ibid., p 7: "Political goals no doubt should inform strategy, but the strategic alternatives, enunciated by the military, may simultaneously shape those goals. The analysis of strategic effectiveness should aim at capturing this reciprocity."

Strategic effectiveness depends on the ability of a nation's government and military leaders to devise an effective national (or grand) strategy which orchestrates an appropriate combination of national moral and physical power against an enemy to achieve friendly national political objectives. This entails the selection of prudent theater-strategic objectives. National leaders also must mobilize, transport and direct sufficient national military assets to support vital theaters of war and campaigns – and they must ensure that corresponding enemy capabilities are impeded or exceeded. Theater-strategic effectiveness involves the judicious use of national assets to achieve objectives at that level.

**Operational and Tactical Effectiveness.** The former is the ability of a nation's military to plan and conduct campaigns and related military operations to achieve national and theater-strategic objectives. The latter is the ability of a nation's military to perform effectively on the battlefield, with "effectively" being defined in the context of broad strategic parameters. Operational and tactical commanders must take care lest *seemingly* sensible actions from their narrower perspective (such as 'search and destroy' or burning villages to save them from the enemy) ultimately produce fatal consequences at the strategic level (such as popular demonstrations and loss of national will).

The following three negative examples elaborate on the importance of holistic and synergistic military effectiveness:

**1.** In World War II, Nazi strategy for conquering the Soviet Union was predicated on the rapid collapse of Stalin's communist regime. Shortly into Operation BARBAROSSA, however, Nazi-German Einsatzgruppen, etc., began the systematic extermination of Commissars, Jews, intellectuals, and other 'undesirable' elements of the Soviet-Russian population. Casting their nets widely and indiscriminately produced a wave of terror and fear which backfired against the Nazi invaders. Stalin – recognizing some truth in the original Nazi assumptions – was handed the opportunity to appeal to his people to wage a nationalistic war for 'Mother Russia' and personal survival against the Teutonic exterminators. The Nazis gave him an easy and effective

alternative to asking them to fight for himself and communism. The Nazi policy of early extermination of 'undesirables' was directly detrimental to requirements for a quick victory and assumptions about popular support for the Soviet government. Thus German prowess at the operational and tactical levels of war was offset by abject incompetence at the strategic level. In their planning for BARBAROSSA, Nazi-Germany's top political and military leaders would have been well advised to have considered and adopted a temporary campaign of deception, deceit and propaganda ('we come as liberators') aimed at the Soviet peoples to facilitate and magnify superior German operational and tactical performance on the battlefield. But because of hubris, racial arrogance, ignorance and overconfidence, they instead waited not one day to begin implementing their twisted, demented and evil policies. Three million German soldiers and thousands of German civilians paid the ultimate price for such folly.

**2.** Certain tactical advantages derived from destroying actual or suspected Viet Cong villages, bases and sanctuaries in Vietnam were more than offset by revulsion and reduced public support for the American war effort (nor did it do much for the morale of the rural South Vietnamese population). Similarly, operational advantages obtained from invading Cambodia in 1970 were offset by adverse reaction from Americans at home opposed to 'widening the war.' Gains on the 'War Front' were thus offset by losses on the 'Home Front.' These examples illustrate "Winning the Battle and Losing the War."

**3.** Congressman Newt Gingrich once observed that equipping the Nicaraguan Contras to operate and fight as 'Commandos' (high tech, U.S. equipment, etc.) worked at cross-purposes with the policy of establishing an effective anti-Sandinista guerrilla movement. Guerrillas, he asserted, live among the people, capture and use (simple) enemy weapons, have no elaborate base areas and logistic structures, etc. The Contras, on the other hand, were equipped to operate like World War II British Commando or American Ranger units which operated behind enemy lines on specific missions for short periods before returning to base.

During the recent Persian Gulf War a positive example was the imposition of tactical and operational constraints upon coalition military forces for the sake of maintaining coalition and U.S. public support for the war. Many ROE unpopular in military circles were (and will be) necessary for reasons relating to political dynamics at the strategic level of war. (Such as the policy against bombing Chinese air bases in Manchuria during the Korean War.)

In short, advantages of doing things at one level of war (usually the lower levels) have to be weighed against possible (and potentially greater) adverse consequences at another level. Consider the often heard remark pertaining to counterinsurgency (counterrevolutionary) warfare: "For every one we kill, two more take his place."

**OPERATE IAW APPROPRIATE  
SMALL "w" PRINCIPLES OF  
CONVENTIONAL WAR,  
UNCONVENTIONAL WAR,  
(including SMALL WARS and  
COUNTERINSURGENCY),  
OR MILITARY OPERATIONS OTHER  
THAN WAR**

Apply the appropriate set of Principles of War small "w" to the category of war, conflict or operation at hand. While the essential characteristics of each of the three main categories of war or operations listed below have some dynamics in common, in many respects they are significantly different. It would be dangerous to assume, for example, that all of the 'traditional' principles of war are relevant to unconventional warfare, small wars, or military operations other than war (MOOTW/OOTW). In certain types of

conflict, some of these 'principles' might even be **counter-productive** because they suggest tempting courses of actions based on false illusions. This leads us to the notion that each category of war/operations requires its own set of "small w" principles. The following categories of conflict may not necessarily jive with current Joint doctrine – but then, the latter should not preclude the use of standard English or historically understood terms.

**1. Conventional War** is hereby defined as the style of warfare which characterized the bulk of World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the 1991 Persian Gulf War – conventional armies and forces engaged in attrition warfare or seeking decisive battle through maneuver warfare. Army vs. army, fleet vs. fleet, bombers vs. fighters and flak, and tank vs. tank, ship vs. ship, gun vs. gun, factories vs. factories, and so on. Think of Operations OVERLORD and DESERT STORM; the battles of Gettysburg, Iwo Jima and Inchon. (Reference the twelve "traditional" principles of war listed in AFSC Pub 1, The Joint Staff Officer's Guide 1991, pp 1-3, pages and principles which I prefer to the more current 1993 version, pages 1-3. The latter, however, contains the following sentences: "In-depth discussions of our current principles of war can be found in joint and Service publications. Joint Pub 1, Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces, and Joint Pub 0-1, Basic National Defense Doctrine, both include the principles of war and their application in joint warfare.")

**2. Unconventional War** is hereby defined as the style of warfare characterizing Mao's People's War, guerrilla and partisan warfare, revolutionary and counter-revolutionary warfare, and insurgency and counter-insurgency warfare. Common historical scenarios often involve conventionally trained, equipped and 'oriented' forces pitted against illusive guerrillas and partisans. Examples in this category range from the Peninsular War, 1808-1814, and French, Yugoslav and Russian partisans in World War II, to the two Indochina Wars. Other examples are the Chinese Civil War (Chiang vs. Mao); the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960, the Hukbalahap Insurgency in the Philippines, the Algerian War,



1954-1962, and the more recent conflict in Somalia. Conflicts characterized by unconventional warfare are almost always protracted, messy and dirty affairs; and casualties are often intensive relative to the total number of guerrillas and partisans involved. They are financially costly for the non-revolutionary, non-insurgent side – especially in cases where an outside force wages a 'colonial war' or an interventionary power/force assists the government side in a civil war. **The outcome of this type of conflict is invariably determined as much or more by moral and political factors than by military factors.**

JCS Pub 1-02, p 399, defines unconventional warfare as: "A broad spectrum of military and paramilitary operations, normally of long duration, predominantly conducted by indigenous or surrogate forces who are organized, trained, equipped, supported, and directed in varying degrees by an external source. It **includes guerrilla warfare** and other direct offensive, low visibility, covert, or clandestine operations, as well as indirect activities of subversion, sabotage, intelligence activities, and evasion and escape."

Where is the list of "principles of unconventional war" and how does it differ from that applicable to conventional war? Good question(s)! An excellent place to start is Sir Robert Thompson's five basic principles of Counterinsurgency warfare as explained in his Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam (1965), pp 50-62:

- (1) "The government must have a clear political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable."
- (2) "The government must function in accordance with law."
- (3) "The government must have an **overall** plan." (emphasis added) ("It must include all political, social, economic, administrative, police and other measures which have a bearing on the insurgency. ... there should be a proper balance between the military and

the civil effort, with complete cooperation in all fields. Otherwise a situation will arise in which military operations produce no lasting results because they are unsupported by civil follow-up action.")

- (4) **"The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerillas."**
- (5) "In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first."

Reference also FM 31-20, Doctrine for Special Forces Operations, 20 April 1990, Chapter 10, "Foreign Internal Defense," which briefly discusses the following topics: "training assistance," "advisory assistance," "intelligence operations," "psychological operations," "civil-military operations," "populace and resources control," and "tactical operations." (See also FM 100-5, referred to below under MOOTW.)

This category of conflict **includes** the well-known series of 'small wars' fought mainly by the U.S. Marine Corps in the Caribbean and Central American region between the two World Wars. A list of "principles of small wars" would have much in common with those for unconventional war (above) and MOOTW (below). NAVMC 2890, The U.S. Marine Corps Small Wars Manual (Reprint of 1940 Edition), 1 April 1987, remains an outstanding source on this subject. See especially Chapter I, "Introduction," which discusses "general characteristics," "strategy," "psychology," "relationship with the State Department," and the "military-civil relationship." Sections in other chapters discuss "the estimate of the situation," "methods of pacification," "establishment and administration of military government," "applications of principles to situations short of war," "supervision of elections" and "withdrawal."

This category of conflict also **includes** the more recent **small scale** U.S. "**interventions**" in Grenada (URGENT FURY) and Panama (JUST CAUSE) – both **brief, very lopsided affairs**, involving intervention with overwhelming military power in a small country possessing insignificant military power, usually for

the purpose of restoring order and stability, and/or to remove a troublesome political regime.

**3. Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW/OOTW).** Reference Joint Pub 3-0, Doctrine For Joint Operations, 9 Sep 1993, pp V-9 to 16: "Military" Operations Other Than War "include, but are not limited to," the following: (1) Arms Control, (2) Combating Terrorism, (3) DOD Support to Counterdrug Operations, (4) Nation Assistance, (5) NEO, (6) Support to Civil Authorities, (7) Peace Operations, and (8) Support to Insurgencies. Peace Operations (#7) include "peacemaking (diplomatic actions), peacekeeping (noncombatant military operations), and peace enforcement (coercive use of military force)." I wish only to emphasize that 'Peace Keeping' and 'Peace Enforcement' operations involve the possibility of hostile action, either to keep the peace or out of a failure to enforce it.

FM 100-5 Operations, June 1993, Chapter 13, "Operations Other Than War," discusses "the environment" and principles of MOOTW: "objective," "unity of effort," "**legitimacy**," "**perseverance**," "**restraint**," and "security" (emphasis added). Joint Pub 3-0, Doctrine for Joint Operations, 9 September 1993, pp V-2 to V-4, also lists and discusses those same six under the heading "principles for *Joint Operations Other Than War*": Objective, Unity of Effort, Security, Restraint, Perseverance and Legitimacy. These same principles are listed in Joint Pub 3-07, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, 16 June 1995, chapter II. At the very least, these six principles are an excellent beginning, although the concept of "Legitimacy" is so fundamental that it should be listed first. All "Objectives" should be rooted in "Legitimacy".

**MOOTW and principles of capital W war.** Regarding the initial U.S. experience in Operation RESTORE HOPE in Somalia, Major General Anthony Zinni, J-3, CJTF, subsequently emphasized that "If you don't understand the culture, you make stupid moves." Soon after arriving in Somalia, certain members of the JTF took an OJT crash course in Somali history, culture, society, and politics. "The operators had to go out and explore the

cultural terrain," continued General Zinni. "We had to find out who Aideed really was; and it didn't take long to discover that they really hate the term 'warlord.'"<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, in this case responsible senior officers soon realized their ignorance (and the potential consequences thereof) and proceeded to correct it. **Fortunately, CJTF came to Somalia with the right mind-set, and the incentive and ability to learn, grow, and recover from initial ignorance and mistakes.** (There is a big difference between ignorance and stupidity – one should be temporary, the other is invariably terminal.)

## TO INCLUDE AN EFFECTIVE MILITARY STRATEGY OF PERCEPTION CONTROL

A national 'military' strategy of "perception control" (or even a national strategy of ...) is not the same thing as "perception management" although they are related. The DOD definition of "perception management" is:

perception **management** – Actions to convey and/or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning; and to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels to influence official estimates, ultimately resulting in foreign behaviors and official actions favorable to the originator's objectives. In various ways, perception management combines truth projection, operations security, cover and deception, and psychological operations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Remarks by (then) Major General Anthony Zinni, 4 December 1993, Session on "Peace Keeping, Peace Making, Peace Enforcement and Humanitarian Operations," sponsored by The Military Society of the Marine Corps University, Quantico Marine Base.

<sup>2</sup> Joint Pub 1-02, Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, 23 March 1994, p 287.

Now, consider the concept and definition of a military strategy of perception **control**, as explained by Dr. Howard M. Hensel in The Sword of the Union: Federal Objectives and Strategies During the American Civil War:

A military strategy of perception control attempts, **through military action**, [<sup>1</sup>] to influence along desired lines, the attitudes of the enemy peoples, the international community heretofore neutral in the conflict, one's own people, and the people of any power with whom one is allied, especially those individuals occupying influential positions. More specifically, this strategy attempts to influence the attitudes of the enemy people and/or troops, especially those in positions of power, to cease resistance at all levels of conflict and terminate the war in accord with one's own national objectives. Equally important, this strategy seeks to influence the attitudes of one's own people and soldiers, again, especially the powerful members of one's own population and army, to continue to resist at whatever level of military conflict is necessary until the war has been brought to a successful conclusion. Finally, this generic strategy seeks to influence the attitudes of peoples of foreign powers to, at minimum, refrain from actively assisting the enemy to resist and, optimally, induce these external powers to actively render whatever assistance is desired to facilitate the conclusion of the conflict on satisfactory terms. <sup>2</sup>

Dr. Hensel applies this concept to President Lincoln's perception that the Northern/Union public needed to see significant, successful offensive action **each year** by Union forces to sustain popular support for the war. And this is one reason why Lincoln prodded his generals to get cracking ("If you are not planning on doing anything with your army for a while, would you mind if I

---

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Hensel, Howard M. The Sword of the Union: Federal Objectives and Strategies During the American Civil War. Montgomery, AL: USAF Command and Staff College, Military History Series 87-1, 1989, pp 274-275.

borrowed it?") This concept applies in spades to the military strategy adopted by Generals Grant and Sherman in 1864 and 1865, which was designed to convey to the southern population that (a) they were fighting a war they could not win, and (b) that the people of the Confederacy were not safe from advancing and marauding Union armies no matter where they lived. Legions of letters containing bad news of events and conditions back home to soldiers in General Lee's army in the trenches of Richmond and St. Petersburg contributed greatly to the high desertion rate in Lee's Army of Northern Virginia during the last six months of the war. President Lincoln's lenient policy regarding re-admission of rebellious Southern states into the Union – "*With malice toward none,*" – was the carrot which complemented General Sherman's stick: "*They will soon feel the hard hand of war. [and] The crueller it [the war] is, the sooner it will be over.*" It was an effective combination.

Note the goal of military strategies of perception control and perception management activities is the same – to influence the emotions, motives and objective reasoning of friend and foe (leaders, soldiers and publics), ultimately resulting in friendly and enemy behaviors and actions favorable to the originator's objectives. Only the means vary.

The following are just a few of the many historical examples of perception control strategies:

- ♦ Hitler's bombing of London in 1940 to terrorize the British people into suing for peace.
- ♦ Admiral Yamamoto's Operation HAWAII, the surprise raid on the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, to convince the American people of the military prowess and determination of Japan, so that they would conclude that the cost in blood and treasure to defeat Japan would be too high, and that the American government would therefore seek a compromise, negotiated settlement with Tokyo. (During late 1944 and 1945 the Japanese hoped that high American casualties resulting from

storming highly fortified islands and suicide *kamikaze* air attacks would induce Washington to accept something less than 'unconditional surrender.' It worked well enough to compel President Truman to authorize use of the two atomic bombs.)

- ♦ The British strategic bombing campaign against Germany from 1942 to the end of the war, to weaken German popular resolve.
- ♦ Guerrilla tactics and strategy in any insurgency and revolutionary war, to sap the morale and resolve of the opposing military forces and their publics.
- ♦ The entire British-Malayan political-military strategy during the Malayan Emergency (discussed above) was in effect one huge strategy of perception control – from announcing that Malaya would soon be independent, to the New Village relocation program, to the rule of law, to the system of rewards – designed to convey to all sides in the conflict the inevitability of a British-Malayan victory.
- ♦ President Johnson's decision during the Vietnam War to not do certain things – such as invade neutral nations or bomb politically sensitive targets in North Vietnam – to appease international and American domestic public opinion.
- ♦ The "body-count" strategy devised by Secretary of Defense McNamara during the Vietnam War, to convince the American public that the United States was winning the war by generating attrition unacceptable to the enemy in the long run. Or the color-coded maps indicating progress in the percentage of villages which were controlled (or the degree of control) by friendly forces during the Vietnam War.

Many strategies of perception control involve the concept of "momentum" – whether it be a sudden stroke which results in a significant advantage immediately obvious to friend and foe alike, or a series of actions which collectively and over a period of time indicate that victory by the initiator is inevitable.

## CONCLUSION

Although particulars vary from scenario to scenario, all wars, conflicts and military "peace" operations share similar moral and political dynamics relative to principles of capital W war. Principles of capital W war pertain to all categories and types of war, conflict, or military operations other than war – past, present and future.

When so many thousands (or even hundreds) of American marines, soldiers, sailors, or airmen embark on missions (hostile or potentially so) to culturally alien landscapes, it is not possible for many of them to possess beforehand a great deal of regional or country-specific expertise. We simply cannot always predict where the next conflict will ignite, and the next and the next after that. (But that is not to say that the armed forces should not be – or continue to be – developing a limited number of such experts, instead of relying solely upon those existing outside the military.) Fortunately, each of the armed services can work toward nurturing in its officer corps a critically important mind-set oriented toward an effective broad-based application of "principles of war (W/w)" in any type of conflict. An army or task force led by such officers, reinforced by a few regional and country-specific experts (military and civilian), will be a sine qua non for superior across-the-board military effectiveness during the next decade and into the 21st Century.





## A Note about Chapter 2

This chapter is designed to critique, in excruciating detail, the decision of Admiral Yamamoto to adopt and execute Operation HAWAII. It discusses what Yamamoto knew about Americans and the United States, how he misused that knowledge, and how he failed to look a little deeper into the pages of American history and the nuances of American culture for insights that would confirm or challenge his assumptions regarding how America would likely react to Operation HAWAII.

This chapter draws the reader through increasingly detailed levels of strategic and operational analysis:

- ☑ the nature and strength of American isolationism in 1941;
- ☑ President Roosevelt's troublesome dilemma in late November and early December 1941;
- ☑ Yamamoto's reasoning and motives for Operation HAWAII, including the associated Japanese diplomatic note to be delivered in Washington "at precisely 1 p.m.";
- ☑ contrasting Japanese and British military perspectives regarding the Philippines and Malaya in the context of capital "W" war imperatives;
- ☑ Japanese naval doctrine and preparations for war before 1940 (*Yûgeki Zengen Sakusen* and *Kantai Kessen*);
- ☑ the fate of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*;
- ☑ the vulnerability of the U.S. Pacific Fleet to air attacks from Japanese carrier- and land-based naval aircraft;
- ☑ the likely outcome of a major naval battle in 1941 or early 1942 between the Imperial Japanese Navy's Combined Fleet and the United States Navy's Pacific Fleet; and
- ☑ an alternative Japanese political-military approach to the United States in 1941-1942 based upon principles of capital "W" war.

## Chapter 2

---

### **Pearl Harbor: Japan's First Step to Defeat**

The "Battle of Pearl Harbor" on Sunday morning, 7 December 1941, was a spectacular Japanese military victory. Japan's six largest and best aircraft carriers (plus escorts) sailed across the barren north Pacific, avoided detection and achieved complete surprise. Japanese Zeroes destroyed many of the American fighters on the ground as two large waves of torpedo and horizontal bombers reduced the U.S. Pacific Fleet's battleline to shambles. The *Arizona* blew up. The *Oklahoma* capsized. The heavily damaged *West Virginia* leaned over against the *Tennessee*. The *California* settled to the bottom in shallow water. The *Nevada* – the only battleship to get underway that morning – was beached at Hospital Point. When the last formation of Japanese planes headed back to the sea, only the *Pennsylvania* (in dry dock), the *Maryland* (inboard of the capsized *Oklahoma*), and the *Tennessee* (which had to be dynamited free of the *West Virginia*) were capable of an 'emergency sortie' in 72 hours.

#### **A "Strategic Imbecility."**

Despite (and ironically because of) this spectacular military victory, Japan's "Operation HAWAII"<sup>1</sup> was a monumental strategic blunder. In 1951 the renowned American naval historian, Samuel Eliot Morison, concluded that "far from being a 'strategic necessity,' as the Japanese claimed even after the war," the "surprise attack" on Pearl Harbor was ...

---

<sup>1</sup> The code name given to the Japanese surprise attack on the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Hawaiian waters.

a strategic imbecility. One can search military history in vain for an operation more fatal to the aggressor. On the tactical level, the Pearl Harbor attack was wrongly concentrated on ships rather than permanent installations and oil tanks. On the strategic level it was idiotic. On the high political level it was disastrous.<sup>1</sup>

Although Morison's 'levels of war' do not equate precisely with today's Joint and service usage of these terms,<sup>2</sup> his statement remains crystal clear. Before Pearl Harbor millions of American 'isolationists' were opposed to 'coming to the rescue' of Dutch and British colonial possessions in Southeast Asia even if they were subject to an overt and unprovoked Japanese attack – assuming of course that Japan refrained from concurrently attacking American forces in the Philippines. Japan's decision for war against the United States in general, and Operation HAWAII in particular, rendered such 'isolationist' attitudes irrelevant. Embarking on a morally charged crusade, a united America was determined to avenge the dastardly deed of 7 December and to expunge all vestiges of Japanese militarism from the face of the earth.

The creator and driving force behind Operation HAWAII was Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander in Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy's Combined Fleet since 30 August 1939. Before we can appreciate the nature and magnitude of Yamamoto's miscalculation and analyze its causes, we must first turn to the American political scene and review the struggle between the American isolationists and President Franklin D. Roosevelt over United States national security policy during the two-year period before 7 December 1941.

---

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, History of United States Naval Operations in World War II, Vol 3, The Rising Sun (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1982 [1948]), p 132.

<sup>2</sup> Today Morison's word "tactical" does equate to "tactical," but his "strategic level" corresponds to today's "theater-strategic level" and his "high political level" equates to the political dimension of the "strategic level" of war.

## SECTION 1:

### KNOW YOUR ENEMY

JAPAN'S POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERS  
SHOULD HAVE STUDIED AMERICAN ISOLATIONISM  
AND CONSIDERED WAYS OF SUSTAINING AND EXPLOITING  
THIS POTENTIAL ENEMY CRITICAL VULNERABILITY  
IN A WAR AGAINST THE UNITED STATES

#### **Roots of American Isolationism.**

Before World War II the heartbed of American isolationism lay in the American Midwest – that vast expanse of rural farmland between the Appalachian and Rocky Mountains. Most isolationists were immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Germany, Central Europe, Scandinavia and Ireland. For three hundred years they fled Europe and came to the "New World" in part to escape the ravages of militarism and war. Mentally and physically the old world they left behind seemed far, far away. During World War I, many German-Americans wanted the United States to stay neutral. (Neither they nor the rest of America viewed Imperial Germany in the manner which most Americans viewed Hitler's Nazi-Germany during World War II.) Moreover, they were joined by many Irish-Americans who were not anxious for the United States to come to the aid of Great Britain, against whom their ancestors had fought for so many generations.

#### **Many Americans Came to View American Involvement in World War I as a "Mistake."**

Following World War I the ranks and strength of American isolationism benefited from a popular perception that American ideals had been betrayed abroad and at home. President Woodrow Wilson had called on America to defend "freedom of the seas" and to fight a "war to end all wars." But during the Paris peace

conference in 1919 his idealistic policies were severely compromised by our more practical-minded and balance-of-power-oriented wartime allies. The Versailles Peace Treaty was *anything but* a "peace without victors." In an orgy of guilt, British and American intellectuals wrote a flood of books condemning the harsh and unfair treatment of post-war Germany. This sentiment was only reinforced by the refusal of our wartime "allies" (with the exception of tiny Finland) to repay American war loans. Therefore, when – in the aftermath of Hitler's coming to power in Germany in 1933 – it appeared that Europe seemed headed toward yet another war, the isolationists were determined to prevent America from traveling down the same road which led to her involvement in World War I. They saw no reason why America should again *intervene* in European political and military affairs. Isolationists wanted American relations with Europe **restricted** to trade and commerce and the routine diplomatic functions associated with business and travel abroad. And because the noble sentiments and naive expectations of 1917 had turned to cynicism and frustration across the land (and not just in the isolationist Midwest), during the mid-1930's few Americans actively opposed them.

### **The Nye Committee and "The Merchants of Death."**

The Senate Investigation of the Munitions Industries headed by Senator Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota "grew out of a passionate determination to prevent the United States from becoming involved in any future European wars." <sup>1</sup> The Nye Committee concluded that the barons of the American munitions industry – popularly called "merchants of death" – conspired to get the United States into the First World War to make greater profits. The Committee identified two other factors which also contributed to American entry into the war: (a) the use of *American* ships to transport war materials purchased by Britain and France, and (b) American citizens sailing to Europe on belligerent ships.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wayne S. Cole, An Interpretive History of American Foreign Relations. (Homewood, IL: The Dorsey Press, 1974 Revised Edition), p 361.

The upshot of the Nye Committee was the 1937 Neutrality Act. It prohibited the sale of munitions to all belligerents (in effect, a "mandatory" arms embargo), banned private loans to all belligerents, and prohibited American citizens from traveling on belligerent ships to prevent future *Lusitania*-type incidents. Furthermore, the Act specified that belligerents must (a) pay cash even for non-embargoed American goods and (b) transport (carry) those products in non-American ships. It was stipulated that this particular provision of the Act – popularly called "cash-and-carry" – would be in effect until 1 May 1939, at which time it would be reconsidered. The rest of the 1937 Neutrality Act was considered "permanent."<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the slaughter of World War I and a sense of betrayal, many isolationists were fearful for the future of American democratic institutions should the United States intervene in the European war which erupted with Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939. Many isolationists believed that the flood of New Deal legislation since March 1933 had already made the Roosevelt Administration – i.e., the Federal Government – too powerful for the national good. How much more power, they asked, would the Executive Branch need (and demand) to prosecute a global world war? A widely disseminated anti-interventionist political cartoon had 'Miss Liberty' on her knees, sobbing at the feet of 'Uncle Sam,' who was looking across the Atlantic to the war in Europe. 'Miss Liberty' implored 'Uncle Sam' to stay out of the war for "my sake" (i.e., the sake of American liberty and democracy *at home*). This was the rebuttal to the interventionist argument that America had to go to war to preserve liberty and democracy *abroad*.

**"America First," Charles Lindbergh  
and "Fortress America."**

The "America First Committee" was the largest and most effective isolationist organization. It had over 800,000 card-

---

<sup>1</sup> Cole, p 363.

carrying members, many from the American Midwest. The most prominent and effective spokesman for the isolationist cause was Charles Lindbergh, popularly called "Lucky Lindy" for his heroic 1927 solo flight across the Atlantic in the *Spirit of St. Louis*. By the mid-1930's Lindbergh was a universally acknowledged expert on international aviation – civil and military. American newspapers frequently carried pictures and stories of him inspecting aircraft factories and air forces around the world.

Lindbergh was perhaps 'the' most popular speaker at large "America First" rallies across the nation. He argued that America should stay out of the next war, played down the threat which a Nazi-dominated Europe would pose to the United States, and believed that England (after the fall of France in 1940) was losing (and would lose) the war. Why sell to Britain planes, weapons and munitions that were needed for our own security and protection, he asked, especially when she (Britain) will only lose them in a futile battle against Germany? Even if Britain held out and America entered the war on her side, Lindbergh believed that an American-British effort to liberate western Europe from the Germans would involve excessive casualties.<sup>1</sup> Lindbergh was not a pacifist; he simply preferred a "Fortress America" policy to intervention in Europe. While some Americans called him a Nazi traitor, millions of American isolationists believed Charles Lindbergh was an American hero and patriot.

### **President Roosevelt and "Aid Short of War."**

With the outbreak of war in Europe in September 1939, President Franklin D. Roosevelt adopted a strong anti-Axis foreign

---

<sup>1</sup> Lindbergh made his remarks about excessive Anglo-American casualties before Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. For those of you who have seen the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, imagine how much more terrible Omaha Beach would have been for the amphibious assault troops (or how many more Omaha Beaches there would have been in the Normandy invasion) had not two-thirds of the German Army been committed to the Eastern Front, where it was eye-deep in Russians and had, by June 1944, already suffered millions of casualties in three years of intense fighting.

policy, which over the next two years evolved to the point where he called for assisting the European Allies with all-out aid short of war.

In November 1939 Roosevelt asked Congress to repeal the 1937 Neutrality Act – **all of it**. But after heated debate, Congress repealed only the "arms embargo" provision. "Cash-and-carry" for *all goods* remained in effect. On 3 September 1940, Roosevelt announced the "Destroyers for Bases Deal" with Britain. On 29 December he called upon his countrymen to make the United States "the great arsenal of democracy." On 6 January 1941, he urged Congress to pass legislation which would implement his "lend-lease" idea, which he had explained to the American people a few weeks earlier. If your neighbor's house is on fire, he explained in a (now famous) fireside chat to the nation, you would gladly lend him your water hose to put out his fire with the expectation that he would return it to you afterwards. I propose this same idea for 'lending or leasing' munitions to the Allies in their hour of need, as they are also fighting *our* battle. Despite vehement isolationist opposition, including Lindbergh's testimony against it, HR 1776 (as the Lend-Lease Bill was cleverly numbered by its House proponents) passed both Houses of Congress: 260-165 in the House and 60-31 a month later in the Senate.<sup>1</sup>

In July 1941 the United States took over the defense of Iceland, and the U.S. Navy extended its U-boat "search" patrols and convoyed American ships as far as Iceland. Incidents involving U-boats increased. On 11 September the President delivered his famous "shoot-on-sight" address in which he referred to German U-boats as "rattlesnakes" of the seas. On 9 October Roosevelt asked Congress to repeal the "crippling provisions" retained in the 1939 Neutrality Act – referring to the fact that war materials sold to the Allies still had to be 'carried' in non-American ships. On 17 October eleven American sailors died when a U-boat torpedoed an American destroyer, the *Kearny*, in waters near Iceland. Public opinion polls showed that most Americans approved the

---

<sup>1</sup> Cole, p 366.



President's aid-short-of-war policy. Despite spirited opposition from committed isolationist members of Congress (who had lost some of their power and influence after the shock of the rapid fall of France in June 1940), both Houses approved Roosevelt's request to authorize the use of armed American merchant ships to transport Allied war goods across the Atlantic. This latest revision to what was left of the original 1937 Neutrality Act became law with the President's signature on 17 November 1941. Thus, just nineteen days before Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt "had authority to do almost everything to aid Great Britain and the Soviet Union against Germany *except* send the American Army and Air Force into the battle." <sup>1</sup>

The foregoing is the popular version of the evolution of the President's long and generally triumphant struggle against his isolationist opponents. Many historians have advanced the interpretation that within the next six months a comfortable majority of the American people – having finally awoken to the long-term danger to the United States posed by the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis alliance – *even without a Pearl Harbor-type incident* would have backed the President on the logical (and therefore inevitable) last step into the European war, and/or for a more aggressive stand against Japanese expansionism in the Pacific. However, there are other historians who believe that this popular version ignores the rest of the story, and that the *whole* story merits a different conclusion.

**During the Months, Weeks and Days Before  
7 December 1941, the Isolationists were Not  
Beaten – Not by a Long Shot – and a  
Worried President Roosevelt Knew It.**

Despite his string of policy 'victories' from November 1939 to the eve of Pearl Harbor, isolationist/non-interventionist sentiment and opposition remained troublesome for the President, so much so that he wondered at times whether it was actually increasing.

---

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis added. Cole, p 368. (Hitler invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941.)

Consider, for example, the following lesser-known parts of the story of the President's battle against the isolationists:

(1) Late in the presidential election campaign of 1940 – President Roosevelt felt compelled to react to a strong surge in popular support for his Republican opponent, Wendell Willkie, after he (Willkie) had begun to champion the isolationist cause. In a speech in Boston just days before the election, President Roosevelt promised American mothers and fathers (and wives) that: "Your boys [which were then being drafted] are not going to be sent into any *foreign* wars." Even then, the President's margin of victory on election day was narrower than it had been in his first two campaigns for President.

(2) In August 1941 the House voted to extend America's first peacetime draft – which had been adopted in September 1940 in reaction to the fall of France – for an additional 18 months. But it did so by the razor-thin margin of a single vote: 199-198. Had the vote gone the other way, the U.S. Army would have been forced to begin releasing hundreds of thousands of men who had initially been drafted for one year (as their obligations expired over the next few months).

(3) Next, let's examine more closely Congress's revision of the Neutrality Act in November 1941. The President had asked Congress to authorize: (a) the arming of American merchant ships, and (b) the use of American ships to transport Allied war materials, i.e., sending them into combat zones in the eastern Atlantic. After protracted debate, the House passed an "arm only" bill by a vote of 259-138, but the Senate approved both requests. The House then passed the Senate bill, but by an uncomfortably close margin of 212-194.<sup>1</sup> "Less than a month before Pearl Harbor the vote against the administration on repeal of the vital provisions of the Neutrality Act was greater than the opposition vote had been against repeal of the arms embargo in 1939 or against Lend-Lease early in 1941."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 194 included 128 Republicans and 66 Democrats.

<sup>2</sup> Cole, p 369.

(4) If President Roosevelt's real (i.e., secret) goal in late 1941, if not before then, was active American *intervention* in the war in Europe – which many historians believe – it is ironic that he was becoming a victim of his own words and the perceived success of his own publicly-stated policy (all-out aid short of war).<sup>1</sup> In October 1941 a public opinion poll asked two questions: (a) "Would you favor active US intervention in the war in Europe if that were necessary to ensure the defeat of Hitler?" 80% replied YES. (b) "Do you favor a declaration of war against Germany?" 80% replied NO! The explanation for this ostensible paradox is simple. Most Americans believed that the war in Europe had reached (or would soon reach) a stalemate. England had survived the 'Battle of Britain' in 1940; it looked like she was (now) getting the U-boats under control; the war in North Africa seemed to have turned into a perpetual see-saw affair; and the German Army seemed to be losing its punch and steam deep inside Soviet Russia (the long Smolensk pause). Many Americans had taken the President's aid-short-of-war policy at face value. They believed the President when he said it *would* work. And in the fall of 1941 they believed that aid short of war had *in fact worked*. If the war in Europe was stalemated, they reasoned, then obviously Hitler's threat to the Western Hemisphere was greatly diminished.<sup>2</sup> According to this interpretation of events, some of the Senators and Congressmen who voted **for** Congressional authorization to arm

<sup>1</sup> FDR was so careful and cautious (and sometimes ambiguous) in executing this policy that historians are still divided regarding his true motivations. Did he believe that the European Allies could ultimately defeat Hitler with significant American aid short of war? Or, did he use "aid short of war" as a ruse for his real goal of pushing (or dragging), step-by-step, a reluctant America into the war in Europe, a war which he believed the Allies could not win without full American participation? (I, and many others, believe the latter.)

<sup>2</sup> For a more elaborate discussion of the "stalemate" thesis, see Chapter 2 "The Impending Stalemate in Europe," in Bruce M. Russett, No Clear and Present Danger: A Skeptical View of the U.S. Entry into World War II, New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1972. Russett contends that the war in Europe was on the verge of being stalemated at the time of Pearl Harbor. Moreover, he also contends that "It seems most unlikely that the marginal increment that can be attributed to American *belligerency* in 1942 was critical to the Russian war effort [and her survival in 1942]" (p 28).

American merchant ships and send them into European war zones carrying Allied war goods viewed this step as the **final one in the President's aid-short-of-war policy**, and **not** as the next-to-last step toward inevitable American entry into the war against Hitler. Thus, in gauging the strength of opposition against active intervention, their votes should be **added** to the 194 who voted **against** the bill.

(5) In the summer of 1941 President Roosevelt's Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, began urging his boss to ask Congress for a declaration of war against Nazi-Germany. But his "boss" knew better. Roosevelt envisioned two possible political scenarios, both involving a long and bitter debate in both Houses of Congress. In the first scenario Congress might reject his request outright, thus handing him a severe political defeat; and until Hitler made an overt provocative blunder, there would be no second chance. The second scenario was at best a marginal improvement over the first, and in some respects it was worse: his request could be approved but with *at least* a third of both Houses of Congress voicing strong opposition. **This would mean taking a bitterly divided America into a world war**; after all, Nazi-Germany and Japan were allies and one could not assume the war would stay confined to Europe. Unprepared American armed forces were bound to suffer embarrassing reverses during the first year of conflict. And these reverses would undoubtedly serve as grist for the mill of two types of Americans: those still opposed to the war in their hearts and minds, and those members of the "loyal opposition" serving their country as watchdogs on the lookout for "misguided" and "inept" bungling which could be used to humble and weaken the President's administration with an eye on the Congressional elections in 1942 and even the presidential contest in 1944. Just thinking about *either* of these two scenarios gave President Roosevelt a severe headache.

We are now ready to return to Japanese actions in Asia and the Pacific.

### **Many Americans Held Negative Attitudes about Japan Well Before Pearl Harbor.**

A cartoon caricature of Japanese people and society published in *Fortune* magazine two months after Pearl Harbor reflects the popular American conception (held long before Pearl Harbor) of a country of tight-lipped generals and admirals, corrupt capitalists, ruthless businessmen, fanatical priests, doll-like geisha girls, and submissive peasants and their wives who bred toothy, mindless soldiers who filled up the army that really ran "Japan and its God Emperor." <sup>1</sup> It was hardly an image of respect. (See photo, page 129.)

Negative American attitudes of the Japanese dated back to turn-of-the-century California where anti-Japanese immigration laws protected "American" jobs and values. During the years before Pearl Harbor, American anti-Japanese sentiment was magnified and hardened by accounts and photographs of Japanese atrocities against thousands of unarmed Chinese women and children during Japan's four-year imperialist war against China (begun in 1937). One particularly famous UPI photograph showed a crying Chinese baby sitting seemingly abandoned amid the rubble of Shanghai in the aftermath of a Japanese terror bombing attack in 1937. This was soon followed by stories and accounts of the infamous "Rape of Nanking" <sup>2</sup> when Japanese soldiers and their officers brutally, barbarically, sadistically and systematically massacred over 200,000 Chinese civilians (men, women, children and babies) in a deliberate and wanton act of cold-blooded terror. On 12 December 1937, Japanese aircraft sank the American gunboat *Panay* near Nanking on the Yangtze River. The attack took place on a clear day and the *Panay* was marked clearly with large American flags. The Japanese government formally apologized for the incident, but many Americans doubted Tokyo's professed sincerity.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Fortune* magazine, February 1942, pp 52-53.

<sup>2</sup> This horrible story is graphically and convincingly told and documented by Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

**But the Pacific was a Big Ocean,  
and China and Japan Seemed Far, Far Away.**

Many Americans may have disliked or despised the Japanese, but China and Japan were a long way from the West Coast of the United States – seemingly half a world away on the far side of the world's biggest ocean. Nanking and Tokyo were even farther from Boston, New York and Philadelphia. Therefore – as was the case for the Nazis and the war in Europe – Japan's aggression against China seemingly posed no threat to the United States. Consider, for example, the results of a public opinion poll conducted by *Fortune* magazine in September 1941, two months **after** Japanese forces had occupied the southern half of French Indochina – a move which placed them closer to the Dutch East Indies, Britain's great naval base and fortress at Singapore, and the Philippine Islands:

"Which one of these statements comes closest to expressing your feelings about Japan? <sup>1</sup>

- ◆ Japan has proved her right to grow and we should not interfere with her. \_\_\_\_\_ 3.5 %
- ◆ While Japan may be a threat in the future, we should not get excited about her until she attacks some of our territory or interferes with our supplies. \_\_\_\_\_ 43.0 %
- ◆ Japan has already gone far enough and we should place our fleet across her path and tell her another step means war. \_\_\_\_\_ 33.8 %
- ◆ Japan has already gone too far and we should immediately declare war on her. \_\_\_ 3.4 %
- ◆ Don't know. \_\_\_\_\_ 16.3 %"

The three categories "not interfere," "not until ... our territory" and "Don't know," added up to 62.8%.

<sup>1</sup> *Fortune* magazine, October 1941, p 107.

**During the Weeks and Days Before Pearl Harbor  
President Roosevelt and his Advisors were in a Real  
Political Quandary.**

During the weeks and days before Pearl Harbor the Roosevelt Administration was in a quandary. It was obvious that the Japanese were about to initiate a major action somewhere in the Western Pacific and/or Southeast Asia. But the thoughts and actions (taken or not taken) by the Administration were governed by two debilitating concerns – "fears" would not be too strong a word.

First, Roosevelt and his advisors were worried that the Japanese would be smart enough – in their quest for access to oil and other resources in Southeast Asia – to attack *just* the Dutch East Indies, or the Dutch and British together, *without attacking any United States forces or possessions*. Second, even if the Japanese *were* planning to attack American forces and possessions, the President and several members of his cabinet were still worried. What if prudent precautionary measures taken by American forces in the Pacific *before* a Japanese attack were publicized and used by Tokyo as a *pretext* for such an attack? And what if the Administration's isolationist critics then 'seconded' these accusations?

As a result of the recent *Greer* incident in the Atlantic (see below), isolationist suspicions of the President were stronger than ever. For months the President's bolder critics had claimed that he would do *anything* to get the United States actively involved in the European war against Hitler. Therefore, if American forces in the Pacific assumed a precautionary state of readiness in advance of a possible Japanese attack, Roosevelt and his advisers feared that millions of skeptical non-interventionist Americans would believe the charge that *at least some* of those "precautions" had been secretly ordered by the White House so as to *provoke* a Japanese attack against the United States – thus creating a situation which would invariably also lead to war with Nazi-Germany (since Japan and Germany were close allies).

Under these circumstances, a war against Japan (or Japan and Germany) would begin under a cloud of suspicion, controversy and doubt. Inevitable military reverses – such as the fall of the Philippines – were certain to be exploited by Roosevelt's critics in an attempt to discredit and possibly derail his war policy and strategy (for patriotic motives and/or political gain). This scenario would be a nasty replay of the recent *Greer* and "Victory Program" incidents, only on a far grander scale and with potentially monumental adverse consequences for the President and the nation.

**The *Greer* and "FDR'S WAR PLANS"  
(Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Read all about it!)**

The official story told to Congress and the public was that on 4 September 1941, a German U-boat fired two torpedoes at the American destroyer *Greer* without provocation while the latter was on routine patrol duty in the western Atlantic. In fact, the *Greer* had been tracking the U-boat for several hours (at a location farther east than was implied officially) and was – per standard practice at that time – radioing its location to nearby British warships and aircraft which were closing in for the kill. All German U-boat commanders had been briefed about this American practice. Unable to escape the pursuing *Greer*, running low on breathable air, and fearing the imminent arrival of British warships and/or planes, the U-boat commander fired at the stalking *Greer* in self-defense. A few senior U.S. Navy and Administration officials soon knew the real story. But because the facts in this case did not conform to the President's earlier brandishment of the U-boats as "rattlesnakes of the seas," the Administration withheld the full story.

Some isolationist critics instantly smelled a rat. Their suspicions were soon confirmed when the 'full story' was leaked to the press by an unknown source. Although the Administration challenged the credibility and truthfulness of the leaker, the affair became more controversial and many Americans continued to



harbor doubts about the government's version of the incident. When the White House began to receive intelligence reports from the middle of November onward that the Japanese were up to something big in Southeast Asia, the upshot of the *Greer* mess was that several members of the Administration – in particular the President, himself, and the Secretary of the Treasury, Hans Morgenthau – were all the more determined NOT to give the Japanese any plausible pretext which they could use to justify an attack against American forces in the Philippines. This explains the cautious wording of the "War Warning" message sent to General Walter Short (and relayed to Admiral Kimmel) in Hawaii by the War Department in Washington on 27 November 1941:

... Japanese future action unpredictable but hostile action possible at any moment. **If hostilities cannot, repeat cannot, be avoided the United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act.** This policy should not, repeat not, be construed as restricting you to a course of action that might jeopardize your defense. Prior to hostile Japanese action you are authorized to undertake such reconnaissance and other measures as you deem necessary **but these measures should be carried out so as not, repeat not, to alarm civil population or disclose intent....**<sup>1</sup>

(Signed "Marshall"<sup>2</sup>)

The wording of this warning reflected a compromise between those who wanted to issue the Hawaiian Command a clear unequivocal warning and those who were also aware that the Administration was walking a veritable political tightrope. The Administration *desperately needed* a scenario in which **all** Americans – not just Administration supporters and military professionals – would **readily perceive and acknowledge** that commencement of hostilities with Japan involved a clear-cut, black-and-white, OVERT and UNPROVOKED case of Japanese

<sup>1</sup> Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), p 402. Emphasis added.

<sup>2</sup> Chief of Staff, United States Army.

aggression. The 27 November warning was worded with the thought of precluding the Hawaiian commanders (Short and Kimmel) from taking any action that could be readily interpreted and heralded by both Japan and the Administration's American critics as being unduly provocative.

As if the tension level wasn't already high enough in the White House, on 4 December – just one week later – the Roosevelt Administration was rocked by blockbuster newspaper headlines: "FDR'S WAR PLANS." There had been another leak. *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Washington Times-Herald* contained front-page stories revealing details of a super-secret "Victory Program" conducted by the U.S. Army at the request of the President. Editorials in both papers attacked plans for an army of 6.7 million men, a two million man air force and another million men for the navy, as a "blueprint for total war" on an unprecedented scale. On Capitol Hill outraged isolationists proclaimed that the President had betrayed the nation, and that this proved that his 'aid-short-of-war' policy had been a ruse all along.<sup>1</sup>

The next day, Friday 5 December – just two days before Pearl Harbor – the President received more bad news. The latest public opinion poll (completed before yesterday's headlines) confirmed what he already knew: "that it would not be easy to sell the American people on aiding the British and Dutch in Southeast Asia" if Japan refrained from attacking the United States. Despite public knowledge that slow-moving Japanese troop convoys were at sea in Southeast Asian waters, "only 51 percent of those interviewed thought the United States would go to war in the near future," *even though* in this same poll "69 percent of the respondents believed that America should take steps to keep Japan from growing more powerful – even if that meant war."<sup>2</sup>

But what, specifically, did these numbers mean? Even today it is not clear how many of the 51% believed that Japan would (be

<sup>1</sup> Richard M. Ketchum, *The Borrowed Years 1938-1941: America on the Way to War* (New York: Random House, 1989), p 701.

<sup>2</sup> Ketchum, p 702.

foolish enough to) attack the United States, as opposed to those who believed that Roosevelt would (or should) initiate a war with Japan. Moreover, what exactly did the phrase "if that meant war" mean, and what kind of steps did the 69% have in mind? If the Japanese attacked the Dutch and the British, how many of the 69% would support an American declaration of war against Japan; how many would support just stronger military action (perhaps limited to more aggressive posturing, i.e., signaling) which they believed would undoubtedly escalate to a war *initiated by Japan, not the United States*; and how many supported just stronger diplomatic action which they believed would probably lead to war, but a war *initiated by Japan and not the United States*? It would be safe to assume that those who were prepared to support more aggressive military action would probably readily support an American declaration of war when it came to crunch time. However, if only a third of the 69 percent fell into the stronger diplomatic action, did that mean that less than half of those polled would support an immediate U.S. declaration of war if Japan attacked only the Dutch and the British? <sup>1</sup> Finally, at the moment of truth when the nation stared war in the face, would all 69% readily concede that a Japanese attack against the Dutch and British (a specific real act) automatically equated to Japan "growing more powerful" (a general, abstract concept) and that the real Japanese act required a real and irrevocable American "step" toward or into a very real war? Who really knew?

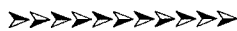
Finally, the President was discouraged by the attitude of his own Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. For months the President had tried to get Hull to agree "that an attack on the East Indies should result in our going to war with Japan" – **and for months he had failed.** Hull had a distinguished career as a Congressman and then a Senator from Tennessee for twenty-six years before he became Secretary of State in 1932. Even in the ninth year of Roosevelt's presidency, this venerable Tennessean still possessed considerable influence on Capitol Hill. In the event of a Japanese attack against the Dutch East Indies, and given the mood of the

---

<sup>1</sup> 23 (1/3 of 69) + 31 (100 - 69) = 54.

American public, the President knew that without Cordell Hull, he "had no hope of persuading Congress to go along with him" <sup>1</sup> – certainly not a Congress that less than a month ago had barely agreed to send armed American merchant ships carrying British and Russian war goods into U-boat infested combat zones in the eastern Atlantic. The equally venerable Henry L. Stimson (Roosevelt's Secretary of War) contemplated the specter of the President being hamstrung by a tepid American public and an obstinate old circuit court judge from Tennessee.<sup>2</sup> "The impasse into which America had thought herself in 1941," Stimson later wrote, "might have continued indefinitely had it been the will of the Axis."

And that's our cue to return to Pearl Harbor, Operation HAWAII and Admiral Yamamoto.



<sup>1</sup> Ketchum, p 702.

<sup>2</sup> Referring to Hull's pre-Congress political career.

## SECTION 2:

### **WHEN IT CAME TO SHAPING THE NATURE OF THE CONFLICT ADMIRAL YAMAMOTO REALLY BLEW IT !!**

#### **Pearl Harbor: Shock, Duplicity and Infamy (And a Great Relief to President Roosevelt).**

That is why, despite the heavy loss in American lives and ships, Japan's surprise attack on the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on Sunday morning, 7 December 1941, came as a great relief to President Roosevelt. Japan did not attack just the Dutch, or just the Dutch and the British. Nor did Japan *first* declare war on the United States and then attack American forces in the Philippines and Guam. From the perspective of the Oval Office on 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the Japanese had unexpectedly committed a profoundly foolish act. That afternoon the President of the United States knew that all Americans now realized that Tokyo had used 'negotiations' in Washington as a ploy to conceal a naval attack force as it steamed across the barren North Pacific to deliver an unprovoked sneak attack against the U.S. Pacific Fleet based in Oahu. Furthermore, that tiny island – having been struck by far-ranging Japanese aircraft carriers – was suddenly perceived by all Americans to be much closer to the West Coast than it was the day before.

On 26 November a special Japanese envoy had arrived in Washington to assist the Japanese Ambassador to the United States in high-level negotiations with Secretary of State Hull. Photographs of Hull flanked by the two smiling Japanese ambassadors, Ambassador Nomura and special envoy Ambassador Kuruu, appeared on the front pages of newspapers all across America. For ten days America read and heard stories about the progress of this new round of negotiations, resumed by Japan – so said Tokyo – to avert war in the Pacific. On that final peaceful

Sunday morning, America believed these negotiations were still underway. And when the news of Pearl Harbor shocked the nation, the image of those smiling Japanese faces intensified the primordial feelings of an enraged nation. (See photo, page 130.)

### "War Without Mercy on a Treacherous Foe."

A popular political cartoon entitled "Throwing In An Extra Charge" captured the mood of America. It shows a muscular and determined American sailor adding an 'extra charge' of powder as he prepares to fire a gun aimed at the Japanese Home Islands. Between the sailor and gun (in the foreground) and Japan (in the background) lies the still-smoldering island of 'Hawaii.' Filling the sky over Japan is the upper half of the Japanese naval ensign, but with a black skull taking the place of the sun. The sailor's tank top reads "U.S Navy," and the extra charge of powder has a large tag which reads "War Without Mercy on a Treacherous Foe." This cartoon was republished in John Dower's War Without Mercy with the following caption:

This cartoon by *The Chicago Tribune's* Carey Orr, published three days after Pearl Harbor, is an unequivocal reminder of how the surprise attack became an indelible symbol of Japanese treachery in the United States, and inspired an immediate commitment to a vengeful war without mercy. Japanese military planners, obsessed with operational issues and misled by disdainful stereotypes of Americans as decadent and egocentric, gave virtually no thought to the psychological consequences of their decision to attack the U.S. fleet.<sup>1</sup>

The first sentence is a telling fact. But the second sentence, while true enough for most Japanese officers, was ironically untrue for the man *most* responsible for Operation HAWAII.

---

<sup>1</sup> John W. Dower, War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), p 181.

**Admiral Yamamoto:  
A Unique Japanese Student of America Who Strongly  
Opposed War Against the United States.**

When it came to significant personal contact with Americans and Europeans, Admiral Yamamoto was the exception among his military and naval peers in Imperial Japan. From April 1919 to July 1921 he was stationed in the United States as a "naval representative and language officer" at the rank of Commander. He was officially registered in a Harvard class for foreign students in America called "English E." In 1923 he toured Europe and America for nine months as a Captain. From the beginning of 1926 to March 1928 he served as Naval attaché at the Japanese embassy in Washington. In 1930 he participated in the London Naval Disarmament Conference as a Rear Admiral. In 1934 (then) Vice Admiral Yamamoto was a member of the Japanese delegation to preliminary talks for the 1936 London Naval Conference.<sup>1</sup>

During this array of assignments and opportunities, Yamamoto exhibited a professional interest in oil and aviation, and a strong personal liking for gambling and "games of chance." But Yamamoto's interest in America exceeded the realm of oil, aviation and gambling; and his education in American culture and society began years before he was a navy Commander. When he was a boy, Yamamoto attended the church of an American missionary, and at the Naval Academy he kept a Bible on his desk in his personal quarters. His biographer, Hiroyuki Agawa, concluded that it was "likely that the lingering effect of [these] Christian teachings remained with him late in life." "As a result of this early and rare exposure to western civilization and his later assignments to America and Europe, he acquired the habit – equally rare at that time – of looking at Japan's situation from an international viewpoint, and was able to develop the ability to make

---

<sup>1</sup> Hiroyuki Agawa, *The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy* (New York: Kodansha International LTD, 1979 [1969]), "Chronology" following title page and pp 73-74.

dispassionate, logical observations." <sup>1</sup> Yamamoto was not a "stubborn smug nationalist" and, during the twenties and thirties, he did not go along with the practice of "belittling Anglo-American strength." He liked America and was, so he believed and said, "well aware of America's real strength and ... national character." <sup>2</sup>

In 1940 Yamamoto, even under the threat of right wing assassins, opposed Japan's entry into the Tripartite Pact with Hitler and Mussolini. Before Yamamoto left the Navy Ministry to become Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet, he and Yonai and Inoue <sup>3</sup> had all agreed that "nothing was to be gained by concluding a military alliance with Germany. To join up with America's most hated foe would benefit the latter alone; Japan would merely increase the risk of a war with America, with no discernible advantage to itself. And such a war was the one thing that the navy wished most to avoid." <sup>4</sup>

Yamamoto's deep-seated opposition to war against the United States is legendary. In a private meeting in September 1940 Prince Konoe was concerned about how the Imperial Navy would fare in a war with America. "'If we are ordered to do it,' said Yamamoto, 'then I can guarantee to put up a tough fight for the first six months, but I have absolutely no confidence as to what would happen if it went on for two or three years. It's too late to do anything about the Tripartite Pact now, but I hope at least that you'll make every effort to avoid war with America.'" <sup>5</sup>

The world will never know what might have been had Yamamoto more openly and forcefully opposed the Tripartite Pact, including the threat of resignation as Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet. He refrained from doing so for domestic political

<sup>1</sup> Agawa, p 75.

<sup>2</sup> Agawa, p 21.

<sup>3</sup> Yonai Mitsumasa was Navy Minister. Inoue Shigeyoshi was Chief of the Naval Affairs Bureau. Yamamoto was then Navy Vice-Minister.

<sup>4</sup> Agawa, pp 12 and 143.

<sup>5</sup> Agawa, p 189.



reasons, principally not wanting to embarrass or jeopardize the stability of the current government or place the Emperor in an awkward situation. Thereafter, he remained in his post where he "found himself obliged to consider how the navy should wage the war with America that was now so fast becoming a real threat. If such a war came, there would be little hope of victory, or even of a favorable and early peace, unless some quite extraordinary measures were resorted to." <sup>1</sup> Unfortunately for Japan, Admiral Yamamoto would select and propound the wrong "extraordinary measures."

### **Admiral Yamamoto: A Tragic Reversion to the Heritage (and Mind-set) of the Samurai Warrior.**

For strategic, theater-strategic and operational reasons which will be discussed later in this chapter, Yamamoto's advice not to go to war with America was cast aside in the fall of 1941 during the planning process for operations designed to seize the Dutch East Indies and the British flanking positions in Malaya and Hong Kong. It was during this time that Admiral Yamamoto transitioned from being a counselor against war with America to being a proponent of a bold surprise attack – **an event which only compounded Japan's unwise decision to initiate hostilities against the United States.** It was a decision which did not conform with the Yamamoto that has been described on the foregoing pages: (1) the young boy who learned Western Christian principles; (2) the young officer who spent a considerable portion of his naval career in assignments and travels in the United States and Europe; (3) the maturing senior officer who developed an objective capability to assess Japan's situation from an international perspective uncorrupted by false nationalistic stereotypes; and (4) the mature Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet who knew that even if her opening military moves were spectacularly successful, **Japan's long-term political-military (grand) strategy was dependent upon the willingness of the United States to conclude a negotiated settlement – a**

---

<sup>1</sup> Agawa, pp 192-193.

negotiated conclusion to a Pacific War *à la* something akin to the treaty signed by Japan and Russia at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, at the end of the 1904-05 Russo-Japanese War. The only logical explanation for Yamamoto's decision – and his insistence, at the threat of resignation – for Operation HAWAII is that, upon feeling himself relieved of the responsibility to think as a statesman, he focused exclusively on the realm of operational possibilities which he approached with the mind-set of a traditional Samurai warrior.

Yamamoto was not the first Japanese naval officer to seriously consider a large-scale raid against Pearl Harbor. For the past twenty years its feasibility, and its risks and rewards, had been considered and debated by students and faculty at the Japanese Navy Staff College. Off and on over the years Yamamoto, too, had dreamed of replicating Admiral Togo's surprise raid on the Russian Pacific Squadron at Port Arthur <sup>1</sup> by conducting a daring raid against a powerful U.S. fleet based at Pearl Harbor. During the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) Admiral Togo had defeated a numerically superior Russian navy by engaging separate parts of it at different times: first, decimating and neutralizing the strong Russian Far Eastern Fleet based at Port Arthur in a surprise night attack with torpedo-laden destroyers; and then (over a year later), annihilating the Russian Baltic Fleet in the Battle of Tsushima (May 1905) after it had made a laborious journey halfway around the world. In the meantime, the Japanese Army had secured Korea and captured Port Arthur. During fleet exercises in December 1940, Admiral Yamamoto decided to apply this exact model against the United States: substitute the U.S. Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor for the Russian Pacific Fleet at Port Arthur; substitute the East Indies, Malaya and the Philippines for Korea and Port Arthur; substitute a great Japanese-American naval battle in the western Central Pacific for the Battle of Tsushima; and substitute American-(British-)Japanese negotiations in late 1942 <sup>2</sup> for the Russo-Japanese negotiations at Portsmouth in 1905.

---

<sup>1</sup> 8 February 1904, the first day of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905.

<sup>2</sup> The location would be anyone's guess.

As Admiral Yamamoto and his staff planned Operation HAWAII they focused on aircraft carriers and battleships. Yamamoto reasoned that destroying the three U.S. Pacific Fleet carriers<sup>1</sup> right off the bat would render American carrier raids on Japan far less likely. Destroying the carriers as well as some of Admiral Kimmel's battleships would also make it literally impossible for the United States to interfere with Japanese operations against the Dutch East Indies, British Malaya and the Philippines during the opening six-month period necessary for their completion. Finally, Yamamoto was concerned – contrary to twenty years of Japanese naval planning and expectations since the end of World War I – that the American Fleet would *not* venture into the western Central Pacific (perhaps for a full year) until after it had been reinforced considerably by ships transferred from the Atlantic and by new ships currently nearing completion. Japan would then be confronted by a stronger and more capable fleet than that possessed by Admiral Kimmel in Hawaii during the fall of 1941. This would be the unwelcome antithesis of the model that the Japanese Navy had successfully employed against Russia thirty-five years ago.

Yamamoto's answer to this 'unwelcome antithesis' was Operation HAWAII and the short-term dynamics he hoped it would produce: (a) the American Pacific Fleet pummeled in its lair; (b) Japan soon in firm control of the East Indies, Malaya and the Philippines; (c) Japanese commanders busily and impressively reinforcing the Empire's outer defensive perimeter in the western Central Pacific; (d) ships, aircraft and submarines of a (by then) demonstrably capable and confident Japanese Combined Fleet preparing for a great naval engagement; and (e) the United States distracted or diverted by the war in Europe. Given these developments, Yamamoto envisioned that the United States would entertain and accept reasonable peace terms.

---

<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Navy possessed six large carriers, the smaller *Ranger* and a small escort carrier on 7 December 1941. On that date the *Saratoga* was on the U.S. West Coast for overhaul and refitting. The *Hornet*, *Wasp* and *Yorktown* were in the Atlantic (broadly defined). Only the *Lexington* and *Enterprise* were in the Hawaiian area.

Unlike many Japanese navy officers (and nearly all army officers) Yamamoto occasionally admonished (almost always in friendly personal conversations) those who denigrated the American "spirit" which he compared favorably to the Japanese "spirit." It is therefore all the more surprising that he made such a remarkable miscalculation regarding how America as a nation would react to his proposed opening gambit. In addition to the theater-strategic and operational rationale behind Operation HAWAII, Admiral Yamamoto hoped that – at the strategic level – it would **break the will of the American people** to fight a long and costly war against Japan. One of his earlier ideas was to launch the carrier planes "500 to 600 miles from Oahu." While this concept offered certain tactical advantages (surprise and safety of the carriers – destroyers and subs would retrieve the pilots after they had ditched in waters west of Oahu – Yamamoto had stressed the moral advantages of this type of attack:

[He] ... presumed, with rare naiveté, that in the face of this type of attack the American people might think the Japanese such a unique and fearless race that it would be useless to fight them. That Yamamoto – Harvard student, former attaché at Washington, associate of American naval officers – should have seriously entertained such an idea is a sharp indication of the mutual underestimation between Japanese and Americans at this time, even between those who should have known better. <sup>1</sup>

Although he soon discarded this one-way attack notion, Yamamoto continued to harbor the belief (hope?) that even without this radical characteristic, Operation HAWAII would still be bold enough, impressive enough, and successful enough to produce a feeling of awe and hopelessness in the American national psyche. He clung to this fanciful rationalization <sup>2</sup> with dogged determination when Operation HAWAII encountered strong Japanese

---

<sup>1</sup> Prange, p 21.

<sup>2</sup> Rationalize: "To devise self-satisfying but incorrect reasons for (one's behavior)." Webster's II.

criticism. The Japanese Naval General Staff, nearly to a man, believed that the plan (involving Japan's six largest aircraft carriers) was too risky. Yamamoto countered that their rejection of Operation HAWAII would leave the initiative in the western Central Pacific to the Americans. Moreover, what if the American Fleet failed to engage in an early 'decisive' naval battle in the western Central Pacific, contrary to the expectations of the Naval General Staff (and in accordance with an article-of-faith assumption which underlay the last twenty years of Japanese naval planning)? What if the Americans waited until their Pacific Fleet was too strong? 'No!' insisted Yamamoto, 'We must seize the initiative at the outset.'

The Naval General Staff retorted: Aside from the considerable risk inherent in Operation HAWAII, what if the American carriers were not at Pearl Harbor or they could not be found by the Japanese strike force? Then what?! Yamamoto's reply went right to the bottom line: It was not a matter of sinking this or that ship or two ships, he reasoned. It was a matter of delivering such a blow in such a manner that it would cripple America's spirit, shatter her sense of smug superiority and destroy her confidence to fight and win a prolonged test of moral and physical strength. That *strategic* objective could be accomplished, he asserted, by destroying half of Kimmel's battleships and inflicting considerable damage to others in a bold attack which demonstrated Japan's capability and resolve – even if the carriers were not found and sunk! Although the progressive-minded officers in both the Japanese and American navies realized that the battleship was being eclipsed by the airplane and its waterborne carrier, Yamamoto contended that the battleship was still the **symbol** of national power and military prowess in the **minds of the American people**. The objective of Operation HAWAII was to alter the American public's perception of relative American and Japanese moral and physical power. In Yamamoto's mind, the destruction of an impressive number of Kimmel's capital ships was the way to achieve that objective. It was Japan's only hope for ultimate victory, he asserted. And if the Naval General Staff would

not approve his plan, then he would resign as Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet. At that point, the Naval General Staff, including the Commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy, backed down.

### **Pearl Harbor: Results and Reasonable Expectations.**

If Americans today know anything about Pearl Harbor, they know that it united America in a national determination to crush the Japanese. When the *Enterprise* task force "returned to a still-smoking Pearl Harbor" on 8 December, the pugnacious Admiral Halsey vowed: "'Before we're through with 'em, the Japanese language will be spoken only in hell.'" <sup>1</sup>

Charles Lindbergh was scheduled to give a major anti-interventionist address in Boston, Massachusetts on 11 December. For a moment he thought he might still be able to make a case for not intervening against Hitler, and that Pearl Harbor only strengthened (not weakened) that argument. But given the national patriotic frenzy, he soon thought better of it and canceled. To carry on an intellectual argument against intervention in the war in Europe in such an emotionally charged atmosphere would have been utter folly. Literally overnight, Operation HAWAII put the American isolationists out of business. It also destroyed any chance that Japan's war against the United States would end in a negotiated settlement favorable to Japanese national interests.

### **"At Precisely 1 p.m. Washington Time" – Putting a Super-Thin American Veneer on a Traditional Japanese Practice.**

Late Saturday, 6 December, the Japanese Embassy in Washington received the last part of a 14-part diplomatic note from

<sup>1</sup> Rear Admiral Edwin T. Layton, USN (Ret.), "And I Was There": Pearl Harbor and Midway – Breaking The Secrets (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), p 318.

Tokyo. It read: "The Japanese Government regrets to have to notify hereby the American Government that in view of the attitude of the American Government [on China, Indochina and other issues] it cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations." Ambassador Nomura was instructed to deliver the note the next day to Secretary of State Hull at **precisely** 1 p.m. Washington time.<sup>1</sup>

"At precisely 1 p.m." because the attack at Pearl Harbor was scheduled for roughly 8:00 a.m. Oahu time, which was 1:30 p.m. Washington time. According to Samurai tradition it was not honorable to conduct a sneak attack against an unwary enemy who was given no time at all to react. A warrior, for example, who had deftly sneaked into his opponent's bedroom to slay him in the middle of the night was obligated to shout a warning cry (Aieeyutt!) a second before delivering a fatal blow – just time enough to allow the 'gods' to intervene if they desired (i.e., time for a miraculous response by the intended victim to thwart the blow). That single second was the difference between honor and dishonor. In the mind of Admiral Yamamoto the 30 short minutes between 1:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. was that split second equivalent. Time enough, opportunity enough, for Secretary of State Hull to realize that the note meant war; perhaps even time enough for Hull to warn the President and the U.S. War Department. But not time enough for them to warn American forces in the Pacific or for those forces to react upon receipt of a warning.

On the morning of 7 December the situation at the Japanese Embassy in Washington was chaotic. The staff was busily destroying secret papers and devices and engaged in related other about-to-go-to-war activities. The situation was compounded by "Tokyo's instructions not to use an ordinary typist" in preparing the note for Hull, and it took much longer for a "diplomatic secretary" to "slowly peck ... his way through the lengthy message." Nomura therefore requested that his meeting with Hull be postponed forty-five minutes, which it was. When Nomura and Kurusu finally

---

<sup>1</sup> Prange, p 485.

delivered Tokyo's note to Hull at 1:55 p.m. (they were ten minutes late even for the 1:45 appointment), the attack at Pearl Harbor had already taken place (which Hull knew but Nomura did not).<sup>1</sup>

There are two different versions of how Yamamoto reacted when he first learned (or realized) that Nomura was 55 minutes late. According to Gordon Prange (At Dawn We Slept):

... a special worry nagged at him. An honorable man, he had insisted that Japan's final diplomatic note be delivered before the strike on Pearl Harbor began. He delineated sharply between 'a strategic surprise attack' and 'a political sneak attack.' After the event, when [radio] broadcasts [from the United States] castigating Japan for the 'sneak attack' began to come in, Yamamoto is said to have called for an inquiry. A subsequent probe revealed that the note transmitted by the fourteen-part message of December 6-7 had been delivered to the State Department, but not exactly when. This worried Yamamoto, and he seemed 'to have an unpleasant feeling about it.' Apparently no one told him that fifty-five minutes [*sic.*<sup>2</sup>] had elapsed between the commencement of hostilities and official submission of the final note to Hull.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Layton, p 309. When Kurusu arrived in Washington in early November to "assist" Nomura in his negotiations, he knew that Tokyo had already resolved to decide in late November to go to war against **the United States** (and not just the Dutch and British) in early December assuming that the negotiations would fail. Although Kurusu did not know about Operation HAWAII, he did know that the Japanese Government was resigned to the **likelihood** of a diplomatic failure, and that some parties in Tokyo welcomed that outcome. Thus Kurusu's efforts in Washington were less sincere and purposeful than were those of Nomura, who – being kept in the dark until the very end – did his best to reach some kind of settlement.

<sup>2</sup> Twenty-five minutes. The note was supposed to be delivered thirty minutes before the attack. (55 - 30 = 25.) Fifty-five minutes late, but only twenty-five minutes after the start of hostilities (in fact, twenty-seven minutes, because the attack occurred at 7:58 a.m. at Pearl Harbor, which was 1:28 p.m. in Washington. See below, page 119 for time differences, and page 123 for the time of the attack.

<sup>3</sup> Prange, p 580.



The popular movie *Tora, Tora, Tora* (based *in part* on Prange's At Dawn We Slept) offered a different version of this story:

[First Scene: Admiral Yamamoto with his staff somewhere in the Inland Sea, sometime close to 1 p.m. Washington time EST.]

Yamamoto: "Our ultimatum should be delivered in Washington before the attack begins. I hope everything is on schedule."

A Junior Officer: "Don't worry, sir. The Emperor insists that we follow the rules of the Geneva Convention. Our declaration of war will be delivered at 1:00 p.m. ... 30 minutes before the attack begins."

Yamamoto: nods in thoughtful silence. [End scene.]

[Second Scene: Admiral Yamamoto with his staff and other naval officers sometime after the attack. They have just listened to the Japanese radio announcement of the attack.]

Yamamoto: "I had intended to deal a fatal blow to the American fleet by attacking Pearl Harbor immediately after Japan's official declaration of war. But according to the American radio, Pearl Harbor was attacked fifty-five [*sic.*<sup>1</sup>] minutes before our ultimatum was delivered in Washington. **I can't imagine anything that would infuriate the Americans more. I fear all we have done is to awaken a sleeping giant and fill him with a terrible resolve.**"

Those assembled: Sat in silence as Yamamoto left the room. [End scene.]

Regardless of which version is more accurate, both convey the Admiral's concern about the final note being delivered late. Yet, practically speaking, how much difference would forty-five minutes to an hour have made to Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public from

---

<sup>1</sup> Again, 25 minutes. (See footnote number 2 on the previous page.)

Peoria, Illinois – **his intended target audience?** Were ordinary Americans able to make the distinction between a political and a strategic warning? And even if *they* could distinguish the difference, would it have mattered to them? Hmm. Let's see. How many days must it have taken for the Japanese attack force to sail all the way from Japan to Pearl Harbor? And what is ten or eleven **days** compared to one hour?! Furthermore, the fourteenth part of the Japanese note "was not a formal declaration of war; it did not even rupture diplomatic relations. It merely broke off the discussions." <sup>1</sup> Virtually all Americans scoffed at Tokyo's idea of a declaration of war. And they would have derided Yamamoto's notion of a "political warning," whether Nomura had been on time or not. In the final analysis, the fine points of Yamamoto's logic regarding the timing of the so-called "warning" and the attack were rationalized figments of his imagination.

Was Admiral Yamamoto genuinely unable to foresee this sort of reaction – regardless of "precisely" when the note was delivered? Given his years of duty, travel, study and observation in America and considerable exposure to Americans, how could he have made such a tragic miscalculation, and with such confidence and determination? <sup>2</sup> For part of the answer we need to return to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.

#### **Drawing Comforting (But False) Parallels Between Russia in 1904-1905 and the United States in 1941.**

Yamamoto compared Operation HAWAII to Admiral Togo's surprise attack on the Russian Pacific Fleet at Port Arthur at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. Consider the following particulars (drawn from Stephan Howarth, The Fighting Ships of the Rising Sun ...):

(a) "At 11 p.m. on 8 February the [Russian] Viceroy's Chief of Staff in Port Arthur received a telegram from St. Petersburg with

---

<sup>1</sup> Prange, p 485.

<sup>2</sup> Referring to his threat to resign as Commander in Chief, Combined Fleet, if the General Naval Staff did not approve Operation HAWAII.

the comforting news that negotiations were going well – 'any fear of armed conflict is mere fancy.'"

(b) Twenty miles away, steaming at 13 knots in a dark sea, ten Japanese destroyers closed on Port Arthur. "[T]he sight in front of them was a raider's dream. All the ships except one in the roadstead outside the harbour were lit up; 'the lighthouse situated between the outer and inner roadsteads was throwing out its brilliant beams; the town was also completely lit up ... those poor devils, then, had no presentiment, and apparently were wrapped in peaceful slumber.'" In the ensuing surprise attack, three of the seven Russian battleships were struck by torpedoes.

(c) The Russian Government responded quickly by dispatching thousands of troops eastward across the long, rickety trans-Siberian railroad, and the typical Russian soldier fought well enough. On the other hand, the shock of Port Arthur did **not** unite the Russian people and fill them with a spirit of resolve and vengeance; and the skill and audacity displayed by the Japanese Navy effectively intimidated the senior commanders of the Russian Far Eastern Fleet for the duration of the war.

(d) World reaction to the surprise attack varied greatly. "In America, opinions ranged from weak protests to cautious admiration; in Britain it was seen as daring and dashing, 'destined to take a place of honour in naval annals.'" Not surprisingly, many Frenchmen – France had an alliance with Russia, England an alliance with Japan – "denounced the attack as treacherous, saying that nothing better could be expected from an ally of 'perfidious Albion.'" "Rubbish, said *The [London] Times'* leading article – 'Our ally put her navy in motion with a promptness and courage that exhorted the admiration of the world, and her action in doing so before war had been formally declared, so far from being an international solecism, is in accordance with the prevailing practice of most wars in modern times.'"

(e) In St. Petersburg, Tsar Nicholas wrote in his diary that Japan had attacked "'without a declaration of war. May God come to our aid.'" But in Port Arthur, one Russian admiral expressed a sentiment shared by many of Japan's leaders in late 1941: "[T]he **question of who started it was immaterial. 'War does not**

**always begin with the firing of guns,' said [the] Russian admiral. 'In my opinion the war began long ago.'"**<sup>1</sup>

In 1941 Yamamoto was encouraged by this list of particulars (although he may have personally, and silently, regretted the absence of a 'political warning' to Russia before the attack on Port Arthur). But unfortunately for him and Japan, Imperial Russia in 1904 differed radically from the United States in 1941. And Yamamoto and other Japanese leaders would have been wise not to take too much inference or comfort from the sympathetic reactions of some Americans and a great many British to Japan's surprise attack in 1904 without a declaration of war. Personal perceptions always depend on personal points of view. In 1904 a nation of isolated Englishmen were sticking up for their spunky new ally, and most of the sympathetic American remarks probably originated among military and upper crust social circles which placed a premium on skill and audacity, and harbored little good will for Tsarist Russia. Surely these same Englishmen and Americans would have sung a different tune had they been the victims instead of the Russians (and especially while negotiations were still going on).

The United States was not Russia and not Japan. Nor had the United States remained unchanged since the gilded days of 1904. In Japan, the precise timing of the attack at Oahu in relation to the delivery of Tokyo's final diplomatic note in Washington conformed fully to the honorable tradition of the Samurai warrior. But did Yamamoto really believe that thirty minutes would be enough to satisfy American sensibilities for fair play in 1941? If he did, the artificial veneer which he applied to an ingrained Japanese concept was too thin to be seen, much less appreciated, by the American public.

---

<sup>1</sup> Stephan Howarth, The Fighting Ships of the Rising Sun: The Drama of the Imperial Japanese Navy 1895-1954 (New York: Atheneum, 1983). For (a), (b) and (c) see pp 64-65; for (d) and (e) see pp 67-68. (Last sentence, emphasis added.)

### **Can Operation HAWAII be Attributed to a Misreading of the Character of the American Isolationists?**

Did Yamamoto completely misread the character of the typical American isolationist? What, for instance, did he think about that segment of American society which expressed reluctance to fight Japan – after the Nanking incident, after the *Panay* incident, after four years of war against China, after Tokyo had signed the Tripartite Pact with Hitler in 1940, after Japan had moved into northern French Indochina and then finally southern Indochina in July 1941? Did he think that even though a great percentage of that segment of American society abhorred these Japanese actions, they abhorred even more the specter of American boys being killed in a Pacific war to defend European colonies or Asiatic peoples or 'high moral principles' halfway around the world? A war at the end of which there would still be no guarantees that the region would remain trouble free (i.e., a variant of the 'what did we really get for our sacrifices in World War I?'). Or, did he think these Americans were too materialistic, self-absorbed and selfish? And/or did he believe that they did not want to fight Japan partly because they, too, perceived what the Japanese people took for granted – that the United States was not justified in pressuring Japan to withdraw from (first) Indochina and (then) China? (Thus paralleling the Russian Admiral's remark above in paragraph [e], pages 78-79.) And/or did he believe that many conservative and/or Republican isolationists were so politically incensed at their New Deal (Liberal and Democrat) President that there would be 'no way in Hell' that they would allow their sons to fight for *'that man's dubious war'* against faraway Japan?

Did Yamamoto conclude that many isolationists and rabid Roosevelt-haters would still balk at an all-out, knock-down, drag-out war with a Japan that they perceived had been *'backed into a corner'* by 'that man in the White House' (the oil "embargo" had been in effect since July 1941); (a Japan) that they perceived had *taken the care* to make a *gesture* of a western-style declaration

of war; and (a Japan) that had, in Operation HAWAII, demonstrated its national resolve and military prowess, thereby shattering the comforting and arrogant illusion of American superiority? If Yamamoto's understanding of American history and culture were more superficial than we are commonly led to believe, it would have been easy (even natural) for him to have reached some or all of these conclusions.

Was his understanding more superficial? Or was it a case of his otherwise relatively sophisticated understanding of American society being corrupted by his own culture? More to the point, regardless of his cultural predilections and bias, when Yamamoto began to consider the feasibility and strategic merits of Operation HAWAII in 1940, did he also consider making a serious, concerted and professional effort (with the aid of low-profile researchers) to investigate, for example, particular events in American history that might have indicated how America was likely to react to the timing, nature and hoped-for physical results of a Sunday morning surprise attack on the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor?

**(Know Your Enemy)**

**The Maine, the Alamo and Bunker Hill ...**

Turning first to American history, let's start with the *Maine* in 1898, a surprise duplicitous act of Spanish treachery – or so it was believed by many Americans at the time. Was America impressed by this display of Spanish skill? Did Americans across the land pause to reflect on the fact that the United States Navy suddenly had one less battleship with which to fight the Spanish? And – in the aftermath of the *Maine* incident – did the vast majority of American citizens apply overwhelming pressure on their political leaders in Washington to refrain from going to war with Spain and to instead settle American concerns regarding the "harsh" Spanish administration in Cuba via negotiations with Madrid? To the contrary, the rallying cry "Remember the Maine!" was shouted from coast to coast by millions of Americans wanting to avenge the *Maine's* 'murdered' crew and liberate Cuba from the clutches of

Spanish tyranny. Moreover, in 1941 this chapter of American history was not nearly as dim and distant and irrelevant to Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public (and their parents) as it is today in 1998.

How about the Alamo? The slaughter (with a bit of struggle) by Santa Anna's 4,000-man army of 180-odd defenders of a small mission in San Antonio, Texas really struck fear into the hearts of those rebellious Texans, didn't it? Why, they were so intimidated by this impressive Mexican feat of arms (and the nearly simultaneous, lackluster performance of Fanin's 500-man army which was supposed to reinforce the Alamo) that Sam Houston and his men, upon sober reflection, decided to go home and foreswear notions of Texas independence. Right? Wrong! But that was an episode in the history of Texas, not America; which was therefore illustrative of the character of Texans, not Americans in general. (*"Aaaant! Wrong again. Would you like to try for door number three ...?"*)

How about the Battle of Bunker Hill? When the better-trained, better-equipped, better-led (strictly from a professional point of view) and better-organized British Redcoats fearlessly charged up that long hill and drove that ragtag band of rebel militia amateurs from their defensive positions, the great majority of "Americans" (excuse me, "colonialists") from Maine to Georgia took notice, thought better of their chances against the mighty British Empire, and talked sense into the heads of their radical political leaders who had gotten them into such a fix in the first place. Right? *Wrong again!*

**(Know Your Enemy)**

**... and the Zimmermann Telegram affair in 1917.**

OK. Enough fun. Let's get really serious now and consider the "Zimmermann Telegram" episode in 1917. Since a German U-boat had sunk the *Lusitania* in April 1915 with the loss of 1,198 lives, including 128 Americans, America had debated the pros and cons of actively entering World War I on the side of the Allies.

Despite the general perception that the Germans (in Europe) were rather nasty fellows,<sup>1</sup> as late as January 1917 most Americans believed that the United States should stay out of the war in Europe. This was understandably the opinion of the large German-American and Irish-American communities.<sup>2</sup> For its part, the (even larger) English-American community was evenly divided between entering the war on the side of Britain and remaining neutral. Even though he had broken off diplomatic relations with Germany on 3 February 1917, President Woodrow Wilson continued to reflect the mood of the nation and did not seriously entertain asking Congress for a declaration of war on Germany – that is, until the advent of the "Zimmermann Telegram."

The Zimmermann Telegram (or Note) was a coded message, dated 19 January 1917, sent by the German Foreign Secretary, Alfred Zimmermann, to the German Ambassador in Mexico (von Eckhardt). It instructed von Eckhardt to propose an alliance with Mexico if (repeat "if") the United States declared war on Germany. Germany and Mexico would then make war and peace together. Berlin promised "generous financial support" and it was "understood that Mexico [was] to reconquer the lost territory in New Mexico, Texas, and Arizona." Mexico would also urge Japan to switch to Germany's side. This message, sent by a transatlantic cable which had a land link (connection) in southern England, was intercepted and **decoded** by British naval intelligence. On 24 February a copy was given to Walter Page, the U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, who immediately transmitted it to the State Department in Washington. On 1 March it was released to the American press.

---

<sup>1</sup> A sentiment fueled initially by the German violation of Belgian neutrality in 1914 and later by partially-true British propaganda about rough German treatment of Belgian civilians – and this was on top of some negative perceptions of the impetuous young Kaiser Bill and German militarism in general.

<sup>2</sup> neither of whom mounted any serious political campaign for the United States to side *with Germany*.



Some Americans immediately accepted it as genuine. Others, not believing the Germans could be so reckless or foolish, thought it was a British trick – just one more step in their propaganda war to get the United States into the war. A small group of ardently pacific (and skeptical) senators on Capitol Hill demanded that the President *prove* to the nation that the telegram was genuine. There were doubts even among "the distinguished gentlemen of the Round Table Dining Club, a gathering of the intellectual cream skimmed off the social and professional elite of New York." When they discussed the "Zimmermann sensation" on 2 March, Joseph H. Choate, a former Ambassador to England and "as warm an Anglophile [!] as any in America," openly expressed his belief that "the Zimmermann note was a forgery" – and his opinion was "practically unanimously [shared] by the whole bunch."<sup>2</sup>

"When such a group as the Round Table was incredulous," wrote Barbara Tuchman, "it was no wonder the [Wilson] Cabinet was worried about the problem that had haunted the telegram from the beginning – how to authenticate it."<sup>3</sup> The Mexicans, the Japanese and von Eckhardt had all denied the telegram; and if Zimmermann himself also challenged the United States to prove its authenticity, "the American government, restricted by its pledge of secrecy to Great Britain, would be unable to do it. The Cabinet could only agree to assert emphatically that they possessed conclusive evidence."<sup>4</sup>

Then, instead of also denying it at a press conference in Berlin the next morning, Arthur Zimmermann unbelievably admitted the whole thing. When prompted by a friendly German-American correspondent in Berlin ("Of course Your Excellency will deny this story"), the Foreign Secretary replied, "I *cannot* deny it. It is

---

<sup>1</sup> phile (pro), phobe (against); Anglophile (pro-British), Germanophobe (anti-German).

<sup>2</sup> Barbara W. Tuchman, The Zimmermann Telegram (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966 [1958]), p 181.

<sup>3</sup> Tuchman, p 182.

<sup>4</sup> Tuchman, p 183.

true." The egotistical Zimmermann simply did not want to look foolish in the eyes of British and American officials who (he knew) obviously knew the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Zimmermann's admission shattered the indifference with which three-quarters of the United States had regarded the war until that moment. ... Back in 1915 the *Lusitania* had shocked the nation, but that shock was humanitarian, not personal. This was different. This was Germany proposing to attack the United States, conspiring with Germany's neighbor to snatch American territory; worse, conspiring to set an Oriental foe upon America's back. This was a direct threat upon the body of America, which most Americans never dreamed was a German intention. It penetrated to the midpoint of the continent, even to Omaha, Nebraska, a thousand miles from either ocean and a thousand miles from Mexico. 'The issue shifts,' soberly stated the Omaha *World Herald*, 'from Germany against Great Britain to Germany against the United States.'<sup>2</sup>

"Torpedoings of merchant ships and loss of noncombatant lives, including American," wrote Barbara Tuchman, "convinced Americans of German frightfulness but not of German hostility to themselves." Returning to 1941 and Admiral Yamamoto, let's substitute the even more dramatic and threatening Operation HAWAII for the Zimmermann telegram. Let's substitute the "Rape of Nanking" and related incidents in China for the torpedoing of the *Lusitania*. And let's substitute "Japanese frightfulness but not of Japanese hostility" for "German frightfulness but not of German hostility." The parallels are breathtaking!

And in 1917 it was not just the Omaha *World Herald*. It was also the Chicago *Tribune*, the Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, the Oshkosh *Northwestern*, and the Detroit *Times*. "In Minneapolis, where large numbers of [German-Americans] were concentrated,

---

<sup>1</sup> Tuchman, p 183.

<sup>2</sup> Tuchman, p 184.

the *Journal* admitted it was no longer possible for German-Americans to be loyal to both their native and their adopted countries...." "Midwest sentiment paled beside the outraged indignation of the Pacific Coast and the roar that came out of Texas. ... The El Paso *Times* grew purple at the spectacle of Prussian militarism 'writhing in the slime of intrigue,' and out in California the Sacramento *Bee* echoed its outrage at Germany's 'treacherous enmity, underhanded, nasty intriguing.'" "The Springfield (Massachusetts) *Republican* said that nothing else but this threat of hostile action to American territory could have so solidified the American people, and the Los Angeles *Tribune* said it extinguished all differences." <sup>1</sup> Citations from another 250 newspapers would merely repeat these refrains.

By the time President Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war on 2 April 1917, the great majority of the nation was ready and expectant. On 4 April the Senate voted 82-6; two days later the House vote was 373-50.

True, Barbara Tuchman's book was not published until 1958. But in the spring of 1917 the story of the Zimmermann telegram was front-page news from coast to coast for a full month. In 1940 or 1941 any Japanese researcher (or say, 'visiting scholar') in America had access to many of the original newspapers which had been preserved in various newspaper and academic research archives across the nation (the same ones used by Tuchman to research her book in the 1950's). If the story of the Zimmermann Telegram had been researched and relayed discretely in 1940 or 1941 to a certain behind-the-scenes sponsor, it might have made his blood turn cold – or, turn even colder had he simultaneously read and pondered Carl Sandburg's account of the Northern popular reaction to the firing on Fort Sumter by the Confederate States of America in April 1861.

---

<sup>1</sup> Tuchman, pp 185-186.

**(Know Your Enemy)**

**Carl Sandburg, Fort Sumter and Admiral Yamamoto.**

It is said that Yamamoto greatly admired President Abraham Lincoln. When a junior assistant once asked the Admiral to recommend the biography of some famous American that he could read to improve his English, Yamamoto reached without hesitation for his personal copy of Carl Sandburg's biography of Lincoln, Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years – which he had bought and read during his last tour in America – and handed it to the young officer. "Here. I like Lincoln. I think he's great not just as an American, but as a human being."<sup>1</sup> But was Yamamoto also familiar with, or even aware of, Sandburg's companion volume, Abraham Lincoln: The War Years, which was published in 1936? And if not, why not? Surely by 1940 he could have acquired a personal copy of a book by his favorite American author, about his favorite American historical personality, and which obviously contained an account of the *beginning* of the great American Civil War – *a subject directly relevant to Operation HAWAII*.

What would Sandburg's The War Years have revealed to Admiral Yamamoto about Lincoln, America and the Confederate firing on Fort Sumter at 4:30 a.m. on 12 April 1861? He would have read about President Lincoln's acute political dilemma. In his inaugural address in March 1861 – well after seven Southern states had already seceded from the Union – President Lincoln told those states, "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. **You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors.**"<sup>2</sup> Should war break out, Sandburg explained, President Lincoln realized that Northern popular support for the Union war effort would be influenced significantly by **how** the war started.

---

<sup>1</sup> Agawa, p 21.

<sup>2</sup> Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The War Years (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1937 [1936]), p 135. (Emphasis added.)

**Lincoln knew**, Sandburg continued, that if war could not be avoided **it was critically important that the Confederacy fire the first shot**. Proceeding carefully, he sent a personal note (via a War Department clerk) to Governor Pickens of South Carolina, informing him that "an attempt will be made to supply Fort Sumter [a fort still under Federal control in Charleston harbor] with provisions only; and that if such an attempt be not resisted, no effort to throw in men, arms, or ammunition will be made without further notice, or in case of attack upon the fort."<sup>1</sup> Lincoln knew that this message would be forwarded quickly to the newly established Confederate Government at Montgomery, Alabama. And he was right.

In Montgomery, Confederate President Jefferson Davis called his advisers into session to consider Lincoln's message to Governor Pickens.

Robert Toombs, Secretary of State, read Lincoln's letter, and said, 'The firing on that fort will inaugurate a civil war greater than any the world has yet seen ...' Toombs [then] paced back and forth with his hands behind him, his head lowered in thought. After a time he gave his opinion on the proposed bombardment of Sumter: 'Mr. President, **at this time it is suicide, murder, and you will lose us every friend [in] the North**. You will wantonly strike a hornet's nest which extends from mountains to ocean; **legions, now quiet, will swarm out and sting us to death. It is unnecessary; it puts us in the wrong; it is fatal.**'<sup>2</sup>

Davis decided otherwise, and instructed the commander of Confederate forces at Charleston to "demand [the fort's] evacuation, and if this is refused, proceed, in such manner as you may determine, to reduce it."<sup>3</sup> The Confederacy thus fired the

---

<sup>1</sup> Sandburg, p 205.

<sup>2</sup> Sandburg, p 206. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>3</sup> Sandburg, p 206.

first shot at 4:30 a.m. on 12 April 1861. After a thirty-hour bombardment, Major Anderson [Sumter's commander] surrendered his battered fort and tiny garrison.

"Now came the day of April 15, 1861," wrote Sandburg:

What happened on that day was referred to as the Uprising of the People. Mass action ruled. The people swarmed onto the streets, into public squares, into meeting-halls and churches. The shooting of the Stars and Stripes off the Sumter flagstaff – and the Lincoln proclamation [calling for troops] – acted as a vast magnet on a national multitude. The action was compared to Ezekiel's vision of the prophet's voice calling across a silent valley when the dry bones arose and walked, clothed with new flesh. It was likened to the mystic hosts that arose to go fight for the tomb of Christ when Peter the Hermit called for Crusaders.

In a thousand cities, towns and villages the fever of hate, exaltation, speech, action, followed a similar course.... Newspapers [across the Union echoed] the war song of the *Chicago Tribune*: "There is a republic! The gates of Janus are open; the storm is on us. Let the cry be, "The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon!" with the instruction, "From this hour let no Northern man or woman tolerate in his or her presence the utterance of a word of treason," and the warning: "We say to the Tories and lickspittles in this community, a patient and reluctant, but at last an outraged and maddened people will no longer endure your hissing. You must keep your venom sealed or go down!"<sup>1</sup>

And so it was across the land.

Some historians claim that Lincoln had cleverly "set a trap to incite the South to fire the first shot." If so, concluded Peter J. Parish forty years after Sandburg, "the Southern leadership surely

---

<sup>1</sup> Sandburg, p 215.

fell headlong into it by bombarding Fort Sumter even before the relief expedition had arrived." "Most northerners wanted to save the Union," Parish continued, "but many had not squarely faced the issue of using force against their separated brethren **until the guns in Charleston harbour decided the matter for them.**"<sup>1</sup>

**(Know Your Enemy)  
Americans Like to Believe They Fight "Just Wars" and  
Moral Crusades – and that They Have No Other Choice.**

Even a cursory reading of American history in 1940-41 would have indicated that Americans like to believe (in fact, need to believe) that American wars are fought for high moral principles. In April 1861 the vast multitudes of Americans (on both sides) believed they were going to war for a noble cause – defense of the Union or the right to leave it. A derivative, concurrent phenomenon, by no means limited to Americans, is the perception and belief that because our side is so obviously in the right, the enemy *must* realize that *they* are in the wrong and that therefore their moral strength and will to fight *must* be inferior to our own. In 1861, wrote Parish, "Few people on either side had expected such a will to fight in the other."<sup>2</sup>

Americans also like (and need) to believe that they have been pushed into a fight and that their government did everything reasonable to avoid it. America needs to enter a war with a clear conscience. Americans turn many wars into moral crusades. And, at least through World War II, Americans have taken it on faith THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL PREVAIL – WITH THE HELP OF ALMIGHTY GOD – NO MATTER WHAT THE ODDS MAY SEEM. For many Americans war has traditionally been an emotional, in contrast to an intellectual, decision. In many respects it resembles schoolyard dynamics *writ large*: (1) Two boys, angry at each other for some reason and posturing for a fight, dare each other to step over the line first or to throw the first punch, so as to obtain

<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Parish, The American Civil War (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986 paperback edition [1975]), p 80.

<sup>2</sup> Parish, p 80.

for themselves that extra edge and inner strength which comes from knowing (and knowing that others know) that the fight was thrust upon you. (2) A boy who is normally intimidated by a schoolyard bully suddenly turns on him in a wing-ding, fist-and-dirt-flying brawl. Why? Perhaps the bully insulted his girlfriend or mother, or perhaps the bully hit him in the back with his fist or a small stone as he attempted to walk away. An example of this second case occurred in the classic movie *A Christmas Story* when the main character, in a sudden rage of righteous fury, gave the neighborhood bully a really good shellacking. When it comes to courage and determination, 'being right' and 'having the fight thrust upon you' are two significant force multipliers – in our schoolyards and in our nation's wars.

Regarding the strength of our national religious heritage and beliefs as they existed before Pearl Harbor, how could a man who had attended the church of an American missionary when he was a boy, who had kept a Bible on his desk at the Japanese Naval Academy, who had lived roughly three years in America, and whose favorite American was Abraham Lincoln NOT KNOW (or at least not be able to make a better educated guess as to) how America would likely react to a surprise attack against *peaceful* American sailors, airmen and soldiers in a place far away from Japan on a SUNDAY morning?

American history, culture and religion. To Americans and foreigners alike they collectively shouted a clear warning in 1940-41: Do not take foolish actions which arouse the passions of Americans against you, especially when millions of Americans already despise you. Do not commit the first overt act, especially when the American people are unsure or deeply divided about going to war. Do not make it easy for the American proponents of war to paint you as the aggressor. And – **no matter how large the tactical or operational advantage to be gained** – do not recklessly commit acts which will be perceived as being treacherous, barbarous, uncivilized and unchristian in the eyes of millions of Americans.



In the aftermath of Operation HAWAII the American people were indeed amazed that Japanese naval forces were capable of projecting power that far across the Pacific; and they readily perceived that the Japanese could just as easily have attacked Seattle or San Francisco instead of Pearl Harbor. This was a reaction which Yamamoto had anticipated and desired. But instead of being cowed and intimidated by that power, America instead became determined to wipe out its source. That was a reaction which Yamamoto had not anticipated and did not desire. Ironically, Operation HAWAII turned out to be *too* impressive.

**(Know Your Enemy)**

**It is Seductively Easy to See What One Wants to See  
or What One Expects to See.**

When looking at another country, nation, culture and society, it is natural to see either what you expect to see, or what you want or need to see. If you want or need to see an enemy society whose leaders are likely to be intimidated by your military power and your resolve to use it, then that is what you will be predisposed to see. If you want or need to see an enemy whose population is divided and/or irresolute, then *that* is what you will be predisposed to see. Or, if you need to see an enemy whose people do not perceive their cause as being just. Cultural bias and various degrees of ethnocentrism make it impossible to examine alien cultures and social landscapes with objectivity. If Yamamoto *had* pondered the Fort Sumter crisis and found its implications disturbing, would he have then looked beyond 1861 to find comfort in the situation which existed in the summer of 1864, when – despite the twin Union victories of Gettysburg and Vicksburg in 1863 – war weariness, pessimism and depression were so widespread among the Northern people that Lincoln himself (and many others) doubted he would be reelected in November? If Admiral Yamamoto had compared the 1864 situation with the political dynamics that he hoped would occur in the impending war against the United States, would he have realized that in 1864 many Northerners still regarded "white"

Southerners as their American brothers and wanted (perhaps even in 1861 but certainly in 1864 after three years of death and destruction) to just preserve the Union instead of also freeing the slaves? And if he realized that, would he have then appreciated how great the difference was between Northerners thinking about their "white" Southern American brothers in 1864 and Americans thinking about the "yellow" oriental Japanese barbarians in 1942 or 1943?

**O.K. But what if Tokyo Knew in Advance about a 'Secret' Roosevelt Pledge to Churchill (given at Argentinia) that America would Support the British in case of a Japanese Attack against Them and the Dutch?**

During the middle of August 1941 President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the American and British Chiefs of Staff met for several days during the Argentinia Conference<sup>1</sup> on board the cruiser *Augusta* and the British battleship *Prince of Wales* in Placentia Bay on the southern coast of Newfoundland. Ostensibly, they met to discuss U-boats in the Atlantic, Lend-Lease aid and other measures relating to the war in Europe. The only publicly announced result of the conference was the Atlantic Charter declaration which applied Roosevelt's New Deal "Four Freedoms" to the international scene.

However, historians have known for some time that at least half of the so-called 'Atlantic' Conference was devoted to the situation in the Far East, and that the conferees reached a "far-reaching military agreement ... which was not committed to writing." There is an array of evidence supporting this conclusion. For example:

☐ On Monday, 11 August, Admiral Harold Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, USN, told a combined meeting on board the *Prince of Wales*: "We are now trying to build up the defense of the Philippines as a direct defense of the Indian Ocean and Singapore."

<sup>1</sup> Commonly called the "Atlantic Conference."

☑ On 14 August, General Henry (Hap) Arnold, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Air Forces, wrote in his diary that he "believed firmly that the [American and British] military leaders were in total accord on 'the handling of Japan if that nation moved farther southward.'"

☑ On 3 November, during a session of the Joint U.S. Army-Navy Board, Admiral Stark stated: "In the case of a Japanese attack against either the Philippines or British or Dutch possessions, the United States *should* resist the attack." The records of the Joint Board indicate "that the board members were making their plans on the *assumption* that America would be at war if Japan attacked the British, but not United States, territory first."

☑ On 17 January 1942, Prime Minister Churchill "felt obliged to allude to the [unwritten] agreement [reached at Argentia] in defending himself against a censure motion in the House of Commons. To the charge that Britain's colonies in the Far East had been inadequately guarded, Churchill asserted he had taken care that Britain 'should not be exposed single-handed to the Japanese onslaught.'" <sup>1</sup> Whether in preparation to support the

---

<sup>1</sup> Rear Admiral Edwin T. Layton, USN (Ret.), "And I Was There": Pearl Harbor and Midway – Breaking The Secrets (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985): 11 Aug, Stark, p 132; 14 Aug, Arnold, p 133; 3 Nov, Stark, p 135; records indicate, p 134; 17 Jan, Churchill, p 135. (Although I have cited this book for references to the Argentia Conference and the count-down to Pearl Harbor, the book as a whole should be read with caution. The treatment of the Pearl Harbor affair, for example, is just another stale contribution to the litany: 'it was all Washington's fault' that Kimmel was caught by surprise on 7 December. Although Layton was Kimmel's chief intelligence officer, all he (Layton) talks about in this book is this or that decrypted message which Washington failed to forward to the Pacific commanders. Nowhere does Layton indicate any self-awareness that it is an obligation of an "intelligence officer" to provide his commander with an educated insight into the mind of his opponent. Before 7 December Layton (and Kimmel for that matter) should have known (a) that Yamamoto was a bold gambler, and (b) that Japan had initiated her last three wars (against China, Russia, and German possessions in China and the Pacific in WWI) by conducting surprise attacks. During the days before 7 December 1941, Layton should have been thinking continuously, and reminding his boss continuously, about Port Arthur in 1904. True, Washington did withhold important

British and Dutch, or as prudent defensive measures in case of a Japanese attack against the United States, during the interval between the Argentinia Conference and 7 December 1941, thirty-five long-range B-17 bombers were sent to the Philippines along with a modest reinforcement of the islands' small American ground and tactical air forces.

Not only did the Japanese have general – and in some cases quite specific – knowledge of American reinforcements arriving in and destined for the Philippines, **they also knew about the Argentinia Conference and suspected its purpose.** Once more, a few high-level United States officials knew they knew (which is why today we know the Japanese knew). American Intelligence had intercepted, decoded and translated a 7 August message from Ambassador Nomura to Tokyo which reported "that Japanese-American relations were 'extremely critical' since 'the president accompanied by high army and navy officials is meeting with Churchill.'" The Argentinia conference, Nomura added, indicated that "'careful preparations are being made to counter our every move.'" The following day a cable to Tokyo from Japan's London envoy reported that "the Far East was to be one of the principal topics." "The Japanese military attaché in Washington ... report[ed] that such a high-level meeting could mean only one

---

information from the Hawaiian commanders. But the latter did receive a "War Warning" message from Washington on 27 November; they could count the number of days it would take a Japanese task force to sail from Japan to Oahu; Layton should have known that Japan had conducted negotiations with the Russians right up to the moment of her sneak attack against Port Arthur in 1904 (and so he should have been more skeptical and on guard when the Japanese 'returned' to the negotiations in Washington); they could read the Hawaii newspapers which carried stories of 'imminent war' with Japan daily; they knew that Japanese troop convoys were at sea in the China Sea; Layton did not know where the six main-line Japanese carriers were; and finally, if those carriers were approaching Oahu from the north there was little chance that Layton or Kimmel would know it because they had done nothing to place or orient any eyes or ears in that direction. And this was after the Martin-Bellinger report – prepared at Oahu in the spring of 1941 – had concluded that the Japanese would take the "northern" route in case of a surprise naval-air attack on Pearl Harbor. For that report, see Prange pp 93-97.)

thing: 'closer arrangements for a joint Anglo-American participation in the war.'" <sup>1</sup>

This begs the question: Does Japanese knowledge of the Argentinia Conference and its purpose months before December 1941 undermine the critique leveled at Admiral Yamamoto in this chapter thus far? While some may disagree, my answer is not just "No," it is "Hell No." There are two parts to my explanation for this answer. For the first part it is necessary to return to April 1861 and consider Jefferson Davis's rationale for firing on Fort Sumter.

**Jefferson Davis's Rationale for Firing on Fort Sumter was Identical to Japan's Rationale for Firing the First Shots in 1941 <sup>2</sup> – and Both were Flawed from a Capital W War Perspective!**

Sometime after the event, President Jefferson Davis justified, in writing, his order to bombard Fort Sumter:

To have waited further strengthening of their position by land and naval forces, with hostile purpose now declared [to maintain Federal control of the fort], for the sake of having them "fire the first gun," would have been as unwise as it would be to hesitate to strike down an assailant, who levels a deadly weapon at one's breast, until he has actually fired. He who makes the assault is not necessarily he who strikes the first blow or fires the first gun. <sup>3</sup>

Japanese strategists applied virtually identical logic to their own situation in the fall of 1941. As they thought about conducting military operations against just the Dutch and the British, American forces in the Philippines were seemingly posed

<sup>1</sup> Layton, p 138. The 7 Aug message was translated on 15 September; 8 Aug London message translated 18 September. For obvious reasons the translation date always lagged well behind the intercept date.

<sup>2</sup> regardless of where Japanese strategists decided to fire those shots.

<sup>3</sup> Sandburg, p 206.

to strike the long Japanese lines of communication at a time of America's own choosing. To leave the initiative in the hands of a potential enemy in this situation went against all military logic, Japanese or Western. Moreover, since Tokyo had now been warned about the purpose and probable consequences of the Argentia Conference, the solution seemed clear and obvious. If President Roosevelt was going to order his military forces to come to the assistance of the British and Dutch in any event, why not strike the Americans first, thereby gaining the tactical and operational advantages accruing from the element of surprise? Would it not then be obvious to any objective international observer that Japan had simply used the *tactic* of surprise attack in the strategic context of an act of national self-defense? Were not the U.S.-British-Dutch oil embargo (in effect since July 1941) and other accumulated embargoes of strategic raw materials already an economic declaration of war against Japan? **In the broader scheme of things then, had not the Dutch, the British and the Americans already fired the first shot?** In the military and political context of 1941 Japanese strategists viewed American forces in the Philippines as a dagger ready to be thrust into the back of Japanese forces securing the vitally needed economic resources of Southeast Asia. In this context, to refrain from attacking the Philippines (and Guam and Wake) at the outset, so they reasoned, would be an act of military stupidity.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately for Japan, that viewpoint – which contributed mightily to the strategic decision to initiate hostilities against the United States – was seriously flawed at several levels of war, but especially at the strategic level, as was Jefferson Davis's viewpoint in 1861.

(How Are We Doing So Far?)

---

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent review of Japanese military thinking and options regarding the Philippines, see Louis Morton, "The Japanese Decision For War," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, December 1954, pp 1325-1335.

### SECTION 3:

#### WHEN OPERATIONAL AND TACTICAL IMPERATIVES CONFLICTED WITH CAPITAL W WAR IMPERATIVES, THE JAPANESE GOT IT WRONG, AND THE BRITISH GOT IT RIGHT.

##### **Take Japanese Strategic and Operational Thinking about the Philippines, for example ...**

**First.** Japanese strategists greatly overestimated the operational and tactical threats that American forces in the Philippines posed to Japan's lines of communication to Malaya and the Dutch East Indies. The thirty-five B-17's in the Philippines on 7 December posed no mortal threat without reinforcements. And how long would it take for the United States to augment that number to the tune of, say, 200 total B-17's?<sup>1</sup> Precisely how did the few thousand American troops and the two hundred-odd short-range fighter planes threaten Japan's sea lines of communication? And what of Admiral Hart's small flotilla of World War I destroyers and some twenty-odd aging submarines? With their antiquated antiaircraft armament, Hart's destroyers would have been easy prey for Japan's land-based and carrier-borne aircraft.

That left Hart's submarines, which ostensibly posed more of a problem and a threat. But let's carefully analyze this submarine "threat" in the context of the military necessity for a surprise attack against American forces in the Philippines. (a) Unless most of Hart's submarines were lined up neatly at Cavite in Manila Bay or were out to sea **without** full loads of torpedoes, a Japanese surprise attack would likely have minimal impact on their short-term

---

<sup>1</sup> On 7 December 1941, forty-eight more B-17's were being rushed to the Philippines from the U.S. West coast. The first flight of eighteen arrived at Oahu one hour after the beginning of the Japanese attack.

effectiveness.<sup>1</sup> Next, let's consider the planned landings against the British in northern Malaya (and southern Siam). (b) If some of the American subs were already in position to assist the British, then air attacks against their bases in the Philippines would (again) have no immediate impact regarding naval opposition to the initial landings. (c) If Hart's subs received orders (while at sea) to proceed to the area of the landings, the troop landings themselves would be over before their arrival – although the subs would pose a theoretical threat to cargo ships still off-loading their wares over the beach. (d) The Japanese did not anticipate that their forces in Malaya would require *major* resupplies of food and ammunition above that carried by cargo ships which accompanied the assault forces. That leaves the matter of subsequent operations against the Netherlands East Indies; and here (had America entered the fray) the American subs would have had time enough to assume appropriate combat stations in support of the Dutch. (e) But again, how could surprise Japanese air attacks against Cavite prevent this, if most of Hart's subs were at sea? (f) Upon American entry into the war one way or another, how many of Hart's subs would be deployed in defense of the Philippine Islands (which would be uppermost on General MacArthur's mind) and how many would be deployed to assist the Dutch? (g) How effective would Hart's aging subs be if (in the absence of an Operation HAWAII) they were up against, say, half the destroyers in the Imperial Japanese Navy supported by hundreds of sub-snooping aircraft?

The bottom line is this: With or without American entry into the war, the Anglo-Dutch-Japanese War for Malaya and the East Indies would have been over by the time the United States could have deployed appreciable numbers of B-17's (and bombs and aviation gasoline and mechanics) and submarines to the Philippines (assuming that the President and his naval advisers were not dumb enough to risk also sending major surface elements of the U.S. Pacific Fleet to the islands). If America withheld *active* armed support from the British and Dutch until its forces in the

---

<sup>1</sup> Who knew or anticipated that the torpedoes themselves would prove defective?



Philippines were ready, and if by the time they were ready there were no longer any British or Dutch forces left to support, then great (from Tokyo's perspective)!! President Roosevelt would then find himself in the position of having to start a *new* war in support of Allies already defeated – and if, up to then, Roosevelt had been unable to rouse American popular support for coming to the aid of the British and Dutch, what chance would he now have? Finally, if America *initiated* hostilities after the British and Dutch were defeated, Japan would be able to concentrate all of her naval and most of her air forces against American forces in and around the Philippines.

**Second.** We need to be perfectly clear about the scenario often discussed in Tokyo in which the United States rushed reinforcements to the Philippines for, say, thirty to sixty days, while Japanese forces were committed to operations against the British and the Dutch, and then attacked. Far from being Tokyo's 'nightmare scenario,' Japan's political and military strategists should have licked their chops thinking about the political and military advantages inherent to Japan in this scenario. (a) The first casualty in this scenario (in which Japan attacks the British and Dutch only) would have been Operation HAWAII, thus leaving the six main-line Japanese carriers and escorting vessels free to 'keep an eye' on the Philippines and the sea around them (in addition to those Japanese air and naval forces that were dedicated to the Philippines and Guam and Wake in the actual event), while the southern assault forces proceeded against the British and the Dutch, again as per the actual event. If President Roosevelt and Admiral Kimmel were stupid enough (which they were not, I think) to send major surface elements of the United States Pacific Fleet forward to Manila Bay, then (b) Japan could have branded that deployment as a hostile act while still reserving her military options which were: (c) a surprise attack before (c-1) or after (c-2) a U.S. naval task force reached the Philippines. Either way, the American ships would have been "toast" in a military debacle far worse than Pearl Harbor. Or (d) Tokyo could still have waited for America to make the first move and then (d-1) crushed American

forces in the Philippines with still superior Japanese air and naval forces. Or (d-2) maybe Roosevelt would have found some way to *welsh* (from the Japanese perspective) on his alleged commitment to Churchill at Argentia – thus leaving the Japanese unmolested to overrun the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya (and Hong Kong). And when this brief Dutch-British-Japanese ruckus had ended, what could Roosevelt have then said or done? The bottom line here is that Japan's military and naval strategists elected to initiate surprise attacks against American forces in the Western Pacific (with or without Operation HAWAII), thus incurring major political liabilities at the strategic level of war for the sake of what, in fact, were only minor military advantages at the operational and tactical levels.

Some readers at this point in this chapter might be inclined to dismiss the above discourse (or even this chapter's entire discourse) as a purely academic after-the-fact, Monday-morning insight devoid of all practical value and applicability to the real world of mortal man. Primarily with those readers in mind, I would like to focus for a while on the perspectives and thoughts of those **British** political and military leaders who faced the dismal specter of having to defend Malaya, and help the Dutch, against an impending Japanese attack without the prospect of active and direct American military assistance.

**Now, Contrast Japanese Thinking about the Philippines with British Thinking (in the final hour) about Malaya and Operation MATADOR.**

**In the Japanese case, 'small w war' thinking regarding the Philippines clouded their 'Capital W War' judgment regarding the United States.**

**It was just the opposite for the British. When 'crunch time' came, they accepted the military disadvantages of NOT executing MATADOR in order to facilitate America's entry into the war.**

The British were both pleased and frustrated by the results of the Argentia Conference. On the credit side of the ledger, President Roosevelt had given Prime Minister Winston Churchill assurances of American "support" for the British and the Dutch in the event of an unprovoked Japanese attack. The President had also agreed (on 9 August) "to include in his next communication to the Japanese Ambassador in Washington a [strong] warning that any further encroachment [southward] by Japan would produce a situation in which the United States Government would be compelled to take counter measures, even though these might lead to war between the United States and Japan." <sup>1</sup> On the debit side of the ledger, although Churchill (on 9 August) had asked for "*armed support*" almost *immediately* after a Japanese attack, the President was vague about the nature and timing of the "support" which the British could expect. Secondly, the wording of the *warning* which President Roosevelt gave to the Japanese Ambassador in Washington on 17 August "differed considerably" from the version which he had agreed to use at Argentia:

... If the Japanese Government takes any further steps in pursuance of a policy or programme of military domination by force or threat of force of neighboring countries, the Government of the United States will be compelled to take immediately any and all steps which it *may deem necessary* towards safe-guarding the legitimate rights and interests of the United States and American nationals, and towards insuring the safety and security of the United States. <sup>2</sup>

In London, Churchill's War Cabinet lamented that the President's *warning* omitted the word 'war,' that it did not mention Great Britain, and that it focused mainly on the security of the United States. Nevertheless, Churchill had no choice but to alter the wording and the style of his parallel pronouncements to the

<sup>1</sup> Major-General S. Woodburn Kirby, The War Against Japan. Vol 1, The Loss of Singapore (History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series) (London: HMSO, 1957), p 72.

<sup>2</sup> Kirby, p 72.

Japanese and the House of Commons. Both the British and the Dutch realized that their short-term and long-term prospects in a war with Japan rested not on their own military forces and defenses in Southeast Asia, but on the United States coming to their rescue with decisive military support. **This appreciation translated into the "overriding necessity" of keeping British policy in step with American policy – even if that meant imposing military disadvantages upon British defense forces in Malaya at the outset of a Japanese attack.**<sup>1</sup>

### **Operation MATADOR.**

For several years British defense planners had assumed that the Japanese would begin a campaign to seize the large naval base and fortress of Singapore by conducting amphibious landings in the Kra Isthmus of Siam (Thailand) in order to gain possession of advance airfields at Singora and Patani and place their ground forces close to the main road artery running down the west coast of Malaya. Alarmed by the prospect of spotting the Japanese this considerable (perhaps decisive) advantage, the British devised a counterstrategy – which they called Operation MATADOR – to beat the Japanese to Singora and Patani.

Because southern Siam was largely waterlogged during the northeast monsoon (October-March) season – with movement limited to a few roads and sparse areas of higher ground – whichever side could get to and secure Singora and Patani first would have a significant advantage. However, to advance by road and rail, and set up a defensive position, the 11th Indian Division required a **twenty-four hour head start** ahead of a Japanese landing. "Otherwise, instead of carrying out a denial action," the 11th Division faced the prospect of fighting an encounter battle against Japanese forces already partly ashore. Moreover, the Japanese had tanks; the 11th Indian Division did not.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Kirby, pp 72-73.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Allen, Singapore 1941-1942 (Newark, Del: University of Delaware Press, 1977), p 93.

A much bigger concern than tanks, however, was the political climate in the United States. During late November and early December 1941 Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, Commander in Chief of British forces in the Far East, was painfully aware that the "likelihood of American support" for a British preemptive violation of Siam's neutrality "did not seem great." <sup>1</sup>

#### **25 November – Malaya and London.**

Late in November 1941 Brooke-Popham sent a number of telegrams to London asking for clarification regarding his authority to execute MATADOR. "We realize your difficulty,' the Chiefs of Staff wired him back on 25 November, ... 'But you should not repeat not order any actual move into THAILAND without specific instructions from His Majesty's Government. We estimate that His Majesty's Government's decision should reach you within 36 hours in receiving a report of any Japanese move.'" At this point in the telegram Brooke-Popham scribbled the word "Slow" in the margin. In the words of Louis Allen, author of Singapore 1941-1942, "It was more than slow. It was a guarantee of [operational] failure." <sup>2</sup>

#### **28 November – Malaya.**

Brooke-Popham again reminded the British Chiefs of Staff, from an operational perspective, of the "vital importance of his being able to undertake 'Matador' without delay if required, and ... [he] requested permission to undertake 'Matador' should reconnaissance [aircraft] report escorted Japanese convoys approaching the coast of Siam." <sup>3</sup>

#### **29 November – London.**

The Chiefs sympathized with Brooke-Popham's views. But they "considered that the presence of escorted Japanese ships off

---

<sup>1</sup> Allen, p 94.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, p 95.

<sup>3</sup> Kirby, p 174.

the Siamese coast would **not itself** constitute an attack on Siam." "To move into the Isthmus of Kra on this pretext alone," they concluded, "would be to place the British Commonwealth in the position of being the first to violate the neutrality of Siam, and of running the risk of becoming involved in war with Japan." (That last clause applied to a possible, though admittedly unlikely, scenario in which Japanese troopships entering the Gulf of Siam steaming west were merely en route to Siam at the latter's 'invitation." This scenario allowed for the possibility that even though Japan might not be planning to invade Malaya in the *immediate* future, she would be only too happy to *immediately* declare war on Britain if the British presented her with a golden opportunity – i.e., if Britain violated Siamese neutrality first. This would make it difficult for the United States [that is, President Roosevelt] to come to Britain's assistance. This assumed, of course, that the Japanese wanted to *avoid* American intervention.) They therefore informed Sir Robert that his request was denied, unless and until "they could first obtain an assurance that America would immediately join in the fight." <sup>1</sup>

### 1 December – London.

In a meeting of the War Cabinet, Churchill told his fellow ministers that "We ought not to assume that the outbreak of war between England and Japan would necessarily precipitate the United States into the war. There was a strong party in the United States who would work up prejudice against being drawn into Britain's war." "We should not, therefore," he concluded, "resist or attempt to forestall a Japanese attack on the Kra Isthmus unless we had a satisfactory assurance from the United States that they would join us should our attack cause us to become involved in war with Japan." There was no disagreement. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kirby, p 174. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>2</sup> Roger Parkinson, Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat – The War History from Dunkirk to Alamein, based on the War Cabinet papers of 1940 to 1942 (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1973), pp 320- 321.

### **1 December – Washington.**

Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador in Washington, requested an early afternoon meeting with President Roosevelt at the White House. (That morning he had received a telegram from the War Cabinet generated because the Chiefs of Staff "wanted to be certain" of American support for MATADOR.) Halifax first told the president that His Majesty's Government "now expected" a Japanese attack against Thailand and the Kra peninsula. He then explained operation MATADOR and wanted to know what the President thought of it. ("We therefore wanted to know urgently what view the United States Government would take of this plan, since it was most important for us to be sure of American support in the event of war.") "The response from Roosevelt was better than expected." Later that day Halifax informed London that "Mr. Roosevelt said that we could certainly count on American support, though it might take a **few days** before it was given." <sup>1</sup>

According to the British official history, the Chiefs of Staff and the Foreign Office held different views on the wording of the telegram sent to Halifax. The Chiefs did not want to move into the Kra Isthmus ahead of the Japanese without being "certain of American support before taking action" and therefore preferred a direct approach (a direct question) to President Roosevelt. The Foreign Office, on the other hand, "thought it unlikely that we should get definite assurance, and that, if we decided to wait for it before moving into the Kra Isthmus, we should never carry out our plan." The Foreign Office therefore preferred wording to the effect that His Majesty's Government "intended to carry out the plan unless the United States Government wished to dissuade us from it." <sup>2</sup> (One might normally expect the latter recommendation from military officers understandably concerned with the military – i.e., operational – implications of doing or not doing MATADOR; and that normally it would be the more politically-minded, politically-

---

<sup>1</sup> Allen, pp 97-98; and Woodward, p 171. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>2</sup> Woodward, p 171.

sensitive and politically-savvy *civilian* officials at the Foreign Office who would recommend the wording which the War Cabinet adopted. **But in this case it is the Chiefs of Staff who are to be commended for their political-military wisdom.** While the Foreign Office tactic in this case was more clever, the Chiefs' approach was more intelligent. To be sure, the Foreign Office wording would have been easier for the President to agree to; but it would also have allowed him to sit in silence and do and say little as the British, and the Dutch, embarked on a war with Japan. That was not what the Chiefs of Staff, the War Cabinet and Winston Churchill had in mind.)

## 2 December – London.

"Prime Minister to Foreign Secretary                      2 Dec. 41

Our settled policy is not to take forward action in advance of the United States. Except in the case of a Japanese attempt to seize the Kra Isthmus there will be time for the United States to be squarely confronted with a new act of Japanese aggression. If they move, we will move immediately in support. **If they do not move, we must consider our position afresh. ...**

A Japanese attack on the Dutch possessions may be made at any time. This would be a direct affront to the United States, following upon their negotiations with Japan. **We should tell the Dutch that we should do nothing to prevent the full impact of this Japanese aggression presenting itself to the United States as a direct issue between them and Japan.** If the United States declares war on Japan, we follow within the hour. If, after a reasonable interval, the United States is found to be incapable of taking any decisive action, even with our immediate support, we will, nevertheless, although alone, make common cause with the Dutch." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Winston S. Churchill, The Grand Alliance, Vol. Three of The Second World War (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), pp 600-601. (Emphasis added.)



**President Roosevelt Attempts (and Fails) to Get the Japanese to Fire the First Shot in the South China Sea.**

**It was a Script which the Japanese Should Have Stuck to *Writ Large* in December 1941.**

**3 December – The Philippines.  
(The President's 'Three Small Ships.')**

Early on 3 December Admiral Thomas C. Hart, Commander in Chief, United States Asiatic Fleet, received an unusual communication from Admiral Harold R. Stark, Chief of Naval Operations, United States Navy. "The **President directs** that the following be done as soon as possible and **within two days.**"

Charter three small vessels for quote defensive information patrol unquote. Minimum requirements to establish identity as United States men of war are commanded by a naval officer and to mount a small machine gun would suffice. Filipino crews may be employed with minimum number of naval ratings to accomplish purpose which is to observe and report by radio Japanese movements in West China Sea and Gulf of Siam.

According to "Roosevelt's specific instructions" the vessels were to "sail within forty-eight hours" and that "by Friday," 5 December, one vessel was to be stationed "south of Hainan, another off the Indo-china coast, and the third south of Cape Cambodia." <sup>1</sup>

There are two schools of thought regarding President Roosevelt's motives for what was, according to Admiral Layton, a "madcap operation." <sup>2</sup> One interpretation holds that the President

---

<sup>1</sup> Rear Admiral Edwin T. Layton, U.S.N. (Ret.), "And I Was There": Pearl Harbor and Midway – Breaking the Secrets (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1985), pp 246-247. (Emphasis added.) Although it seems like it, there are no words missing in the block quote.

<sup>2</sup> Layton, p 246. Rear Admiral Edwin T. Layton was the Pacific Fleet's intelligence officer on 7 December 1941.

only wanted to gain more information about Japanese moves against the British and/or Dutch; that he was **not** trying to provoke a *Panay*-type incident; that the President wanted the vessels marked clearly to **prevent** an incident; and that the use of Filipino crew members was authorized in recognition of the shortage of American sailors to man Hart's warships (i.e., he did not want the non-availability of American sailors to hold things up), not to get Filipinos killed so as to rally the Filipino people and President Manuel Luis Quezon y Molina to the American cause. <sup>1</sup>

Rear Admiral Edwin T. Layton, the U.S. Pacific Fleet's intelligence officer prior to Pearl Harbor, believes otherwise (as do others), and he (and they) could very well be correct. There are at least a couple of different variations of this second interpretation, but for the sake of simplicity their composite would run something like this: While no one knew for sure whether Japan was about to attack the Philippines, the President and his advisers did know that "Tokyo had shown a preference for step-by-step aggression and might be planning to grab British territory as an opening move that would not arouse the United States. To guard against this eventuality," on the afternoon of 2 December "Roosevelt took the extraordinary step of ordering the navy to provide a series of lures for the Japanese tiger." The President "intended to ensure" that Admiral Hart's three tiny ships would "lay directly in the path of any Japanese naval force advancing south toward Malaya." The President viewed them as "bait" – as three *Panays* in harm's way. <sup>2</sup>

The collective membership of this second school of thought have offered various speculations regarding President Roosevelt's *sub-motives* within the broader "sacrificial nature" of the operation: (#1) He wanted the vessels to be viewed as obviously "expendable" so that no one could accuse the President (then or later) of poor military judgment by deliberately sacrificing one or more of Admiral Hart's destroyers with their American crews. (#2) Nor

---

<sup>1</sup> Stanley L. Falk, *Seventy Days to Singapore* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975), p 62.

<sup>2</sup> Layton, pp 246-247.

could they accuse him (during a Congressional debate or inquiry, for example) of overly provoking Japan by threatening Japanese ships at sea with *real* American warships placed directly in their path.<sup>1</sup> (#3) Not only were the tiny vessels themselves expendable, but so were their mainly *Filipino* crews. Up to now, "the wavering" President Manuel Luis Quezon y Molina seemed reluctant to "commit the Philippines to an American fight" against Japan. "If Filipino crewmen were to be killed as the result of Japanese military action, it was assumed that Quezon would have no choice but to support the Americans."<sup>2</sup> (#4) For this mission the President designated three (so obviously) small, meekly-armed and non-threatening *vessels*, so that – in the event these American 'ships' were attacked and American sailors killed in the South China Sea – he could, after the event and with a straight face, *claim* before Congress and the American people that these little 'ships' had been engaged in the peaceful pursuit of intelligence essential to American national security; and so that (the President had shrewdly calculated prior to the event) the American people would vent their wrath against the 'murderous yellow perpetrators' of this villainous act instead of questioning and investigating their Machiavelian President who had cunningly engineered the event.<sup>3</sup> (See below, "5 December – The South China Sea.")

### 3 December – Washington.

In a late evening meeting the President told Lord Halifax that he agreed with, and that the United States would support, "the proposed operations in the Kra Isthmus if the Japanese attacked Thailand." And he assured the ambassador "that by support he meant 'armed support'" although it "might be delayed for a few days."<sup>4</sup> Lord Halifax so informed London but added that the President believed that the Japanese would attack just the Dutch

<sup>1</sup> (#1) and (#2) are **not** drawn directly from Layton.

<sup>2</sup> Layton, p. 247.

<sup>3</sup> (#4) is **not** drawn directly from Layton, although it could be inferred easily from his discussion of this episode.

<sup>4</sup> Woodward, p 173; Falk, p 63. (Emphasis added.)

East Indies, [1] and that he was undecided about "just what sort of warning to give the Japanese." <sup>2</sup> Furthermore, both Halifax and Roosevelt "were aware of the President's constitutional limitations." <sup>3</sup>

#### 4 December – London.

Churchill met with the War Cabinet and passed around Halifax's most recent telegrams "to the great satisfaction of all present." Although the British had become painfully aware of what President Roosevelt "could or could not do without the approval of Congress," Churchill was now sufficiently confident to propose that Brooke-Popham could be instructed to "put Matador into effect if necessary." <sup>4</sup>

#### 4 December – Washington.

President Roosevelt told Halifax that the United States, Great Britain and The Netherlands (Government in exile) should issue *separate* warnings to Japan, and that "for political reasons the American declaration should come first," since he wanted to "convince American opinion" that he was "acting in the interest of American defence, and not just following a British lead." The President also said that if and when the time came for him to act on behalf of the Dutch, or the British and the Dutch, his case for 'armed support' "would be strengthened" if he had tried to communicate directly with the Japanese Emperor. He wanted to wait until 6 December when he was to receive a reply from a previous message requesting "clarification of Japanese activities in Indochina." <sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> i.e., that the Japanese would do the smart thing.

<sup>2</sup> Woodward, p 173; Falk, p. 63.

<sup>3</sup> Falk, p 63.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, p 99; Falk, p 63. (Telegram to Brooke-Popham sent 5 December.)

<sup>5</sup> Woodward, p 173.

## 5 December – The South China Sea.

The skipper of the United States Asiatic Fleet's steam yacht, the *Isabel*, reported by radio to Admiral Hart that she was "spotted and buzzed by Japanese patrol planes" twenty-two miles off the coast of Indochina. If the President intended for her to be "sacrificial bait," the Japanese were not biting.<sup>1</sup>

## 5 December – London.

The Chiefs of Staff dispatched the following telegram to Brooke-Popham:

H.M. Government has now received an assurance of American armed support in the following contingencies: -

(a) If we undertake MATADOR either to forestall attempted Japanese landing in the KRA ISTHMUS or as a reply to a Japanese violation of any part of Thailand.

(b) If the Japanese attack the DUTCH EAST INDIES and we go at once to their support.

(c) If the Japanese attack us.

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, pp 247-248. (Admiral Layton's account of the "three small ships" episode is confusing. On the one hand, he states that the other two small vessels, both schooners, were not ready to sail to their assigned locations in the President's patrol "until the morning that war broke out" [7 December] – implying that they would have sailed had war *not* broken out. On the other hand, he states that "When it was clear from her skipper's radio reports that the Japanese were not going to take the bait and attack [the *Isabel*], Hart recalled her" (on 5 or 6 December). But why would Hart do that before 7 December if the *Isabel* was there to collect information? Did he know of the real purpose of the mission? If so, why didn't he leave her there? Hart could not have been certain that the Japanese might not yet change their minds upon becoming concerned or irritated by her continued 'snooping.' Or, did Hart recall her because Japanese troop convoys were already well to the south of the *Isabel*'s location and the tiny ship was therefore no longer useful? Layton does not say. He does say that Hart had been reluctant to use the *Isabel* but was compelled to because she was the only vessel that could be made ready in time ["within two days"]. "The very idea that the sleek, two funneled *Isabel* should be sunk like another *Panay* offended the Asiatic Fleet commander, who used his yacht for weekend cruises around Manila." [Layton, pp 247-248.]

Accordingly you should order MATADOR without reference to home in either of the two following contingencies: -

(a) You have **good information** that a Japanese expedition is advancing with the apparent intention of landing on the Kra Isthmus.

(b) The Japanese violate any other part of THAILAND (SIAM).

In the event of a Japanese attack on the NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES you have authority without reference to home immediately to put into operation the plans which you have agreed with them.<sup>1</sup>

Since the day he had assumed his present command, Brooke-Popham's options had been restricted by a policy directive from London to **avoid** war with Japan. Now, with war imminent, he had Whitehall's advance permission to execute MATADOR. But the delicacy of the American political situation and the importance of American 'armed support' – not only in Southeast Asia against the Japanese, but also in Europe against Hitler – dictated to him the need to be "cast-iron sure of his grounds for doing so."<sup>2</sup> In fact, the wording of the Chiefs' telegram had "greatly reduced" the chances for MATADOR to succeed. By the time that Brooke-Popham "could be sure that a Japanese expedition was making for the Isthmus of Kra," "it would be too late" for MATADOR to be effective.<sup>3</sup>

### **5 December – Washington.**

#### **President Roosevelt's "Terrible Problem" : What if the Japanese Attacked Just the Dutch and the British?**

During a Friday afternoon Cabinet meeting, the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, revealed secret information that the

<sup>1</sup> Allen, pp 99-100. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>2</sup> Allen, p 100.

<sup>3</sup> Kirby, p 175.

Japanese were headed south. President Roosevelt confirmed that Singapore was the "presumed objective," although the Japanese might also strike elsewhere. "What shall we do?" Roosevelt asked. 'If they proceed south towards Singapore ... What should the United States do? ... It is a terrible problem. ... I hope I won't have to act on it, or settle it, but we may have to.'" At least the President could take some comfort in the fact that Hull's mood had changed to "pessimistic resolution" and that a clear majority of his own Cabinet now favored "standing by Britain if it came to a fight."<sup>1</sup>

But *when* should the President take his case to Congress and the American people? Before or after Japan struck? The draft of a proposed address to Congress was now twenty-seven pages long. Its growing length and intricate – and in places "convoluted" – logic reflected Roosevelt's lingering concern about the possibility that only a narrow majority in Congress (if that) would support strong diplomatic and/or military measures before Japan struck, or a declaration of war after Japan struck – assuming that the Japanese would be smart enough not to attack the United States. It was an address that (with minor changes in wording) could be delivered before or after a Japanese move against one or both of America's two "allies" in Southeast Asia. "I have to report to you a serious danger which is threatening this country and its interests in the Far East," the address began. Twelve pages cataloged and condemned Japanese expansionism and emphasized Tokyo's alliance with Hitler and Mussolini.

'Simply stated, what we are confronted with in the Far East is a repetition of the strategy pursued by Hitler in Europe.' After attempting to 'subjugate China' and invading Indochina, Japan 'now threatens with imminent attack various neighboring areas, not excluding the Philippines.' After eight months of negotiations the 'Japanese government have given no indication of a clear-cut desire to follow the course of peace.'

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, pp 270-271.

There would be a direct threat to American security and interests if Japan were to become 'established in Singapore or the Netherlands East Indies.' ... Permitting further Japanese aggression would not only destroy American commercial interests but the 'farsighted experiment' of impending Philippine independence. It would 'forever terminate the prestige and influence of the United States ... throughout the Orient.' ... '[W]e are pledged to aid those countries,' who [are] defending themselves against 'Hitlerism, ...'

... 'As commander-in-chief, I have given appropriate orders to our Forces in the Far East....' <sup>1</sup>

Those "appropriate orders," if drafted, were never issued, and we will never know whether a majority of Congress would have backed them.

Near the end of that Friday Cabinet meeting Roosevelt stated that he still had "one more diplomatic card to play." He would make an appeal directly to the Emperor of Japan himself in a "final bid to avert war." <sup>2</sup>

### **5 December – The Philippines.**

Sometime during the afternoon (local time), Admiral Hart received a cable from Captain John M. Creighton, the U. S. naval observer in Singapore. Creighton's cable repeated practically sentence-by-sentence <sup>3</sup> the telegram Brooke-Popham had just received from the Chiefs of Staff in London confirming an American "assurance of armed support." Hart immediately "shot off an urgent cable to the navy department: 'Learn from Singapore we have assured British armed support under three or four

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, p 271.

<sup>2</sup> Layton, p 272.

<sup>3</sup> Although the exact wording of the British telegram was changed for security purposes, the precise meaning of each sentence came through loud and clear.



eventualities. Have received no corresponding instructions from you."<sup>1</sup>

### **6 December – Singapore.**

Shortly after noon (local time), a Hudson reconnaissance aircraft flying out of Kota Bharu reported three sightings of Japanese convoys with naval escort some eighty miles southeast of Cape Cambodia. Brooke-Popham also received word of Japanese convoys departing both Camranh Bay and Saigon, and that "Siamese frontier guards had started erecting road blocks on the trunk road to Singora and on the Kroh-Patani road. It was clear that the Japanese were on the move, but where were they bound – Bangkok, Singora, the coast of Malaya, or all three?" After conferring with Vice-Admiral Geoffrey Layton<sup>2</sup> and Admiral Palliser (Chief of Staff to Admiral Phillips, who had flown to Manila to meet with Admiral Hart), Brooke-Popham concluded that the "Japanese would in all probability assemble in Kau Rong bay so that they would be under close air cover by daylight and, if bound for Singora, would make the final approach under cover of darkness." "Bearing in mind the policy of avoiding war with Japan if possible ... and the situation in the United States where the diplomatic talks were still going on, Sir Robert decided that he would not be justified in ordering 'Matador' on this information." He instead ordered the MATADOR force (the 11th Indian Division) to "assume the first degree of readiness and be ready to move at short notice," and placed all forces in Malaya on the "highest state of alert."<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, pp 258-259. No such instructions have been discovered. Admiral Layton has speculated that in sharing the telegram with Captain Creighton, the British were either jumping the gun or were "trying to force Roosevelt's hand."

<sup>2</sup> "the former Far East naval commander who still retained some responsibility in the area," after the appointment of Admiral Phillips as commander of the new Eastern Fleet (composed principally of *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*.) (Falk, pp 67 and 63.)

<sup>3</sup> Kirby, pp 180-181.

**6 December – Washington.  
(Early that day)**

Averell Harriman, the President's special envoy, cabled from London to inform Roosevelt that in the event of a Japanese attack developing from the sea against Thailand, "Churchill would 'postpone taking any action – even though the delay might involve some military sacrifice – until the president has taken such action, as under the circumstances, he considers best.'" Harriman emphasized that the British Prime Minister "was most anxious not to hurt Roosevelt's chances of persuading Congress to declare war if Japan did not attack the Philippines." <sup>1</sup>

**6 December – Washington.  
(Later that day ... )**

In light of Harriman's telegram, it seems odd <sup>2</sup> that Halifax met with the President that same afternoon to get his agreement for "a preemptive British strike against the Japanese convoys steaming toward the Isthmus of Kra." The response, as reported by Halifax to London, was vintage Roosevelt: "If we [the British] saw Japanese transports steaming west or south west across the Gulf of Thailand we should obviously attack them since they must either be going for Thailand or Malaya." But when Halifax pressed the question of immediate American armed support, "Roosevelt said that 'he would not cross that bridge before we [i.e., he] came to it, and that you could not tell exactly how the thing was going to start'" <sup>3</sup> – i.e., that the British should be careful about *how* it starts.

**6 December – London.**

Upon receipt of Halifax's cable that evening, Churchill first accentuated the positive and sent an "urgent minute" to the Foreign Secretary and Chiefs of Staff claiming that Roosevelt's answers

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, p 288.

<sup>2</sup> until we come to "6 December – London" on the next page.

<sup>3</sup> Layton, p 287.

were "'very satisfactory' and that 'this removes all political difficulty for initiating Naval or Air action and I agree with [the] President that we should obviously attack Japanese transports.'" ... Attack is therefore solely one of naval opportunity and expediency. Admiral Phillips should be made fully aware of all these telegrams from the United States.'" But then Churchill did something which seems contrary to the good political-military judgment he had shown during this crisis up to this point. He "drafted a cable instructing Halifax to advise the president 'we should be justified in attacking at sea any Japanese expedition' because 'we understand we can rely on armed support of the United States if we become involved in hostilities with Japan. ...'" In an attempt to "nail down" the President's "commitment," Churchill was about to put Roosevelt "squarely on the line."<sup>1</sup>

Why did Churchill write this message (as well as presumably prompt Halifax's request to President Roosevelt late on the previous day)? With Operation MATADOR hanging precariously in the balance, perhaps the pugnacious Prime Minister *viscerally* could not accept giving Japanese troopships a free ride to the shores of Kota Bharu in northern Malaya (and Singora and Patani in Thailand) and holding fire until Japanese landing craft hit the beaches – even though he realized *intellectually* that everything at the grand strategic level depended upon American entry into the war. Perhaps he was tired or was suffering one of his 'black dog' bouts of depression. And/or perhaps he was concerned about being grilled in the House of Commons after the fact for having allowed the Japanese to land in Malaya and Thailand unopposed.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, p 287.

<sup>2</sup> During the summer of 1936 the British decided to build airfields on the eastern coast of Malaya and on the northeastern frontier with Thailand so as to be able to conduct "reconnaissance and offensive [air] operations against enemy seaborne forces approaching the coast from the Gulf of Siam and the South China Sea." It was decided "to site these airfields as far forward as practicable so as to ensure not only that enemy convoys could be detected early, but also that more than one attack could be delivered on them before they reached the east coast of Malaya." (Kirby, p 14.)

(Regardless – and fortunately – before this telegram could be sent, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.) <sup>1</sup>

**TIME DIFFERENCES** <sup>2</sup>  
 \\/ = International Date Line

Pearl Harbor	Washington	London	\\/	Singapore	Tokyo
<u>Dec 7</u>	<u>Dec 7</u>	<u>Dec 7</u>		<u>Dec 8</u>	<u>Dec 8</u>
7:30 a.m.	1 p.m.	6 p.m.	\\/	1:30 a.m.	3 a.m.
7:58 a.m.	1:28 p.m.	6:28 p.m.	\\/	1:58 a.m.	3:28 a.m.

**6 December – Washington.  
 (Late)**

President Roosevelt read the first thirteen parts of the intercepted, decoded and translated Japanese note which Tokyo had instructed Nomura to deliver at 1 p.m. Upon reading "Therefore, viewed in its entirety, the Japanese government regrets that it cannot accept the [latest American counter-] proposal as a basis for negotiation," the President (in a "low-key" manner) said, "This means war." (I agree with Admiral Layton's conclusion that Roosevelt "did not necessarily mean that he thought the United States was going to be attacked, but that we would be at war because of his pledge to support the British in the event of an

<sup>1</sup> In his postwar memoirs Churchill gave a different impression of his thoughts and actions at this time. Intelligence and reconnaissance reports of Japanese movements and activity off Malaya, he wrote, were followed by communications between London and Malaya, and London and the Commonwealth. "It was rightly decided, both on military and political grounds, that we should not complicate the course of events by striking first in a secondary theater. ..." (Churchill, The Grand Alliance, p 601.) But who "rightly decided," Churchill or Brooke-Popham? See below, pages 121-122.

<sup>2</sup> Inspired by J. M. A. Gwyer, Grand Strategy, Vol. III: June 1941 - August 1942, History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Military Series, Edited by J. R. M. Butler (London: HMSO, 1964), which lists the following times on page 297:

1:30 p.m.    7 p.m.    Midnight    7:30 a.m.    9 a.m.

assault on them by the Japanese" <sup>1</sup> – that is, assuming Congress agreed.) It has been claimed that at that moment the President's close personal adviser and friend, Harry Hopkins, "suggested that since war was coming anyway, 'it was too bad that we could not strike the first blow and prevent any sort of surprise.'" (Hopkins could have been thinking that the Japanese would still have time to strike the first blow while Congress was debating the President's request for a declaration of war.) But "Roosevelt was adamant. 'No we can't do that. We are a democracy and a peaceful people,' he said, raising his voice." As to the origins of this long-developing crisis and confrontation with Japan, the President said, "'We have a good record,'" and he was "determined to 'stand on that record.'" <sup>2</sup>

**6 December – Washington.  
(Even later.)**

Late that Saturday night, the uncertainty among the President's inner circle was nearly unbearable. If Japan refrained from attacking the United States, the President would have to persuade Congress and the nation to go to war anyway. Long into the night he and his army and naval advisers discussed the wording of a final ultimatum to Japan as well as the address to Congress. Adolph Berle labored on the final wording of that address until well after midnight so that Hull, Stimson and Knox could give it their final approval during a meeting scheduled for 10 o'clock Sunday morning. <sup>3</sup>

**7 December – Singapore.  
5:30 p.m. (local time)**

At 5:30 p.m. on 7 December – nearly thirty hours after the first reported sighting of Japanese convoys – another British reconnaissance plane sighted "a merchant vessel and Japanese cruiser ... about 110 miles north of Kota Bharu steaming towards

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, p 291.

<sup>2</sup> Layton, pp 291-292.

<sup>3</sup> Layton, p 297.

Singora." It was evident that these ships and others presumed to be nearby – the rainy weather was providing the Japanese with excellent cover – could arrive at Singora "about midnight" (7/8 Dec). Since MATADOR needed at least a twenty-four hour head start, Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival, commander of British Army forces in Malaya, advised Brooke-Popham that it was too late for the MATADOR force to beat the Japanese to Singora if that was their destination.<sup>1</sup>

**7 December – Singapore.**

**10:30 p.m. (local time)**

At 10:30 p.m. Brooke-Popham conferred with Admiral Phillips, who had just flown back from Manila. Phillips agreed with Percival, and Brooke-Popham promptly telegrammed London (for the second time in two days) that MATADOR was "not on." After the Chiefs had given Brooke-Popham their advance permission for its execution, there remained a small window of time during which MATADOR, if given the green light, might still have worked. That window had now lapsed. The reasons for MATADOR's stillborn death were mainly political in nature. The wording of Brooke-Popham's latest message to the Chiefs in London revealed his concern for President Roosevelt's difficult domestic political situation. "If conclusion[s] drawn from [aerial] reconnaissance [that the Japanese were heading for Singora] prove incorrect we should incur all the disadvantages of first breaking THAI neutrality." Paragraph number four of this telegram suggests the kind of thinking which Japanese strategists *should* have applied to a wide range of political-military considerations as they contemplated going to war against the Dutch, the British *and* the Americans: "Japanese movements are consistent with a *deliberate attempt* to induce us to violate THAI neutrality."<sup>2</sup>

For similar reasons, Brooke-Popham was also reluctant to order air strikes against the approaching Japanese ships, which he could

<sup>1</sup> Kirby, p 181 and Allen, pp 110-112.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted material is from Allen, pp 110-112 (emphasis added); but see Kirby, pp 181 and 185-186 for an excellent discussion of Brooke-Popham's thoughts and actions at this time.

have done as late as 7:00 p.m. "It is pertinent to record," he wrote later, "that, until the Japanese had committed some definite act of hostility against the United States, the Dutch or ourselves, **permission had not been given to attack a Japanese expedition at sea.**"<sup>1</sup>

### 7 December – London.

In London the Chiefs of Staff "met early and sat in almost continuous session throughout the day." "*Even now,*" despite Roosevelt's recent statements as reported by Lord Halifax, "*doubts persisted* over whether America would enter the war if Malaya or the Dutch East Indies were attacked."<sup>2</sup>

### 7 December – Washington.

Noon (6:30 a.m. at Pearl Harbor)

The 10 o'clock meeting of the secretaries of state, war and navy in Hull's office was "breaking for lunch after a **grim** hour and a half devoted to polishing the presidential address to Congress." Still wondering where Japan would strike, Hull "dictated a draft of an ultimatum to go to Japan:

In view of the vital interests of the United States and of the British Commonwealth and Netherlands East Indies, the movement of any Japanese expeditionary force into waters in close proximity to the Philippine Islands or into the China Sea south of latitude 10 degrees north, will of necessity be considered a hostile act directed against the governments concerned."<sup>3</sup>

It is obvious that the wording of this ultimatum was crafted with one eye on the Japanese, one eye on the British, and both eyes on Capitol Hill.

---

<sup>1</sup> Allen, p 112. (Emphasis added.) See also Falk, pp 69-70.

<sup>2</sup> Parkinson, p. 326. (Emphasis added.)

<sup>3</sup> Layton, pp 307-308.

**7 December – Singapore.**

**11:55 p.m. (local time) (5:55 a.m. at Pearl Harbor)**

At 11:55 p.m. a Japanese invasion force anchored offshore from Kota Bharu. In less than two hours Japanese landing craft headed for the beach. "The invasion of Malaya was on." <sup>1</sup> (It was then just a little before 8:00 a.m. at Pearl Harbor.)

**7 December – Pearl Harbor.**

**Ford Island command center.**

**7:58 a.m. (local time) (1:28 p.m. in Washington)**

Lieutenant Commander Logan C. Ramsey of Patrol Wing Two "raced across the corridor to the radio room and ordered all radiomen on duty to send out the same message in plain English:

**'AIR RAID, PEARL HARBOR. THIS IS NOT [A] DRILL.'**

"Thus ... one of the most famous radio messages ever dispatched clicked over the airwaves." <sup>2</sup>

**7 December – Washington.**

**1:55 p.m. (local time) (8:25 a.m. at Pearl Harbor)**

Nomura and Kurushu delivered Tokyo's 'diplomatic' note to Secretary of State Hull at the State Department at 1:55 p.m. The President and Hull had already received word of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor. (The next day, Hull commented to Lord Halifax that "the two Japanese representatives 'had looked like a pair of sheep-killing dogs.'" <sup>3</sup>)

**7 December – Washington.**

**3:00 p.m. The White House.**

At mid-afternoon Roosevelt was remarkably calm (according to several people who were then with him). He was "firmly in command" and displayed the "brusque confidence of a commander in chief at war." And why not! *Militarily* – the loss of American

<sup>1</sup> Allen, p 113.

<sup>2</sup> Prange, p 517.

<sup>3</sup> Woodward, p 177.



lives aside – what was the loss of a few old post-World War I battleships compared to the enormous new fleet being built in dozens of shipyards on the Atlantic, Gulf Coast and Pacific seaboard? (See Tables 1 and 2.) Or compared to the millions of soldiers that would soon be mobilized? Or compared to the hundreds of thousands of planes, tanks and guns that American industry, now unleashed, would produce over the next few years?

**TABLE 1**

**U.S. and Japanese Naval Strength – 7 December 1941**

	Carriers	Battleships	Cruisers	Destroyers	Subs
U.S. Pacific & Asiatic Fleets (*)	3 (†)	9 (†)	24	80	56
Japan	10	10	44	93	71
U.S. Construction	11	15	54	191	73

- (\*) Three (more) carriers, five older battleships, a handful of cruisers and a bunch of modern destroyers were deployed in the Atlantic in support of convoys and the shooting war against German U-boats. Two new battleships were still in shake-down status.
- (†) On 7 Dec 41 the carrier *Saratoga* and the battleship *Colorado* were on the U.S. West Coast for overhaul and refitting.

**TABLE 2**

**United States Naval Units Launched during World War II**

	Carriers (*)		Battleships	Cruisers	Destroyers & (Destroyer Escorts)		Subs
	Fleet	Escort					
1941	–	2	2	6	27	–	15
1942	6	15	3	10	119	(25)	41
1943	11	25	3	9	98	(306)	67
1944	9	35	1	15	61	(105)	78
1945 (†)	8	8	1	8	56	–	20

- (\*) "Fleet" includes "Fleet" and "Light Fleet" carriers.
- (†) Due to the foreseeable end of serious naval fighting after the Battle of Leyte Gulf in October 1944, a significant portion of the naval construction that had been planned for 1945 was canceled.

The huge weight that Admiral Yamamoto had just lifted off the President's back and mind was a *political* weight, not a military one. He was no longer on the hook to aid the Dutch and British *sans* a Japanese attack on American forces, and Pearl Harbor had silenced the isolationists and aroused in America a "war fever that no address to Congress could have achieved." <sup>1</sup>

**7 December – London.**

**9:00 p.m. (local time)**

Upon hearing the news, and after a brief transAtlantic phone conversation with President Roosevelt, Churchill was elated: "At last the United States was in the war, up to the neck and in to the death. So we had won after all. ... Hitler's fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder. All the rest was merely the proper application of overwhelming force." <sup>2</sup> The Chiefs of Staff and senior Cabinet had already dispersed for the

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, p 318. (There are two other explanations for the President's mood that morning. The first is that he had just been told the night before that an intercepted German message revealed that the German Army was going into winter quarters on the Russian front. This meant that the Germans had called off their offensive to capture Moscow, which meant, in turn, that the Soviet Union was still very much in the war, which, in turn, had huge consequences regarding the future strategic direction of the war in Europe. Furthermore, even after Pearl Harbor, neither Roosevelt nor Churchill nor many of their military advisers anticipated that the tide of Japanese military conquests would reach as far as it did before reaching its ebb.)

A second explanation is the charge by various "revisionist" historians that the President had received advance warning from the British that the Japanese were going to attack Pearl Harbor. Therefore, since the President knew it was coming (but elected not to warn Hawaii for fear that the American commanders there would take measures that would scare off the Japanese not only from attacking Pearl Harbor but also from going to war, thereby denying the President the chance to enter the war in Europe against Hitler *via* the Japanese back door), and because he knew that it would be an incredibly stupid act for them and an extraordinarily convenient act for him, he was calm upon hearing the news of the actual attack. To date there has been very little credible evidence presented by anyone which supports this second interpretation.)

<sup>2</sup> Winston S. Churchill, The Grand Alliance (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), p 607.

day so Churchill called them one by one. General Hastings Ismay, Chief Staff Officer to the Prime Minister as Minister of Defense, "felt like shouting for joy. 'How I wished I could have been with the Prime Minister at that moment!'" Anthony Eden, Britain's Foreign Secretary, wrote afterwards that "I could not conceal my relief and did not have to try. I felt that whatever happened now, it was merely a question of time."<sup>1</sup>

**8 December – Singapore.  
9:45 a.m. (local time)**

About seven hours after the Japanese landing at Kota Bharu, Brooke-Popham received word that the Japanese had also landed at Singora.<sup>2</sup>

**Churchill's Summation of Japan's Momentous Blunder  
is a Powerful Indictment of Operation HAWAII.**

Four years after the end of the Second World War, Churchill summarized his reaction to Operation HAWAII and Japan's decision to attack the United States:

We know that all the great Americans round the President and in his confidence felt, as acutely as I did, the awful danger that Japan would attack British or Dutch possessions in the Far East, and would carefully avoid the United States, and that in consequence Congress would not sanction an American declaration of war. The American leaders understood that this might mean vast Japanese conquests, which, if combined with a German victory and thereafter an invasion of Great Britain, would leave America alone to face an overwhelming combination of triumphant aggressors. ... The President and his trusted friends had long realised the grave risks of United States neutrality in the war against Hitler and all

---

<sup>1</sup> Parkinson, p 326.

<sup>2</sup> Kirby, p 186.

that he stood for, and had writhed under the restraints of a Congress whose House of Representatives had a few months before passed by only a single vote the necessary renewal of compulsory military service, without which their Army would have been almost disbanded in the midst of the world convulsion. ...

A Japanese attack upon the United States was a vast simplification of their problems and their duty. How can we wonder that they regarded the actual form of the attack, or even its scale, as incomparably less important than the fact that the whole American nation would be united for its own safety in a righteous cause as never before? To them, as to me, it seemed that for Japan to attack and make war upon the United States would be an act of suicide. <sup>1</sup>

**(Shape the Nature of the Conflict)**

**Yamamoto's Operation HAWAII Contributed Materially to Transforming a Potential American Critical Vulnerability into a Powerful Center of Gravity.**

When it came to potential American centers of gravity before 7 December 1941, the Japanese were in effect faced with two binary chemicals separated by a fragile wall or divider. One of the two binary chemicals was 'the common American view of the Japanese' which had been greatly (negatively) reinforced by Japan's ongoing war against China. The second chemical was 'United States industrial power' – actual and potential. The wall or divider or container which had kept these chemicals from interacting was the '**remoteness**' of the western Pacific and Asia from the United States combined with the mood of '**indifference, apathy and isolationism**' which many Americans felt toward events in that part of the world. That wall/divider/container was blasted to smithereens by Japan's decision to attack the United States in general and by Operation HAWAII in particular – thereby enabling

---

<sup>1</sup> Churchill, The Grand Alliance, pp 602-603.

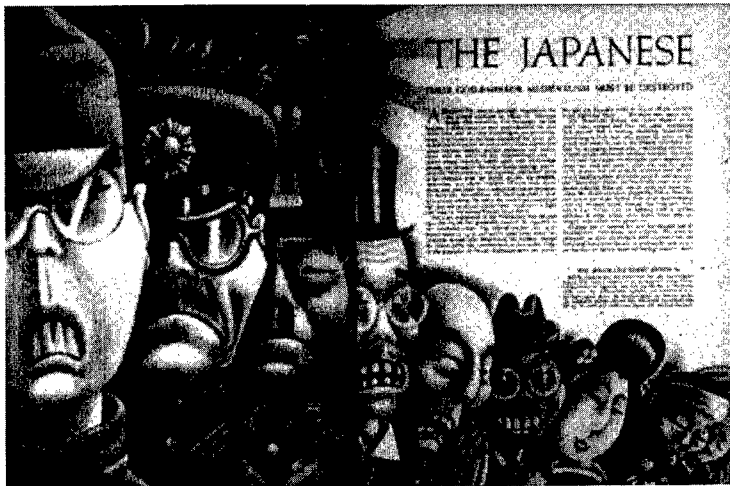
the two chemicals to mix, thus producing a powerful, acid-like chemical which, during the course of World War II, figuratively and literally burned Japan and the Japanese people. (See illustrations on pages 131-133.)

Both the (chemical) reaction and its horrific aftermath were courtesy of those Japanese strategists who insisted in 1941 upon initiating hostilities against the United States in the historical Japanese style of surprise attack (somewhere in the Pacific, even if not in Hawaii) due to their concern for getting the jump on what was, in reality, a motley collection of ragtag American forces in the Philippines. A direct line can be drawn from that concern to Operation HAWAII.

(Are You Still With Me?)



1. This UPI photograph of a crying Chinese baby sitting amid the rubble of Shanghai in the aftermath of a Japanese bombing raid in 1937 (and other photos like this) did not put the Japanese in a good light in the eyes of Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Public from Peoria, Illinois.



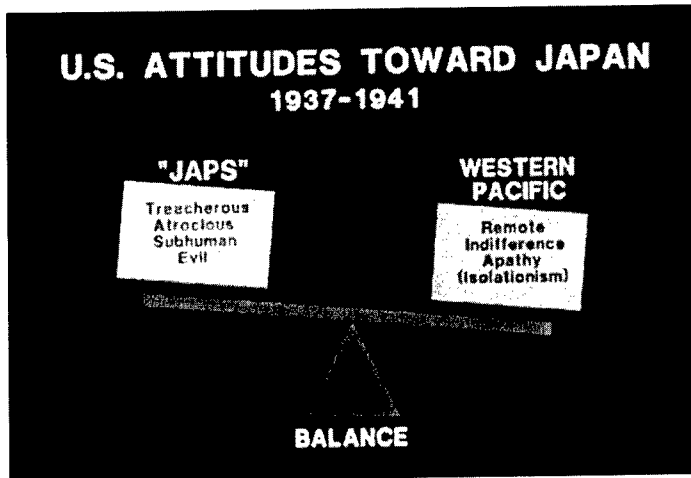
2. A cartoon caricature of "The Japanese" (*Fortune Magazine*, February 1942). It was an image of a society dominated by militarism, duplicitous politicians and diplomats, and corrupt business leaders. The role of the common people was to produce mindless, buck-toothed soldiers (left front).



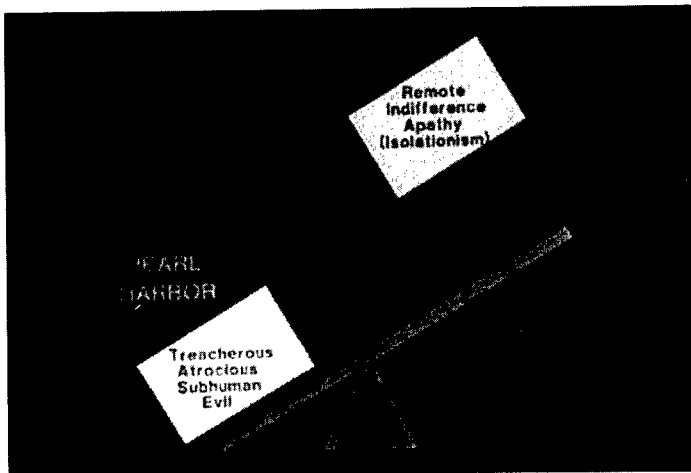
3. Ambassador Nomura (left) and Special Envoy Kurosu with Secretary of State Hull on 26 November 1941. After Pearl Harbor, the thought of these smiling Japanese negotiators reinforced perceptions of Japanese treachery and duplicity, and intensified the rage felt by many Americans.



4. A popular American wartime poster.

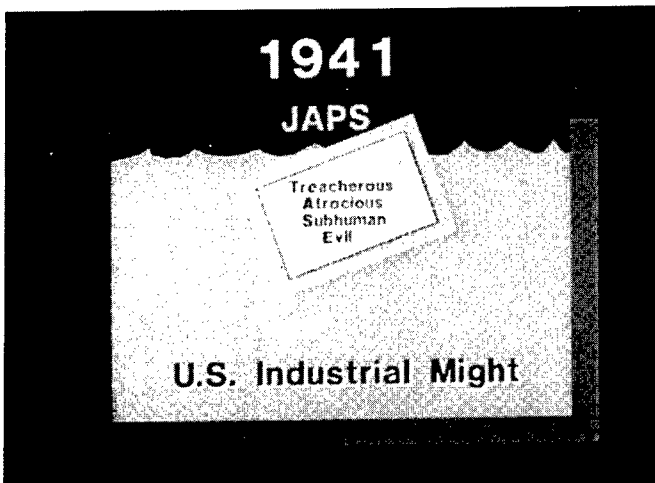


5. From July 1937 to December 1941, American anti-Japanese attitudes were reinforced by stories of Japanese atrocities against Chinese civilians, especially during the multi-month "Rape of Nanking." This sentiment, however, was offset by the fact that Japan and China seemed remote from the United States (as depicted by this teeter-totter).

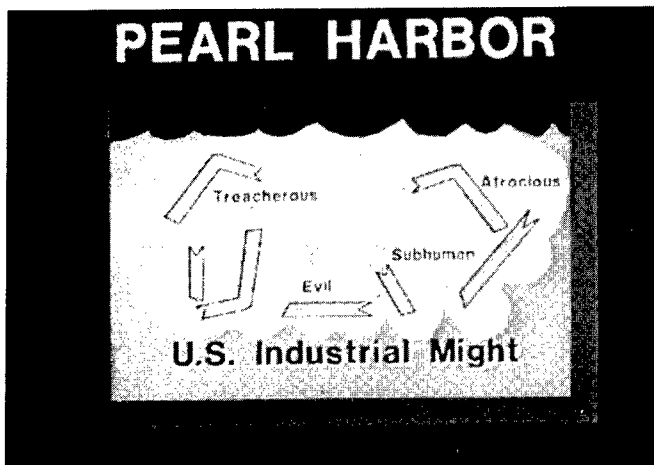


6. On 7 December 1941, American isolationist and apathetic sentiments were catapulted into outer space when Pearl Harbor came down like a ton of bricks on the LEFT side of this notional teeter-totter.

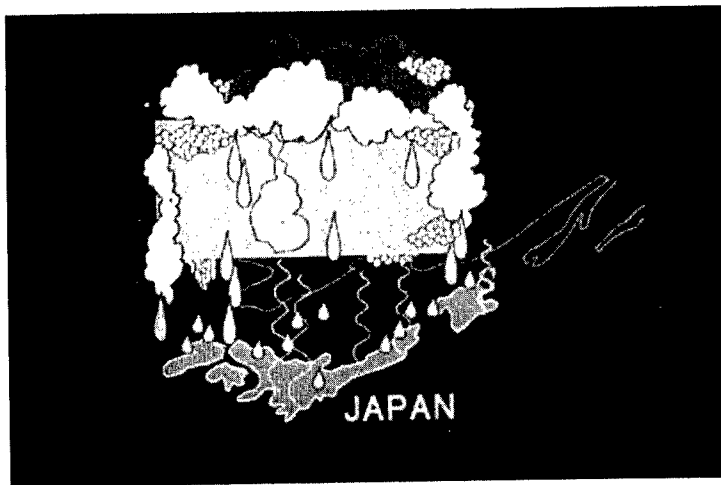




7. (A) Above, a small sealed box contains a chemical powder which represents American negative attitudes about the Japanese (or the "Japs"). It is floating harmlessly in a liquid chemical which represents American industrial might (or, more accurately, 'potential'). The walls of the small box represent "remoteness, indifference, apathy and isolationism," (see photo 5) and keep the two chemicals apart.



8. (B) Operation HAWAII destroyed the walls of the small box. At that instant the powder and liquid chemicals began to interact in the manner of a binary chemical weapon.



9. (C) The volatile interaction of the two chemicals produce a powerful acid which ultimately burns Japan (and the Japanese people) figuratively and literally.



10. A woman weeps for her child who was killed by Japanese bombs in Singapore (January 1942). A flood of new images/stories (like this) confirmed negative American and Asian perceptions about the Japanese, and undercut Japanese proclamations (and propaganda) about 'Asia for the Asians.'

**INSTEAD OF PRODUCING MORE SCENES AND IMAGES LIKE THE ABOVE, INCLUDING THE LIKES OF THE BATAAN DEATH MARCH, A POLITICALLY SAVVY JAPANESE NATIONAL (GRAND) STRATEGY**

**WOULD HAVE PLAYED TO AND BUTTRESSED AMERICAN ISOLATIONIST AND NON-INTERVENTIONIST SENTIMENT, INSTEAD OF DESTROYING IT. THE TWO PICTURES BELOW ARE IMAGES OF WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN POLITICAL COMPONENTS (1/4 SERIOUS, 1/4 'IFFY,' 1/2 OUTRIGHT DECEPTION) OF A FULL-FLEDGED JAPANESE POLITICAL-MILITARY STRATEGY OF PERCEPTION CONTROL TO CONFUSE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND UNDERMINE THEIR WILL TO FIGHT.**



11. (Above) Japanese Army nurses with British POWs (Indian soldiers) after the surrender of Singapore. 12. (Below) A propaganda photograph of Japanese fraternization in the Philippines after the surrender of American forces there.



**SECTION 4:**

**AN ALTERNATIVE JAPANESE  
POLITICAL-MILITARY STRATEGY  
IN ACCORDANCE WITH CAPITAL W WAR  
with emphasis on a  
HOLISTIC POLITICAL-MILITARY STRATEGY**

**Based on What He Knew, Could Have Known, or  
Should Have Known About America, Yamamoto Could  
Have Challenged the Postulations of Some of His Peers.**

During 1941 Admiral Yamamoto could have used his position, influence, knowledge of America, and military judgment to challenge the assertion that the American position and forces in the Philippines constituted a significant threat to Japanese forces operating against the British and Dutch. He could have then proceeded from that narrow operational realm to the broader political-military strategic realm to educate his colleagues on how best to wage war against the United States of America. 'To begin with,' he could have said, 'we must under all circumstances avoid firing the first shot.' But, unfortunately for Japan, Yamamoto not only agreed with his colleagues about the Philippines, he *expanded* the concept of firing the first shot eastward – all the way to the Hawaiian Islands. He then threatened to resign as Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet when the Japanese Naval General Staff, including the Commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy, balked at Operation HAWAII – not for political reasons, but because they feared the operational and tactical risks.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> At the very least Yamamoto conceded the argument about the Philippines (even if he might not have completely agreed with it) because he was preoccupied with Operation HAWAII as a necessary means to achieve a successful resolution of a war with the United States. If he had not been so wedded to the latter, he would have been in a position to more objectively consider the merits of the Philippines argument. Upon debunking that argument, he could have made a strong case for forcing the United States to make the first move (which will be emphasized later in this chapter).

During World War II there were two (or perhaps three) fundamental and irreducible United States centers of gravity at the national (or grand) strategic level. The first was the united, highly-motivated and strong-willed population of the United States. The second was the enormous industrial strength, including a numerous and skilled labor force (which included ever increasing numbers of blacks and women). Arguably a third (moral) center of gravity was President Roosevelt himself, whose moral authority and leadership potential were dramatically enhanced by Operation HAWAII. The industrial potential existed before 7 December 1941, as did FDR's leadership potential. But, given the pre-Pearl Harbor split in American public opinion, '**potential**' is the operative word – especially regarding President Roosevelt.

Hitler and the evils and threat of Nazi-Germany provided a (necessary) stage which magnified the personality and leadership potential of Winston Churchill in his role as the pugnacious, defiant, inspiring and galvanizing leader of an embattled nation which was fighting a desperate struggle not only for its own survival but for the survival of Western Civilization. Likewise, Operation HAWAII and 7 December 1941 contributed massively (though not exclusively) to the creation of nearly identical circumstances which catapulted President Roosevelt toward his historic performance as a national and coalition wartime leader. Moreover, there is a direct and geometric relationship between Operation HAWAII and the industrial power of the United States being shifted into high gear.

### **An Alternative Japanese Political-Military Strategy against the United States in December 1941.**

What would President Roosevelt have done if Japan had attacked just the Dutch (or just the Dutch and the British) on 7 December 1941? Would he have decided to deliver an address to Congress on Monday, 8 December; and if so, would it have been the address which Hull and Stimson and Knox had 'approved' during their "grim" Sunday morning meeting at the White House?

Or would the President have withheld an address while continuing to maneuver the Japanese into firing the first shot, without at the same time putting major U.S. naval forces at serious risk, or deploying them in a manner which could be interpreted as being too provocative by millions of isolationist Americans? With or without a presidential address to Congress on 7, 8 or 9 December, and with or without an American declaration of war, what if Japan's civilian and military leaders had decided not to fire the first shot against the United States? How might that have complicated the American political scene before and after the commencement of active hostilities? And how might Japan's military strategists have adjusted their military strategy and operations accordingly to further maximize political complications and turmoil on the American home front? One answer to the last question would be a slightly modified version of what the Imperial Japanese Navy had had in mind for twenty years **before** Yamamoto became Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet in September 1939.

**For Twenty Years the Imperial Japanese Navy Had Adopted an Intelligent Doctrine and Strategy (although not necessarily for Capital W War reasons).**

***Yûgeki Zengen Sakusen***  
**(Interception-Attrition Operations)**  
**and**  
***Kantai Kessen* (The Great All-Out Battle).**

Until September 1939 the IJN had planned for, built for, trained for, and prepared for a confrontation with the United States Pacific Fleet somewhere in the eastern part of the Western Pacific. Doctrine, operations and strategy were driven by and melded into a single vision or concept:

- (1) At the start of hostilities the IJN would destroy the U.S. Asiatic Fleet and assist the Japanese Army in seizing Luzon and Guam.
- (2) The IJN would then wait until the American Fleet sailed toward some geographic objective in the Western Pacific.

- (3) Japanese submarines (also serving as advance scouts) and aircraft based in the Marshall Islands would begin to whittle away at the American fleet en route to the Western Pacific.
- (4) A combination of additional land-based air attacks, night attacks from fast destroyers and cruisers employing long-range torpedoes, and air attacks from the IJN's main-line aircraft carriers would inflict further attrition on the great American fleet in the vicinity of its objective – presumably the Carolines, the Marianas or the Bonin Islands.
- (5) The IJN's battleships and all available supporting ships, submarines and aircraft would deliver the final blow in a Jutland-type daylight surface battle.

The ultimate military objective of this vision, doctrine and strategy was the decisive defeat – if not outright annihilation – of the United States Pacific Fleet in a more complex replay of Admiral Togo's victory against the Russian Baltic Fleet in the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905.<sup>1</sup>

By 1941 the IJN was well prepared to execute this doctrine and strategy:<sup>2</sup>

Night fighting and Torpedoes:

- The 8,000-ton cruiser *Furutaka* was completed in 1926 with six 8-inch guns and twelve torpedo tubes.
- Next came the "revolutionary" 1,680-ton *Fubuki*-class destroyer in 1928. It had three triple 24-inch torpedo tube mounts and six 5-inch guns in enclosed twin mounts. It was "the first of the modern destroyers."

---

<sup>1</sup> Yoichi Hirama, RADM, JMSDF (Ret.), "Japanese Naval Preparations for World War II," Naval War College Review, Spring 1991, pp 63-64 and 71-72 (of 63-81); and Prange, p 12. See also Toshiyuki Yokoi, RADM, "Thoughts on Japan's Naval Defeat," Proceedings (October 1960), pp 1325-1335.

<sup>2</sup> Except where footnoted otherwise, the data for the following three categories (Night fighting and Torpedoes, Submarines, and The Naval Air Corps) is from Yoichi Hirama, "Japanese Naval Preparations ...," pp 64-71.

- Light cruisers and destroyers were organized into special torpedo squadrons.
- The first of the 10,980-ton *Myōkō*-class heavy cruisers was completed in 1928. It had ten 8-inch guns and twelve torpedo tubes.
- It was followed by the 11,200-ton *Mogami*-class heavy cruisers in 1935, each armed with fifteen 6-inch guns and twelve torpedo tubes.
- The "Type 93," oxygen torpedo was developed in 1935. It had a range of 40,000 meters, a speed of 36 knots and was virtually wakeless. It was a spectacular weapon which "led to notable changes in [Japanese] torpedo tactics to take advantage of its range and stealth." In 1937 the IJN decided to rebuild three light cruisers as "torpedo cruisers ... each with 40 torpedo tubes."
- Night fighting was given a high priority after 1926, and until 1939-1941 it was viewed as "the principal means of attrition operations to precede the decisive battle."
- Throughout this entire period the IJN lost men and ships in intensive training and arduous maneuvers for night attacks. The IJN adopted a seven-day workweek. "Getsu, getsu, ka, sui, moku, kin, kin" was a popular navy slogan "meaning that the navy week was 'Monday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Friday.'"

#### Submarines:

- Increasing emphasis was placed on large, long-range submarines fast enough to shadow the U.S. Fleet and with range enough "to cross the Pacific and return without refueling."
- During the early 1930's a few submarines were equipped with aircraft for reconnaissance.
- In 1937 the IJN launched the 2,200-ton I-7 as the first "command cruiser" submarine. It had "flag space" and a top speed of 23 knots on the surface. An improved model came out in 1941 which displaced 2,400 tons and "boasted a surface speed of 23.5 knots with a range of 16,000 miles at 16 knots."



- In 1933 the midget submarine was developed. By 1938 three midget submarine tenders had been completed, each designed to carry twelve midget submarines. Just before the decisive battle they "would move into the path of the enemy fleet ... and launch the midgets from astern at intervals of 1,000 meters while steaming at 20 knots."
- Final plans for submarine deployment:
  - 27 large submarines would pursue and attack the U.S. Fleet as it emerged from Oahu and sailed westward;
  - 36 large and medium submarines would be distributed among four pre-designated objective areas in Micronesia to lay in wait for the decisive battle; and
  - 36 midget submarines would be employed during the decisive battle.

The Naval Air Corps:

- The 1930's saw rapid improvements in Japanese aircraft performance and the accuracy of torpedoing and dive-bombing. Long-range flying boats and land-based bombers were envisioned and developed as effective adjuncts to carrier aircraft.
- Late in 1936 the G3M "*Nell*" entered service as the IJN's first modern, land-based, medium bomber. It had a range of 2,300 miles and was capable of both torpedo attack and level bombing.
- 1937. No longer adhering to the Washington and London naval armament limitation treaties, Japan began to fortify islands and build airfields in Micronesia.
- 1938. The IJN adopted a "Combined Naval Air Wing Rule" to insure the efficient simultaneous use and coordination of both land- and carrier-based naval aircraft.
- 1939-1941. Throughout the IJN "the naval air corps was recognized as an increasingly potent force" with aircraft emerging "as the principal weapon in interception-attrition operations."
- January 1941. The Eleventh Naval Air Fleet was organized **solely** from land-based squadrons of twin-engine bombers. Its mission was to attack enemy ships at sea.

- April 1941. The First Air Fleet was established to coordinate large numbers of carrier aircraft operating together in multi-division aircraft-carrier task forces.<sup>1</sup>
- Early 1941. The IJN began to take delivery of the GM4 "Betty" two-engine bomber. It could carry a 2,200-pound bomb-load or a single torpedo at a range of over 3,000 miles. Two hundred and fifty "Betty's" were employed effectively as torpedo bombers during the first six months of the war.<sup>2</sup>
- By late 1941 the new A6M *Zero/Zeke* fighter had replaced older fighters on most Japanese carriers. It was very fast, had exceptional range and was lethal to Allied planes early in the war.<sup>3</sup>
- By December 1941 the IJN had **3,300** land-based and carrier-based **aircraft** (1,400 front line) and **ten aircraft carriers** (six large, two medium and two small).<sup>4</sup>

Much of the impetus for the progress in both land-based and carrier-based naval aviation came from Admiral Yamamoto. But when it came to naval strategy in 1940-41, he was not inclined to wait until the American fleet came to him. After assuming his post as Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet in September 1939, Yamamoto at first moved the area of engagement for *Kantai Kessen* east of the Marianas. Shortly thereafter, he discarded the doctrine and the strategy altogether and opted for a surprise attack (Operation HAWAII) against the U.S. Pacific Fleet in its lair at the outset of hostilities. The disastrous political ramifications of that decision have already been discussed. A second (military) price

<sup>1</sup> A carrier division (car div) usually consisted of two carriers. The Japanese ability to coordinate multi-carrier division operations, such as the six-carrier (three-carrier division) Operation HAWAII, came as an unpleasant surprise to most senior American naval officers in December 1941.

<sup>2</sup> James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, *Victory at Sea: World War II in the Pacific* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1995), p 221.

<sup>3</sup> Dunnigan and Nofi, p 221.

<sup>4</sup> As noted in a previous footnote, the data for IJN naval and naval-air developments – unless otherwise indicated – is drawn from Yoichi Hirama, "Japanese Naval Preparations ... ," pp 64-71.

tag associated with Operation HAWAII was the de facto breakup of the IJN's air-land naval air team which had been so painstakingly developed during the five-year period before 7 December 1941.

**Some other Factors and Evidence to Consider regarding the Potential Military Effectiveness of *Yûgeki Zengen Sakusen* and *Kantai Kessen*:**

- First: The IJN's First (carrier-based) and Eleventh (land-based) Naval Air Fleets.
- Second: The fate of the **brand-new** British battleship *Prince of Wales* and the older battle cruiser *Repulse* on 10 December 1941.
- Third: The really pathetic anti-aircraft armament of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, especially the battleships, and its huge dependence on friendly aircraft carrier support.
- Fourth: Prewar underestimation of Japanese naval-air capabilities by senior American and British naval officers.

A discussion of each of these four items follows:

**(1) The IJN's First Air Fleet ...**

The IJN's elite First Air Fleet consisted of about 500 pilots (plus some backseaters) and the same number of planes based on six (more or less) larger and four (more or less) smaller aircraft carriers, organized into five carrier divisions as follows:

Car Div 1: <i>Akagi</i> and <i>Kaga</i>	}	Car Divs 1, 2 and 5
Car Div 2: <i>Hiryu</i> and <i>Soryu</i>	}	formed the strike force
Car Div 5: <i>Shokaku</i> and <i>Zuikaku</i>	}	for Operation HAWAII.
Car Div 4: <i>Zuiho</i> and <i>Taiyo</i>		With the Southern Force. <sup>1</sup>
Car Div 3: <i>Ryujo</i> and <i>Hosho</i>		Air Crew Training.

<sup>1</sup> These two smaller carriers covered various Southern Force task forces making landings in the Philippines (from the east) and the eastern Dutch East Indies (from the northeast). Before 7 December 1941, U.S. Pacific Fleet Intelligence had placed these two carriers in the vicinity of Truk.

Some of the pilots of the Car Divs 1, 2 and 5 had a couple of thousand hours of flight time; all had several hundred at least; some were combat veterans of the war in China; all were considered to be first-rate, dedicated, brave and capable pilots.<sup>1</sup>

Had Yamamoto stayed with the concept and doctrine of *Yûgeki Zengen Sakusen* and *Kentai Kessen* instead of Operation HAWAII, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would likely have encountered all eight Japanese carriers from Car Divs 1, 2, 4 and 5 – plus a couple of hundred aircraft from the Eleventh Air Fleet – in any major fleet engagement in the western Central Pacific during the first four months of the war.

#### **(1) ... and the IJN's Eleventh Air Fleet.**

On 7 December 1941 the combat portion of the IJN's land-based Eleventh Air Fleet was divided between Formosa and French Indochina. The 21st and 23rd Air Flotillas in Formosa had roughly 270 fighters and bombers to support operations against the Philippines, and the 22nd Air Flotilla in Indochina had 380 fighters, bombers and torpedo-bombers to support operations against Malaya, Thailand (if necessary) and later Burma. The latter's size reflects reinforcements detached to it from the 21st and 23rd Flotillas. (These figures are just for the IJN's Eleventh Air Fleet aircraft and do not include the large numbers of Army aircraft assembled in both locations.) Aircraft from all three air flotillas attacked the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* on 10 December 1941.

#### **(2) The Fate of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*.**

Three days after Pearl Harbor, Britain's newest battleship, *Prince of Wales*, and an older battle cruiser, *Repulse*, were sunk in dramatic fashion off the coast of Malaya by Japanese land-based naval aircraft flying from bases near Saigon. The attack against

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Rising Sun in the Pacific: 1931 - April 1942*, Vol. III of *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), p 27. See also Willmott, *Empires in the Balance*, pp 77-78.

these two British capital ships (designated by the British as "Force Z") was launched in three waves (not to mean that they found and attacked Force Z in this order).<sup>1</sup>

- 1st wave: 16 *Nell's* (one torpedo)  
9 *Nell's* (one 1,102 lb bomb)
- 2nd wave: 8 *Nell's* (one torpedo)  
8 *Nell's* (two 551-lb bombs)  
17 *Nell's* (one 1,102 lb bomb)
- 3rd wave: 26 *Betty's* (the latest and best torpedo available)

The following is a brief account of that momentous event:<sup>2</sup>

**2 Dec.** Force Z arrived Singapore (*via* the Indian Ocean).

**8 Dec.** 17.35 hours. Force Z sailed northwestward from Singapore escorted by four destroyers.<sup>3</sup>

**9 Dec.** Evening. Spotted by enemy aircraft.

**10 Dec.**

02.20: Force Z was sighted by the Japanese submarine I58.

06.30: There being no sign of the promised friendly air cover from the mainland, Admiral Sir Tom Phillips (commanding Force Z) abandoned the search for enemy ships and issued orders to steer for Singapore.

11.00: Radar on *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* detected enemy aircraft. All ships assumed "first degree anti-aircraft readiness"; the sea was calm, visibility good. Soon nine high-level bombers were spotted approaching the ships in a "tight line-abreast formation" at about 10,000 feet. The two big ships increased speed to twenty-five knots.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jack Greene, War at Sea – Pearl Harbor to Midway (New York: Gallery Books, 1988), p 89.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Raven and John Roberts, British Battleships of World War Two – The development and technical history of the Royal Navy's battleships and battlecruisers from 1911 to 1946 (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1978, [1976]), pp 361-364.

<sup>3</sup> One destroyer ran short of fuel and was instructed to return to Singapore at 18.35 hours on 9 December. (Raven and Roberts, p 361.)

- 11.13: The 5.25-inch guns on *Prince of Wales* commenced long-range antiaircraft fire, followed shortly by the *Repulse's* 4-inch guns. The aircraft "passed down the starboard side of *Prince of Wales* and attacked *Repulse* from ahead, each dropping one 550-pound bomb simultaneously."
- 11.18: "The enemy's approach from ahead, and their alterations of course, made sustained AA fire [from *Repulse*] difficult and comparatively ineffective." Although *Repulse* shot down only one aircraft, she was hit by only one bomb, causing a fire which was "brought under control" thirty minutes later.
- 11.30: *Prince of Wales's* radar detected a second group of enemy aircraft "approaching from starboard. Nine torpedo-bombers, in line-astern formation, crossed ahead of *Prince of Wales* at extreme range, and using cloud on the port beam to hide their movements, made a series of turns and attacked the battleship in waves of two or three."
- 11.41½: *Prince of Wales* opened fire and shot down two aircraft which "crashed into the sea on the starboard side, **after** having released their torpedoes." A third aircraft was "claimed as possibly damaged. The attack was exceptionally well executed, the aircraft approached in line abreast, and were in no way deterred by the battleship's anti-aircraft fire. The torpedoes were released at ranges between 1,000 and 2,000 yards ... They ran very straight, and their tracks were easily visible. *Prince of Wales* turned to port, to comb the tracks, ..." <sup>1</sup>
- 11.44½: *Prince of Wales* "avoided all the torpedoes except one, which struck the ship on the port side" causing "catastrophic" damage which "as good as guaranteed" the great ship's "ultimate destruction." Rapidly listing 11.5 degrees to port, her speed quickly dropped to fifteen knots. She suffered massive power and electrical

<sup>1</sup> Emphasis added.

system failures which, combined with the heavy list, rendered all but two of the 5.25-inch turrets inoperative. The Captain of *Prince of Wales* ordered counter-flooding.

- 11.56: Eight or nine torpedo-bombers attacked *Repulse* from her port side. She "succeeded in combing the tracks of the torpedoes and was not hit."
- 11.58: *Repulse* was attacked again by "a formation of high-level bombers." One aircraft was claimed shot down (by AA fire from both *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales*). "Again, *Repulse* was not hit, and after the attack was over, she turned back to rejoin the flagship."
- 12.10: Nine torpedo-bombers began another attack – with three targeting *Repulse* which received one torpedo hit on her port side amidships. She "withstood the damage well, and continued to manoeuvre at twenty-five knots." The other six aircraft "attacked *Prince of Wales* in two waves of three." They dropped their torpedoes, then audaciously flew close enough to machine-gun the superstructure. Incapable of taking avoiding action, *Prince of Wales* was hit by four torpedoes on her starboard side. One of the nine aircraft was shot down.
- 12.25: Nine more torpedo-bombers "descended on *Repulse* from several directions." Even though she shot down two of her attackers, this time four torpedoes found their mark. *Repulse* gradually slowed to a halt and listed heavily to port. A timely order by her commander, Captain Tennant, to prepare to abandon ship saved most of the crew.
- 12.33: *Repulse* rolled over and sank (two minutes later). The destroyers *Vampire* and *Electra* rescued 796 survivors, including Captain Tennant.
- 12.42: Nine high-level bombers conducted the final attack against *Prince of Wales*, whose speed had dropped to six knots.
- 13.05: The destroyer *Express* came alongside *Prince of Wales* to take off wounded and non-essential personnel. "By

13.10 hours, *Prince of Wales* was settling rapidly with a heavy list to port. *Express* remained alongside until the last possible moment."

13.20: *Prince of Wales* listed sharply to port and rolled over and sank. "A squadron of Buffalo aircraft from Sembawang arrived on the scene while *Express* and *Electra* were picking up survivors." <sup>1</sup>

## (2) Antiaircraft Armament (AAA) on the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*.

The two British ships had the following AAA: <sup>2</sup>

### *Prince of Wales* (Battleship)

Long-range:

- ▶ sixteen 5.25-inch dual-purpose guns, mounted in eight high-angle/low-angle turrets, arranged in four groups.

Close-range:

- ▶ six eight-barrel Mk VI pom-pom mountings.
- ▶ no 0.5-inch machine-gun quadruple mountings. <sup>3</sup>

### *Repulse* (Battle cruiser)

Long-range:

- ▶ six single 4-inch high-angle guns.

Close-range:

- ▶ three eight-barrel Mark VI pom-pom mountings.
- ▶ two 0.5-inch machine-gun quadruple mountings.
- ▶ eight 20-mm Oerlikons.

---

<sup>1</sup> This account (as indicated above) was taken from Raven and Roberts, pp 361-364. In this account the numbers of attacking aircraft do not add up to 84 (even with adding a goodly number of "high-level bombers" at 11:58. (a) Not all of the dispatched Japanese aircraft found Force Z, and (b) we could forgive the British participants in this affair if things got a little too confusing for them to have made and recorded precise observations.

<sup>2</sup> The following AAA description is based on Raven and Roberts, pp 158-160, 217, 286-287, 378-380, and 385-386.

<sup>3</sup> Despite original design specifications for four 0.5-inch machine-gun mountings for the *King George V* class, early wartime experience revealed their ineffectiveness and none were installed on the *Prince of Wales* or her sister ships. (Raven and Roberts, p 286.)



The *Prince of Wales*' (long-range) 5.25-inch guns:

- Fired an 82-pound shell at a muzzle velocity of 2,600 feet per second, a velocity considered just barely adequate.
- Normal rate of fire – seven to eight rounds per minute.
- The 10-11° per-second training speed of the twin mountings "was not considered adequate."
- The HACS guidance system required accurate (human) estimates of a target's height, course and speed. In general, the HACS system "was too slow to deal effectively with modern high-speed aircraft."
- Long-range naval AA fire during 1939-1941 was not effective and could not break up a determined attack by a disciplined formation of aircraft even during their final approach.

The *Repulse*'s (long-range) 4-inch guns:

- A poor muzzle velocity of around 2,400 feet per second.
- Poor guidance system. (In 1932 the British estimated that a well-trained crew using a Mk I high-angle fire-control system could shoot down a *single* aircraft with 136 4-inch high explosive shells. Of course, the chance of hitting *an* aircraft flying in a tight formation of multiple aircraft would be greater than that.)

The *Prince of Wales*' (close-range) eight-barrel pom-poms:

- By 1941 this was the standard AA weapon in the Royal Navy. "Great confidence was felt in the ability of the multiple pom-pom to deal with close-range air attacks."
- The eight guns per mounting collectively had a minimum rate of fire of 720 rounds per minute.
- By 1939 the muzzle velocity had been increased to 2,400 feet per second. This was then considered sufficient "to satisfy the demands of war," but it proved to be "still too low to be fully effective."
- The *Prince of Wales* was fitted with six sets of type '282' radar; each set (with its own aerial arrays) served a multiple pom-pom. The 282's range was limited to three and a half nautical miles, but then the maximum effective range of the pom-poms was only 1,700 yards.

The *Repulse's* (close-range) eight-barrel pom-poms:

- > Same radar (?) and fire control (?) as *Prince of Wales*.

The *Repulse's* (close-range) 0.5-inch machine-guns:

- > The Mk III, designed in 1926, had a muzzle velocity of 2,520 feet per second, and a maximum rate of fire of 700 rounds per minute. Its maximum effective range was only 800 yards, and it fired a "solid bullet [which] was unlikely to bring an aircraft down unless it struck a particularly vulnerable spot."

The *Repulse's* (close-range) 20-mm Oerlikons:

- > A Swiss weapon intended (in 1937) to replace the 0.5-inch machine gun; first deliveries arrived 1939.
- > The Mk I version "fired 450 rounds of high explosive shell per minute at a muzzle velocity of 2,725 feet per second." After the defeat of France and the closing of the Swiss border, the British set up production of the 20mm Oerlikon in England and started turning them out in 1941. <sup>1</sup>

**(3) The Status of AAA in the U.S. Pacific Fleet,  
Especially on the 'Veteran' Battleships.**

American battleships had pitiful antiaircraft armament and would have been slow-moving targets for the ace pilots of Japan's First and Eleventh Air Fleets. In any relatively early version of *Kantai Kessen* – despite the presence of (and protection from) three or four U.S. aircraft carriers – those battleships **and their supporting carriers** stood an excellent chance of suffering the same fate which befell the British battleship *Prince of Wales* and battlecruiser *Repulse* in the South China Sea on 10 December 1941.

American improvements in ship-borne AAA weapons-systems during the Pacific War were spectacular, as is illustrated by the later transformation of the battleship *Nevada* into a floating AAA

<sup>1</sup> The foregoing AAA description is based on Raven and Roberts, pp 158-160, 217, 286-287, 378-380 and 385-386.

arsenal by March 1945 (see diagram below, page 169).<sup>1</sup> Images of a single (surviving) Japanese *kamikaze* in 1945 attempting to penetrate an air space filled with hundreds (and thousands) of black puffs and streamers from fifty or sixty anti-aircraft guns stand in stark contrast to the AAA capabilities of the United States Pacific Fleet four years earlier. On 7 December 1941 the standard anti-aircraft armament on Kimmel's battlewagons was the 5-inch dual-purpose gun, the 3-inch dual-purpose gun, and the 50-caliber machine gun – **all single barrel weapons**. AAA fire-control was also primitive. Only a few of Kimmel's ships (battleships or otherwise) had crude radar of any kind, let alone fire-control AAA radar. The new battleships which would perform so well during the long fight for Guadalcanal in nine months – the *Washington's* radar directed 16-inch guns at night and the *South Dakota's* 20mm Oerlikon's during the day – were still being built.<sup>2</sup>

In fact, the pace of installing so-called "modern" anti-aircraft weapons was so slow that, as of 1 November 1941, only one of the Pacific Fleet battleships – the *Maryland* – had been fitted with the quadruple 1.1-inch machine cannon which, during the late 1930's, was viewed as the next generation of AAA. In the Atlantic the 1.1 cannon had been installed on the three really old battleships *New York*, *Arkansas* and *Texas*, that were escorting convoys in the Western Atlantic, which was a quasi-war zone throughout 1941. On the West Coast, two power-operated and two hand-operated quadruple 1.1-inch mounts were being installed on the battleship *Colorado* (refitting) when the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor. The *West Virginia* was scheduled to be fitted with the 1.1 cannon in February 1942, the *Tennessee* and *Idaho* in March, and the

---

<sup>1</sup> See also a brief description under "Better Antiaircraft Capability" in Dunnigan and Nofi, *Victory At Sea*, pp 51-52.

<sup>2</sup> "The first radars were inefficient, temperamental, and not at all understood by most senior officers. At times the presence of Japanese warships [at night] was first detected by lookouts, if it had not already been announced by the arrival of their shells, before they were detected by radar, at which point it was usually too late to do anything but die bravely." (Dunnigan and Nofi, pp 158-159.)

*Mississippi* in July; the *Arizona*, *California*, *Oklahoma*, *Nevada* and *Pennsylvania* would have to wait even longer.<sup>1</sup>

During the summer of 1941 the King Board looked beyond the already outdated 1.1-inch machine cannon to two newer, more effective guns: the newer and much heavier quadruple 40mm Borfors gun and the even newer twin 5-inch/38-cal gun mounts. As an interim measure, the board recommended replacing the uninstalled 1.1-inch machine cannons with the Borfors on a one-for-one basis,<sup>2</sup> and *eventually* fitting all Pacific Fleet battleships with eight twin 5in/38's, four Borfors (in place of the 1.1) and eight 20mm Oerlikons.<sup>3</sup> A few months after Pearl Harbor the battleship *South Dakota*, for example, would be completed with thirty-four 20mm Oerlikons, an assortment of 1.1-inch and 40mm guns, and eight 0.50 caliber machine guns.<sup>4</sup> But on 7 December 1941 only one of Kimmel's battleships had even the then-known-to-be-inadequate 1.1 Quads; none had the 20 mm, 40 mm or twin 38's; and when it came to AAA all of them were out-classed by the *Prince of Wales* and even the *Repulse*.

Let's consider some other statistics regarding AAA capabilities at the time of Pearl Harbor compared to later wartime evolutions. We could start with something which Dunnigan and Nofi call the "relative AAA combat value" of a ship. First, note the relative AAA combat values of new American warships entering the fray after Pearl Harbor (see Table 3, page 153). Next, contrast these AAA values to those of the older American battleships which underwent emergency AAA refitting soon after Pearl Harbor and

<sup>1</sup> Norman Friedman, *U.S. Battleships: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1985), pp 354-355. (During the summer of 1941 President Roosevelt directed Admiral Kimmel to 'temporarily' detach the *New Mexico*, *Idaho* and *Mississippi*, "the carrier *Yorktown*, four light cruisers, seventeen destroyers, three oilers, three transports, and ten auxiliaries" to reinforce the Atlantic Fleet. Prange, p 133.)

<sup>2</sup> The Borfors were in fact being installed in place of *some* of the 1.1's on *some* of the new battleships nearing completion.

<sup>3</sup> Friedman, pp 276 and 354.

<sup>4</sup> By November 1942 she would have **fifty-seven** 20mm guns, minus the 1.1's.

the values attributed to the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* (see Table 4, page 154). Next, consider what relative AAA combat value you would attribute to the older battleships in the United States Navy at the time of Pearl Harbor (see Table 5, page 155). Finally, compare AAA values for the pre-Pearl Harbor non-battleships versus the post-Pearl Harbor new ships (see Table 7, page 156). And don't forget speed (see Table 8, page 157.)

These five tables indicate clearly that the ships which comprised the United States Pacific Fleet on 7 December 1941, plus the older ships which were likely to join it within two to four months afterwards, and even those few new ships which might have joined it during this period, were **light-years** away from anything like the images of the massive walls/curtains of AAA fire that greeted wave after wave of *kamikaze* attacks in late 1944 and 1945. (See Table 4 for wartime AAA refitting for just the pre-Pearl Harbor battleships; you can then imagine what was on the new *Iowa* class battleships.)



**TABLE 3: Antiaircraft Armament on NEW American Warships entering the fray AFTER Pearl Harbor <sup>1</sup>**

<u>Ship Class</u>	<u>Class</u>	<u>Value on</u>	<u>AAA Combat</u>	
			<u>Completion</u> <sup>2</sup>	<u>ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS</u>
	<u>Year</u>		<u>On Completion</u>	<u>At End of War</u>
<b>Battleships</b>				
<i>North Carolina</i> <sup>3</sup>	1941	15	(20) 5/38 <sup>4</sup> (24) 1.1 / 40mm and 20mm	(20) 5/38 (100+) 40mm and 20mm
<i>South Dakota</i> <sup>5</sup>	1942	21	(16) 5/38 <sup>6</sup> (18) 1.1 / 40mm (34) 20mm	(16) 5/38 (68) 40mm (40) 20mm
<i>Iowa</i> <sup>7</sup>	1943	38	(20) 5/38 (80) 40mm (40) 20mm	(20) 5/38 (80) 40mm (50) 20mm
<b>8-inch-gun (Heavy) Cruisers</b>				
<i>Baltimore</i>	1943	23	(12) 5/38 (44) 40mm (28) 20mm	(12) 5/38 (44) 40mm (28) 20mm
<b>6-inch-gun (Light) Cruisers</b>				
<i>Cleveland</i>	1942	14	(12) 5/38 (24) 40mm (14) 20mm	(12) 5/38 (24) 40mm (19) 20mm
<b>Antiaircraft Cruisers</b>				
<i>Atlanta</i>	1942	12	(16) 5/38 (24) 40mm	(16) 5/38 (24) 40mm (19) 20mm
<b>Destroyers</b>				
<i>Fletcher</i>	1942	4	(5) 5/38 (10) 40mm (8) 20mm	(5) 5/38 (10) 40mm (8) 20mm
<b>Aircraft Carriers</b>				
<i>Essex</i>	1942	24	(12) 5/38 (78) 40 / 20 mm	(12) 5/38 (72) 40mm (52) 20mm

<sup>1</sup> The data in this chart is compiled primarily from Dunnigan and Nofi, pp 98, 106, 118, 123, 128 and 130; and *Jane's Fighting Ships of World War II* (Foreword by Anthony Preston) (New York: Military Press, 1989 edition), pp 259-281.

<sup>2</sup> As assigned by Dunnigan and Nofi.

<sup>3</sup> And the *Washington*.

<sup>4</sup> (20) 5/38 = twenty 5-inch, 38-calibre guns; i.e., twenty guns in ten twin-gun mounts.

<sup>5</sup> And *Massachusetts*, *Alabama* and *Indiana*.

<sup>6</sup> The other three battleships of this class had twenty 5/38 guns.

<sup>7</sup> And *New Jersey*, *Missouri* and *Wisconsin*.

TABLE 4

**EMERGENCY AAA Refits on U.S. Battleships  
Soon After 7 December 1941,  
Compared to AAA on the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse***

Ship	Class	AAA Combat		ANTIAIRCRAFT ARMAMENT Modifications <sup>2</sup> Soon After 7 Dec 41
		Year	Value After Refit <sup>1</sup>	
<i>Colorado</i>	1921	15		Added radars, splinter protection, four 1.1-inch quads and fourteen 20mm guns.
<i>Maryland</i>	1921	15		Same as <i>Colorado</i> except sixteen 20mm Oerlikons were added.
<i>Tennessee</i>	1921	15		Same as <i>Maryland</i> .
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	1916	14		Added shields for all 5/25 guns, four 1.1-inch quads and sixteen 20mm. Already had radars.
<i>New Mexico</i>	1918	9		All three ships added radars and four 1.1-inch quads each, and were sent to the Pacific.
<i>Mississippi</i>	1918	9		
<i>Idaho</i>	1918	9		
<i>Nevada</i>	1916	—		Heavily damaged 7 Dec 41.
<i>California</i>	1921	—		Heavily damaged 7 Dec 41.
<i>West Virginia</i>	1921	—		Heavily damaged 7 Dec 41.
<i>Arizona</i>	1916	—		Blew up and sank 7 Dec 41.
<i>Oklahoma</i>	1916	—		Sank 7 Dec 41 (raised 1944).
=====				
ANTIAIRCRAFT ARMAMENT on 10 December 1941				
<i>Prince of Wales</i>	1940	14		Sixteen 5/25 <sup>3</sup> and six eight-barrelled radar-controlled pom-poms.
<i>Repulse</i>	1916	9		Eight 4.5-inch DP, six 4-inch AA, and three radar-controlled pom-poms.

<sup>1</sup> As assigned directly or indirectly by Dunnigan and Nofi, p 98.

<sup>2</sup> Data for modifications derived from Friedman, U.S. Battleships, p 356.

<sup>3</sup> Sixteen guns in eight twin-gun mounts.

TABLE 5

**AAA on U.S. Battleships  
Before 7 December 1941<sup>1</sup>**

<u>Ship</u>	<u>Class</u> <u>Year</u>	<u>AAA Combat</u>	
		<u>Value</u> <u>7 Dec 41<sup>2</sup></u>	<u>ANTIAIRCRAFT ARMAMENT</u> <u>Before 7 December 1941</u>
<i>Nevada</i>	1916	?	Eight 5/25 <sup>3</sup> and eight .50-cal mg
<i>Oklahoma</i>	1916	?	same
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	1916	?	Eight 5/25 and eight .50-cal mg
<i>Arizona</i>	1916	?	same
<i>California</i>	1921	?	Eight 5/25 and eleven .50-cal mg
<i>Tennessee</i>	1921	?	same
<i>Maryland</i>	1921	?	Eight 5/25 and eleven .50-cal mg
<i>West Virginia</i>	1921	?	same
<i>Colorado</i>	1921	?	same
<i>New Mexico</i> <sup>4</sup>	1918	?	Eight 5/25 and twelve .50-cal mg
<i>Mississippi</i>	1918	?	same
<i>Idaho</i>	1918	?	same

TABLE 6

**Examples of AAA on the Older U.S. Battleships  
At the END of the Pacific War**

<u>Ship</u>	<u>Antiaircraft Armament</u>
<i>Nevada</i>	Twenty 5/38, and one hundred plus 40mm and 20mm.
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	Sixteen 5/38, sixty-eight 40mm and forty 20mm.
<i>New Mexico</i> and <i>California</i> and <i>Maryland</i>	Twenty 5/38, eighty 40mm and fifty 20mm.

<sup>1</sup> Data in this chart compiled primarily from *Jane's Fighting Ships 1941 (Issued 1942)* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1942), pp 448-454; and Dunnigan and Nofi, p 98.

<sup>2</sup> You make the call in this column.

<sup>3</sup> (8) 5/25 = eight five-inch, 25-caliber guns (eight guns in eight single-gun, mostly unshielded, mounts).

<sup>4</sup> The *New Mexico*, *Mississippi* and *Idaho* were in the Atlantic on 7 December 1941.



**TABLE 7**

**AAA on the Rest of the Ships –  
Prewar Versus Wartime Classes**

<u>Ship Class</u>	<u>Class</u> <u>Year</u>	<b>AAA Combat</b>	
		<b>Value</b> <u>When Built</u> <sup>1</sup>	<b>ANTI-AIRCRAFT ARMAMENT</b> <u>When Built</u>
<b>8-inch-gun Cruiser</b>			
All Classes	1930-39	5	Eight 5/25, eight .50-cal mg
<i>Baltimore</i>	1943	23	Twelve 5/38, forty-four 40mm, and twenty-eight 20mm
<b>6-inch-gun Cruiser</b>			
<i>Omaha</i>	1922	3	Two 3/50, twelve .50-cal mg
<i>Brooklyn</i>	1938	9	Eight 5/25, twenty-four .50-cal mg
<i>Cleveland</i>	1942	14	Twelve 5/38, twenty-four 40mm, and fourteen 20mm
<b>Antiaircraft Cruiser</b>			
None before 1942			
<i>Atlanta</i>	1942	12	Sixteen 5/38, twenty-four 40mm
<b>Destroyer</b>			
All Before 1941		2 or 3	
<i>Fletcher</i>	1942	4	Five 5/38, ten 40mm, eight 20mm
<b>Aircraft Carrier</b>			
<i>Yorktown</i>	1938	13	Eight 5/38, sixteen 1.1-inch, and sixteen .50-cal
<i>Wasp</i>	1940	13	Eight 5/38, forty smaller caliber
<i>Essex</i>	1942	24	Twelve 5/38, seventy-eight 40mm and 20mm



<sup>1</sup> As assigned by Dunnigan and Nofi, pp 106, 118, 123, 128 and 130.

**TABLE 8**

**And  
SPEED**

<u>Ship Class</u>	<u>Class Year</u>	<u>Max Speed</u>
<u>Battleships:</u>		
<i>Nevada</i>	1916	20.5 knots
<i>California</i>	1921	20.5
<i>Maryland</i>	1921	21.0
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	1916	21.0
<i>New Mexico</i>	1918	22.0 (the 'speedsters' of the old bunch)
-----		
<i>Repulse</i>	1916	29.0 (a battle cruiser)
<i>Prince of Wales</i>	1940	28.0 (with 15 inches of belt armor compared to 13.5 inches for the older U.S. battleships above)
-----		
<i>North Carolina</i>	1941	28.0
<i>South Dakota</i>	1942	27.5
<i>Iowa</i>	1943	32.5
<u>Non-Battleships:</u>		
All ships that mattered <b>before</b> and after Pearl Harbor: . . . . . 32.5 to 33 knots		
Except for the <i>Wasp</i> . . . . . 29.5 (which was considered too slow for Pacific operations)		



**(3) The Fate of the U.S. Pacific Fleet in general, and its Battleships in particular, would have Rested Heavily on the Relative Capabilities of its Aircraft Carriers.**

On 7 December 1941, Admiral Kimmel's Pacific Fleet had three large aircraft carriers: *Enterprise*, *Lexington* and *Saratoga* (the latter just finishing refit on the West Coast). The *Yorktown* had been transferred to the Atlantic during the summer and presumably would have returned to the Pacific (with or without Pearl Harbor) in the event of war with Japan.<sup>1</sup> The *Wasp*, too, was in the Atlantic. Considered too slow for operations in the Pacific, she was ferrying U.S. Lend-Lease planes to British forces in the Middle East and had delivered British Spitfires to Malta. The *Hornet*, too, was employed for various duties in the Atlantic. The older and smaller *Ranger* was not suitably configured for sustained combat operations. The U.S. Navy possessed a single operational escort carrier, the *Long Island*, which was also in the Atlantic. The *Wasp* and *Hornet* eventually returned to the Pacific, but (even with Pearl Harbor) not until the *Lexington* (Coral Sea, May 1942) and *Yorktown* (Midway, June 1942) were sunk and the United States became heavily committed to and engaged in a prolonged campaign for Guadalcanal.

Given the absence of Operation HAWAII, it is likely that the U.S. Pacific Fleet would have been reinforced during the first few months of war with Japan by at most either the *Yorktown* or the *Hornet*, plus their escorts and a few support vessels and auxiliaries. The Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Harold Stark, had made it clear to Admiral Kimmel that in the event of a global two-front war against both Japan and Nazi-Germany, the United States would assume the **strategic defensive** in the Pacific. (Hitler declared war on the United States on 11 December 1941, in support of his Japanese ally.) With four large aircraft carriers and nine battleships (including the *Colorado* nearing completion of refit on the West Coast) plus minor reinforcements of various

---

<sup>1</sup> See page 151, footnote 1.

smaller ships, Stark believed that the U.S. Pacific Fleet was quite capable of **defending** the Central Pacific and **harassing** the Japanese flank in the Western/Southwestern Pacific. But (as we will see below), Kimmel had something much more aggressive in mind, with or without reinforcements from the Atlantic.

**(Know Your Enemy)**

**(4) A Pervasive Underestimation of the Japanese.**

Before 7 December 1941 American and British military (and political) leaders seriously underestimated Japanese military capabilities, especially regarding the quantity and quality of her aircraft and pilots. The effectiveness of Japan's naval air forces – both land- and carrier-based – "came as a very bad shock to enemies whose view of Japanese air power generally was colored by the crudest racism. Before the war, despite the freely available evidence of the China campaign, Japanese aviation was consistently denigrated in Western countries."<sup>1</sup> "One battalion commander in Malaya remarked to Brooke-Popham while reviewing the commander's battalion, 'Don't you think they are worthy of some better enemy than the Japanese.' Brigadier Stewart, who commanded the 12th Indian Brigade, also commented to Brooke-Popham that, 'I do hope, Sir, we are not getting too strong in Malaya, because if so the Japanese may never attempt a landing.'"<sup>2</sup> When British troops in Hong Kong found themselves "being accurately strafed by Japanese planes, they had been so nourished on tales of the yellow man's ineptitude in the air that they were convinced that German pilots must have come out to undertake the assault."<sup>3</sup> The same thought flashed across the minds of some Americans at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. The British concern about their inability to defend Malaya against a Japanese attack can be attributed to their being heavily outnumbered, and not to any notions of the superiority of individual Japanese soldiers, sailors, airmen or weapons. General

<sup>1</sup> Willmott, p 80.

<sup>2</sup> Greene, p 83.

<sup>3</sup> Thorne, p 4.

MacArthur, on the other hand, was not even daunted by superior Japanese numbers. Before and after 7 December 1941, he envisioned that his ill-clad, ill-trained and ill-armed Filipino "divisions" could defend invasion beaches against full-scale Japanese landings.

The shock and surprise of Pearl Harbor can be partly explained by the opinion widely held in America that the Japanese would not be so foolish as to attack (go to war against) the United States of America. Japan's decision to the contrary surprised General MacArthur – a self-proclaimed 'Asian expert' – just as much as it did any other American. The fundamental root cause of the United States Hawaiian Command being caught completely by surprise – it was virtually asleep – was the general perception among American naval and air officers there that the Japanese were simply incapable of mounting and executing an attack, surprise or otherwise, on the scale of Operation HAWAII.

Years after World War II, John Service, a United States Foreign Service Officer who served in China and the Far East before and during the war, recalled the pervasive American attitude:

You know, Japan had a reputation those days for being imitative. They copied everything but put out a shoddy copy. Our military people were convinced that they couldn't build anything very well. They didn't believe the Japanese planes were very good, or their trucks were very good, or their mechanical stuff [was] very good. They didn't think they could be very good fighter pilots or bombing pilots, really, because they all wore glasses. So there was a general tendency to look down on the Japanese, to sort of minimize them.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Road To War – U.S.A.," written and narrated by Charles Wheeler. A British Broadcasting Corporation TV Production in association with Arts & Entertainment Network.

This Western perception was compounded by Anglo-American Interwar intelligence branches which underestimated the gross numbers of Japanese aircraft but also (and more significantly) failed to distinguish between Japanese Army and Navy aircraft. For example, standing on the bridge of the *Prince of Wales* on 10 December 1941, Admiral Tom Phillips discounted a suggestion that attacking Japanese aircraft were engaged in a torpedo run with the remark that all Japanese aircraft based in Indochina were Army aircraft and were therefore incapable of such a thing.

But what if there had been no Operation HAWAII? Surely the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* by Japanese aircraft, especially land-based aircraft, would have shattered American notions of Japanese inferiority and made Admiral Kimmel more cautious and/or careful? Sadly, the answer is 'probably not.' Since many U.S. Pacific Fleet officers looked down their noses at the Royal Navy, as well as the IJN, they would likely have attributed the outcome of the 10 December affair in the South China Sea to sub-standard British performance.

Before 7 December 1941 one of Japan's greatest military assets was American ignorance and arrogance: ignorance of particular Japanese weapons and capabilities, and national arrogance regarding all things Japanese. Before 7 December Japan's senior military leaders were confident about the former, and for decades they had been painfully aware of the latter. Unfortunately for Japan, that potentially decisive asset was foolishly squandered by Operation HAWAII. Ironically, the potentially more rewarding strategic surprise (ignorance/underestimation) became a casualty of the operational and tactical surprise achieved against American military forces in Oahu.

**The U.S. Pacific Fleet: To Sortie or Not Sortie?  
In Either Case – A Win-Win Situation for Japan.**

In the absence of Operation HAWAII, had the U.S. Pacific Fleet not made a major move within the first four or five months of the war, the United States would have risked seeing the "war" all

but end on a *de facto* basis (i.e., the fighting in the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia would have ended) notwithstanding a few American carrier raids and scattered submarine operations – particularly if Japan's leaders deemed it desirable to create that general impression. At the very least, with Malaya, the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines securely under Japanese control, the IJN would have been completely free to focus eastward.

However, without Operation HAWAII there was an excellent chance that the United States Pacific Fleet would have made a major move within the first several months of the war. This conclusion is based partly on logic – could President Roosevelt and the intact and unscratched Navy (*his* Navy) have stood by month after month while General MacArthur and the British and the Dutch pleaded for direct and immediate assistance? It is also based partly on historical evidence suggesting that **part** of the reason Kimmel and his command were surprised on 7 December was that they were obsessed and preoccupied with, and actively preparing for, an immediate sortie of the entire U.S. Pacific Fleet against the Japanese-held Marshall Islands for the purpose of drawing out the bulk of the Imperial Japanese Navy and defeating it in a Jutland-style ambush! This incredibly fascinating story is told by Edward S. Miller in War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan 1897-1945.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Admiral Kimmel's "Point Tare" Battle Plan.**

The latest U.S. War Plan – Rainbow Five – called for the Pacific Fleet to assume the strategic defensive for six months in the event of a war against both Japan and Germany. However, within this strategic-defensive context President Roosevelt had promised the British at Argentia that he would attempt to relieve as much pressure as possible on British and Dutch forces in Southeast Asia; and the Navy Department thereafter reminded Kimmel that it expected the Pacific Fleet to divert some of Japan's naval and air

---

<sup>1</sup> Edward S. Miller, War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan 1897-1945, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), Chapter 25.

forces away from the Malay Barrier by engaging in some combination of "mid-ocean sweeps, raids, and feints to confuse" the Japanese.<sup>1</sup> Admiral Stark thereby placed the ball in Kimmel's court and turned his attention to the Atlantic and the war in Europe. At this point Kimmel did more than just take the ball; he ran with it for visceral and logical reasons.

First and foremost, Admiral Kimmel was a "warrior 'full of fight' who relished the prospect of hurling his fleet full tilt" against the Japanese. Secondly, he and his staff logically concluded that if they were going to do anything to help the British they would have to do it sooner rather than later because 'later' would be too late for the British forces defending Malaya. "To translate his zeal for [quick] aggressive action into a systematic plan," Kimmel relied on Captain Charles H. ("Soc") McMorris, the Pacific Fleet War Plans Officer.<sup>2</sup>

There was no prospect for an "immediate amphibious attack" in the Central Pacific; it was banned by the Navy Department, and the Pacific Fleet had neither the ships (troop transports and cargo vessels) nor anywhere near a sufficient number of organized, trained and equipped assault forces. But then Kimmel and McMorris were glad of it. An invasion of the Marshall Islands would have been, at best, a slowly developing and cumbersome affair acting as a heavy ball and chain tied to the ankles of the Pacific Fleet. Unburdened by the need to plan and execute such a complex enterprise, Kimmel and McMorris eschewed attempting "fleabite" carrier raids and "demonstrations," and instead set their sights on nothing less than seeking and winning an old-fashioned, decisive naval battle against the entire Japanese Combined Fleet!<sup>3</sup> "To induce the commander in chief of the Combined Fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, to engage at a favorable time and place, ... they were willing to offer an irresistible lure: the

---

<sup>1</sup> Miller, p 284.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, p 273.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, pp 275, 285, 287 and 293.



American aircraft carriers" <sup>1</sup> as part of a breathtaking "scheme for a Pacific Jutland." <sup>2</sup>

Miller explains the details of this plan in chapter 25, "Fleet Battle in the Central Pacific, 1941" (War Plan Orange). A force of three Blue (U.S.) aircraft carriers (or even two if the third carrier was not immediately available upon the outbreak of war) and escorting cruisers would "gallop westward" to the Marshall Islands and for **three days** "reconnoiter the Marshalls, from northwest to southeast, in search of Orange [Japanese] sea- and aircraft and shore installations." Admiral "Halsey was authorized to attack by air and gunshot if Orange defenses were 'comparatively weak.'" <sup>3</sup> That done, the carriers would slip eastward to a point "Tare" to link up with three of the Pacific Fleet's battleships (having steamed directly from Pearl Harbor) and heavy cruisers (having completed designated reconnaissance sweeps of nearby waters).

For two days all vessels would refuel from oilers and shuffle into reconstituted Task Forces One and Two, while the admirals studied photographs and chose targets. Then the carriers, cocooned by three dozen fast gunships, [including the heavy cruisers and their escorts] would hasten back to the northern Marshalls to blast any ships and planes they could find, with shore facilities as secondary targets. Marine teams would go ashore temporarily to 'demolish installations and eliminate enemy personnel,' but no ship was to expend more than 25 percent of its shells or bombs against fixed targets. <sup>4</sup>

The double cruise (through the Marshalls) stratagem was a "prebattle maneuver." The three-day reconnaissance and shoot-em-up sweep was intended "to signal a forthcoming raid [or invasion] and tantalize Yamamoto to sail to the central Pacific"

<sup>1</sup> Miller, p 293.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, p 294.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, p 298.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, p 299.

with the bulk of the Combined Fleet. The second carrier foray through the islands "would neutralize the northern Marshalls and destroy air reinforcements sucked in by the previous visit, thereby improving the odds" in the impending air-sea naval battle and preventing land-based Japanese planes (in the Marshalls) from attacking Blue long-range patrol aircraft operating from Wake Island's lagoon.<sup>1</sup> The second pass would also 'set the hook in Yamamoto's mouth' (so to speak) and spur his approach to the Marshalls.

During Halsey's second raid, a second "wave" of six battleships would arrive at point Tare. Thereafter, the nine battleships plus escorts, with Kimmel in tactical command, would "steam toward a position north of the Marshalls" within range of Blue reconnaissance aircraft flying from Wake but just out of range of Orange reconnaissance aircraft from the Marshalls. There Kimmel would wait: while Halsey completed his second raid and then "retreated" in a northeasterly direction directly toward Kimmel; while Yamamoto and the IJN's Combined Fleet sailed into Truk, rapidly refueled, and then proceeded toward the Marshalls along the same northeasterly vector; and while Yamamoto's fleet hungrily pursued Halsey's "fleeing" carriers. Then, at precisely the right moment, Kimmel would spring his trap in a clash which, he mused years later, "would have been 'a nice mix-up' and not at all one-sided in favor of Japan."<sup>2</sup>

A detailed picture of Kimmel's vision of the ensuing Jutland-type battle remains unclear. He clearly believed he would have had the element of surprise on his side. Blue would have enjoyed "the exclusive benefit of long-range air scouting" from Wake Island. And "Blue submarines might have exacted a toll on the [Japanese] main body."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Kimmel placed great confidence in the three-to-two gun power advantage that his nine battleships enjoyed over their Japanese counterparts. As for the

<sup>1</sup> Miller, p 302.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, pp 307-308.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, p 308.

Orange carriers, "Kimmel would probably have expected Yamamoto to keep them close to his battle line, as he would have done," instead of having them "sprint ahead to bash Wake or hunt for Halsey." <sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the IJN possessed ten aircraft carriers to Kimmel's three. The IJN's 500 carrier planes outnumbered Kimmel's two-to-one (that is, if he had three carriers, instead of only two), not counting any losses suffered by Halsey in his two prebattle sweeps of the Marshalls.

To readers knowing the superiority of carriers over battleships in World War II, the Blue situation might appear suicidal, but in 1941 this was far from clear. American naval planes were 'ineffective for modern air operations,' according to the General Board that summer, and Japan's aerial capabilities were unknown. Kimmel's appreciation of air power was rather primitive. He prized long-range scouting but tended to view carriers as auxiliaries. They could be detached for raids, but their place in a fleet engagement was with the battle line. <sup>2</sup>

Yamamoto might not have brought all ten carriers with him. (But then, according to McMorris's last minute adjustments and notes of 6 December 1941, he and Kimmel were willing to play this game with only two of their own.) <sup>3</sup> Perhaps Yamamoto might have been careless and overconfident. Perhaps... But how about the other side of the 'perhaps' coin? Perhaps Yamamoto would have directed larger, instead of smaller, numbers of the IJN's Eleventh Air Fleet into the Marshalls. Perhaps a Japanese submarine might have gotten lucky. After all, the plan had the three first-wave battleships (*Pennsylvania*, *Nevada*, and *Arizona*) "hanging about a fixed point for six days with only a pair of destroyers." <sup>4</sup> Perhaps (indeed 'Probably') Yamamoto would have

<sup>1</sup> Miller, p 302 and 306.

<sup>2</sup> Miller, p 306.

<sup>3</sup> Miller, pp 298-299 and 308.

<sup>4</sup> Miller, p 303.

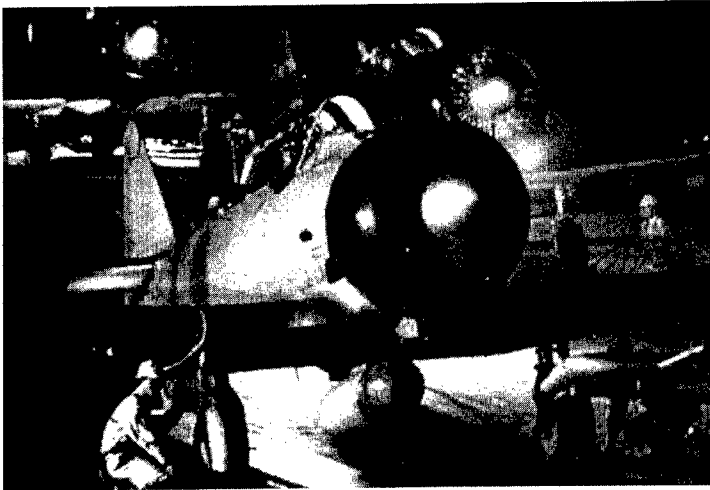
unleashed his fast carriers from his slow battleships; and given the long range of Japanese carrier reconnaissance aircraft as well as the several scout planes carried by each of the escorting cruisers, it is highly unlikely that Kimmel's ships would have remained undetected.

Instead of pilots and mechanics of 180-plus aircraft from six Japanese carriers warming up their engines in the predawn nautical twilight to strike the U.S. Pacific Fleet in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor (and this was just the first of two large waves), it is all too easy to envision a similar scene involving perhaps seven or eight Japanese carriers on the morning of the 'Battle for Point Tare.' Moreover (unlike Admiral Nagumo during the Battle of Midway in June 1942), the very nature of the 'Battle for Point Tare' would have centered on Admiral Yamamoto's acute awareness of the presence of American aircraft carriers. Furthermore, had Halsey's carriers managed to deliver an attack of their own during this battle, they would have likely encountered a swarm of defending Japanese *Zeroes* from, not four carriers as was the case at Midway, but seven or eight carriers. Moreover, Halsey's fighters could not have performed two missions simultaneously (escorting friendly attacking planes **and** flying protective cover for Kimmel's ships) without seriously diluting their already insufficient strength for either mission. On the other hand, Admiral Yamamoto would likely have had a considerable number of fighters for both missions.

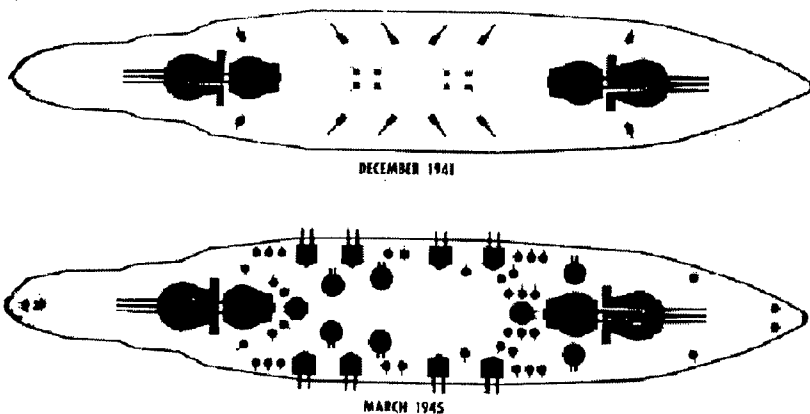
Admiral Kimmel's vision of this battle being "'a nice mix-up'" was in 1941 a dangerous and potentially fatal illusion. I would bet dollars to doughnuts that Yamamoto would have seriously considered shelving Operation HAWAII in the fall of 1941 had he somehow learned of the Kimmel-McMorris plan and been confident that they would implement it soon after the outbreak of the great Japanese-American War of 1941-1942. One thing is for sure: If the *Tennessee*, *California*, *West Virginia*, and *Nevada* (and obviously the *Oklahoma*) had suffered the same degree of damage in the Battle for Point Tare that they did at Pearl Harbor on 7

December 1941, none of them would have survived to be repaired, refitted and ultimately rearmed to participate in every major campaign from the Aleutians in 1943 to the battles for Iwo Jima and Okinawa in 1945. And, as the handling and fate of the *Lexington* demonstrated during the Battle of the Coral Sea in May 1942, damage control parties and procedures within the U.S. Pacific Fleet had a long way to go to reach the level of maturity and sophistication routinely demonstrated in late 1944 and 1945. Regardless of how good American damage control parties and procedures actually were relative to the Japanese in 1941 and early 1942, the question remains: Were they good enough to have saved the United States Pacific Fleet from suffering an American Tsushima in the Battle for Point Tare? That the Pacific Fleet was spared this potentially catastrophic loss in lives and ships (compared to the relatively mild losses actually suffered on 7 December) is an additional blessing rendered to the United States of America by Operation HAWAII.

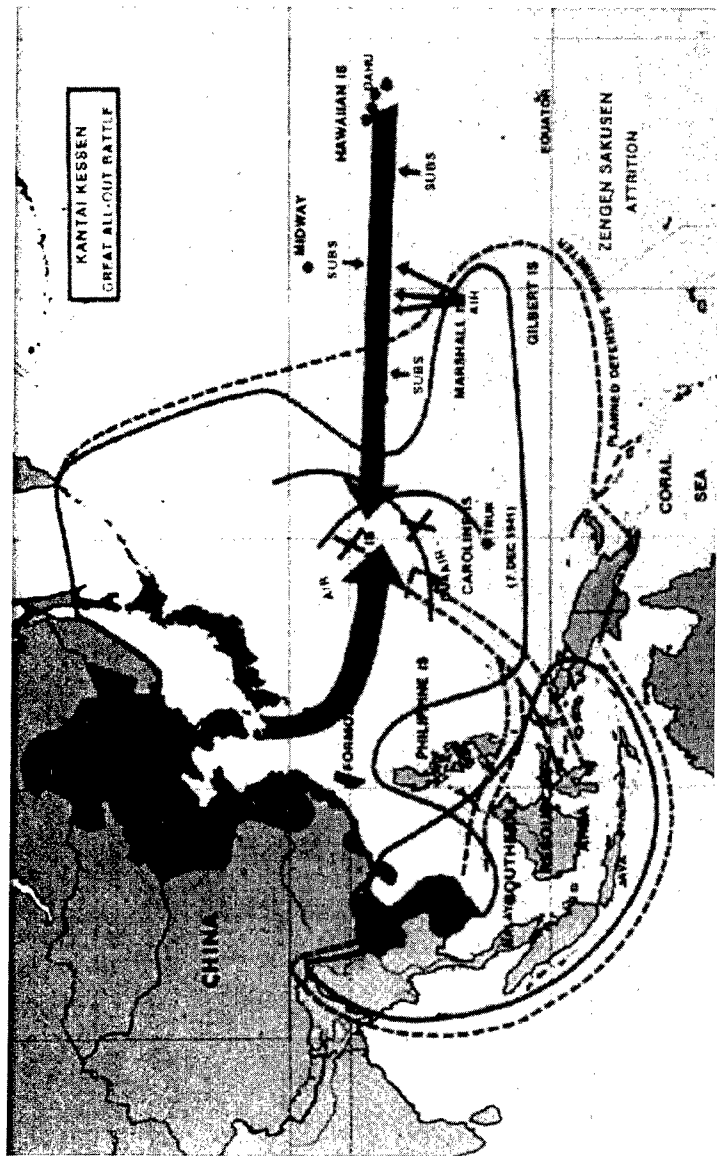
For compelling political and military reasons, Yamamoto should have stayed with the IJN's doctrine and strategy of twenty-odd years; and he should have argued strongly against **any form** of surprise attack against the United States. Fate had given him ample opportunity to study the political and military characteristics of his American opponent. That opportunity could have led him to consider and advocate the following political-military strategy which would have been in harmony with the principles of capital W war.



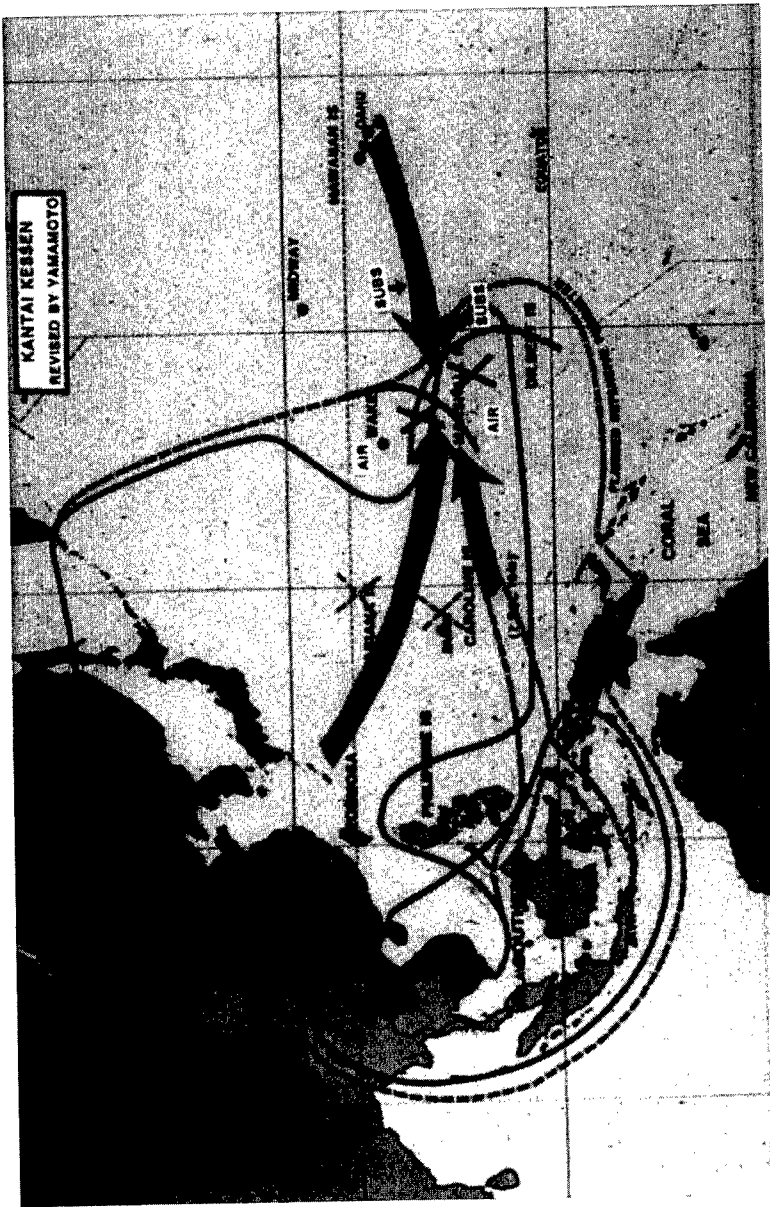
13. Japanese planes about to launch from the decks of six large aircraft carriers early in the morning of 7 December 1941. (Scene from the movie "Tora, Tora, Tora.") It is easy to imagine this same scene (involving seven or eight carriers) on the morning of *Kantai Kessen*. The skill of their pilots, the quality of their planes, and their ability to mount massive air strikes from multiple carrier divisions were potentially deadly Japanese secret weapons. Had they not been foolishly revealed and wasted at Pearl Harbor, collectively they might have rendered a fatal blow to the U.S. Pacific Fleet and the American will to fight.



14. A dramatic contrast. Anti-aircraft armament on the battleship *Nevada* before Pearl Harbor (above) and after she was refitted in the spring of 1945.



Map 1. *Kantai Kessen* before 1940. Land-based aircraft and submarines would whittle away at the American fleet ("Zenger Sakusen" attrition operations) before the IJN's Combined Fleet engaged it in a Tsushima-like decisive naval battle in the western Pacific. The dotted arrows from the South China Sea and Dutch East Indies depict smaller naval forces linking up with the Combined Fleet's Main Body (from Japan) before the climactic battle.



Map 2. *Kantai Kessen* as revised (eastward) by Admiral Yamamoto in 1940. By 1941 he had scrapped it altogether in favor of Operation HAWAII.





15 and 16.

Two images of Yamamoto in sailor's cap (above) and contemplating Japanese actions in the Pacific (left). Given what he knew (and could have known) about America, it was tragic for Japan in World War II that he did not conceive of, and fight for, a savvy political-military strategy based on American moral critical vulnerabilities. Instead, his Operation HAWAII transformed an American critical vulnerability into a powerful center of gravity.

## An Effective Japanese Political-Military Strategy of Perception Control (in Harmony with Capital W War)

### Step 1: Deceive and Obfuscate – Phase 1.

☑ Appear to be attacking the Dutch only for the purpose of securing the oil resources which were "**denied**" to Japan by the American-British-Dutch oil "embargo" in effect since July 1941.

☑ Let the **British** initiate hostilities against Japan (in support of the Dutch) to complicate matters for President Roosevelt.

☑ Force President Roosevelt to make the first moves – political and military. Allow the American Congress to engage in a bitter debate, even if it turns out to be a relatively short one. Allow the voices and votes against war on Capitol Hill to be heard and recorded.

☑ Even if Roosevelt is successful in obtaining from Congress a declaration of war, still do **not** fire the first shot against the United States. Tokyo should instead profess surprise and indignation at the American declaration of war and announce to the world that Japan will **still** not fire unless American forces fire first.

☑ Keep powerful Japanese naval and air forces ready to retaliate decisively against American forces in the Philippines and Guam **after** America fires the first shot.

☑ Meanwhile (before that happens) do nothing to unduly shock or provoke the American isolationists and non-interventionists. They will be Japan's *de facto* political ally when the political-military situation is right for Japan to offer President Roosevelt 'reasonable' terms to end the war. Until that moment Japan should take great pains to orchestrate political and military events to reinforce the perception in the minds of those millions of Americans who had opposed going to war that (a) the war was at the beginning and continues to be "Mr. Roosevelt's War" to preserve the British Empire (with its Imperial Preference trading and financial systems which discriminate against the United States,

as some isolationists have repeatedly proclaimed);<sup>1</sup> (b) American leadership in the war (to that date) has been grossly incompetent, (c) the road to American victory will at the very least be long and hard, and (d) there is a real chance that the United States will ultimately lose the war.

**Step 2: Embarrass the Americans Militarily,  
But Withhold Japan's 'Ace in the Hole.'**

☑ Proceed with operations against the British and Dutch.

☑ After the United States declares war and American forces fire the first shot, embarrass President Roosevelt and "his" armed forces *via* a string of defeats as Japanese forces methodically defeat the British and Dutch while also seizing the Philippines, Guam and possibly Wake Island.

☑ Withhold from all of these operations the IJN's six largest aircraft carriers. Retain them as (and conceal from the Americans the fact that they are) a powerful "ace in the hole." Japan is only too well aware that most senior American and British political and military leaders underestimate many of Japan's weapons in particular and Japanese military prowess in general.<sup>2</sup> Although early British and American defeats might correct this false perception to some extent, American military leaders will in all likelihood attribute these initial 'setbacks' to being unprepared and outnumbered, and will likely retain an attitude of confidence (even cockiness) as they contemplate getting their "first team" into the game.

---

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of negative American attitudes toward the British Empire, see Wm. Roger Louis, Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

<sup>2</sup> For an excellent brief discussion of this theme see Christopher Thorne, Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan, 1941-1945 (NY: Oxford University Press paperback edition, 1979 [1978]), pp 3-7.

### Step 3: Deceive and Obfuscate – Phase 2.

☑ Ensure that all Allied prisoners of war are treated well according to Western standards and norms. Tend to their wounds, feed them and shelter them.

✓ Designate special Japanese military units for this purpose and explain to them the political nature and importance of their mission – that this is being done as a gesture of the Emperor's greatness and generosity, and/or to further divide the enemy and weaken his moral resolve, and/or (regarding the next step) to cleanse the Imperial Japanese Empire of these "unworthy" (by Japanese norms) human beings .

☑ **Then return all Allied prisoners of war!!**

✓ Announce to the world *via* the Swiss, the Swedes, the Irish, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Turks, etc. – and to America directly – that as a manifestation of his sincere desire for peace His Imperial Majesty has decided to return all Allied prisoners of war unconditionally! Within forty-eight hours, broadcast to the world details regarding times, ships, routes and ports of embarkation and debarkation. How could the Allies refuse to receive them? And their arrival in separate ships from India to Australia would be a sensational series of events.

☑ Instead of generating more news reports and photos of Japanese bombs, bullets and bayonets killing and mutilating Asian civilians,<sup>1</sup> **refrain** from militarily unproductive acts such as bombing Singapore and Manila. And as soon as is practically possible, undertake a deceptive campaign of fraternization with the newly 'liberated' Asian peoples while issuing a series of announcements proclaiming the independence of first one country and then another within an economic union of all Asian peoples.

---

<sup>1</sup> referring to Japan's war against China 1937-1941 in general and the "Rape of Nanking" (discussed earlier in this chapter) in particular.

**Step 4: Offer Relatively Generous Peace Terms,  
Let things Percolate on the American Home  
Front, and Wait for the U.S. Pacific Fleet to  
Make Its Big Move.**

☒ Two dynamics will likely occur simultaneously in the United States:

✓ Japan's unconditional return of all Allied POW's and her announcement of surprisingly "generous" peace terms will have created quite a stir from Maine to California. Even if they cannot say so publicly, millions of Americans will be grateful for the puzzling Japanese act.

✓ Simultaneously, millions of (other) Americans (discounting the few daring carrier raids to date) will be voicing impatience and frustration over the absence of a major move by the United States Pacific Fleet. Many Americans will not understand why the Navy can't do more to help General MacArthur's forces in the Philippines. The pressure (and heat) on President Roosevelt to order decisive action will intensify.

☒ Meanwhile, the IJN waits patiently for the U.S. Pacific Fleet to make its big move into the western Central Pacific, being mindful that each passing day:

✓ is one less day remaining in the Anglo-Dutch-Japanese War of 1941-42 (which will soon be over), and is one day closer to the complete defeat of American forces in the Philippines. These two accomplishments, if they occur before the 'big move,' will permit Japan to concentrate even more air and naval assets for *Kantai Kessen*. (And if the 'big move' occurs before those accomplishments, redeploy air and naval forces previously dedicated to those operations as are deemed necessary for the success of *Kantai Kessen*.<sup>1</sup>)

---

<sup>1</sup> If Japan wins the great naval battle, the British and Dutch possessions in Southeast Asia and the Philippines are doomed in any event. If Japan loses that battle, it becomes immaterial whether she has already seized those areas before the battle or proceeds to complete their conquest after the battle.

✓ means a **bigger prize** at the end of *Kantai Kessen*. It would be logical to assume that relatively soon after the outbreak of war, the U.S. Pacific Fleet would receive the following reinforcements: an aircraft carrier, a couple of older battleships, a few cruisers and a dozen modern destroyers transferred from the Atlantic; the new battleship *North Carolina*; the aircraft carrier *Saratoga* and the battleship *Colorado* upon completion of their overhaul on the West Coast. Japanese strategists could, therefore, logically assume that Admiral Kimmel (with four aircraft carriers and a dozen battleships) would feel confident about a sortie in force into the western Central Pacific to seize an island and/or provoke a 'decisive' naval battle. And in that event, the aftermath of *Kantai Kessen* would see just that many more American ships lying on the bottom of the deep Pacific Ocean – in any event more ships than were likely to be "sunk" in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor on the first day of hostilities.

**Step 5: After *Kantai Kessen*, Repeat and Elaborate the Same (Now Seemingly Extraordinarily) Generous Peace Terms and Wait for the American Home Front to 'Come Unglued.'**

☑ With half of the hundred or so ships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet sunk, with the crippled remnant fleeing back to Pearl Harbor, and with invasion rumors rocking Oahu and the West Coast, four days after *Kantai Kessen* Tokyo broadcasts to the world the results of the battle, the names of the ships sunk, and the names of the thousands of American sailors "rescued" by the gallant Imperial Japanese Navy.

☑ Two days later Tokyo repeats (and elaborates) Japan's earlier terms for ending the war.

✓ Complete and immediate independence for, and military neutralization of, the Philippines – with no foreign military bases or forces. Manila has to adopt a neutral foreign

policy and negotiate a reasonable commercial trade treaty with Japan.<sup>1</sup>

- ✓ Complete independence for Indonesia within ten years under the guidance of a benevolent Japanese administration. A commercial treaty guaranteeing Japanese access to oil and other raw materials. Two or three small Japanese military bases which would be relinquished in ten years.
- ✓ Willingness to enter into unconditional negotiations with Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Chinese government. As a gesture of good faith, Tokyo is willing to oversee the immediate return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Complete independence for Malaya within ten years under the guidance of a benevolent Japanese administration. A commercial treaty guaranteeing Japanese access to raw materials. Singapore to become a Japanese naval base, with a 99-year lease from the date of Malayan independence.
- ✓ The complete neutralization and independence of Guam.
- ✓ A willingness to enter into unconditional negotiations regarding Japanese and American military bases in the Gilbert, Marshall, Caroline, Mariana and Hawaiian Islands. These negotiations could take place before or after the signing of a treaty ending the current Pacific war.

☐ Upon completion of operations in the Philippines, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, Tokyo unilaterally **declares a sixty-day cease-fire**, thus adding more fuel to the political conflagration in Washington.

---

<sup>1</sup> Japan could have afforded to be fairly sincere and straightforward in this matter for the purpose of making a maximum positive impact on American public opinion. (a) The real catch for oil and other raw materials was in the Dutch East Indies and Malaya, and (b) genuine military neutralization of the Philippines would have been a significant factor for Japanese national security.

<sup>2</sup> This insincere offer would be designed to assuage U.S. public opinion and open negotiations with Chiang at a time when he and the Chinese people would obviously be impressed/depressed by Japan's decisive defeat of the American Pacific fleet.

- ☑ At that point, the American home front might come unglued:
  - ✓ The search for scapegoats makes front-page headlines as Congress investigates what is widely perceived as an obvious case (or cases) of military incompetence.
  - ✓ A considerable percentage of the millions of Americans who had opposed war against Japan (subdued and silent since the Congressional vote for war) reemerge. If Nazi-Germany has declared war on the United States in the meantime, this emboldened segment of American society would likely split into two camps: the first group recommending a compromise settlement with Japan so that the United States can focus, morally and physically, on defeating Hitler in Europe; with the second group also recommending a compromise settlement with Japan as a first step toward a negotiated end to the war in Europe as well. If Nazi-Germany has refrained from such a stupid act, there is no division among this group.

☑ Meanwhile, as they watch the American political scene erupt, Japanese strategists prepare for the possibility that America might decide to stay in the fight with the aim of 'trying it again' in a couple of years with a brand new navy. Prudent options would include:

- ✓ the repair and consolidation of economic assets in the Dutch East Indies and Malaya;
- ✓ reinforcing advanced defenses in the western Central and Southwestern Pacific;
- ✓ expanding Japan's pilot training and aircraft production programs with the aim of trading Japanese pilots and aircraft for American aircraft carriers should it come to a prolonged "round two" a couple of years hence;
- ✓ preparations to invade and occupy the Hawaiian Islands as soon as practicably possible – depending on the numbers and condition of surviving elements of the IJN and U.S. Pacific Fleet to include the number of U.S. submarines available in the Hawaiian area (and their demonstrated effectiveness to date), and the status of land-based



American air power and ground forces in the Hawaiian Islands. The ultimate political and strategic purpose of this campaign would be to use Japanese possession of those islands as a super bargaining chip to obtain a negotiated end to the Pacific war. Should the Americans still refuse a negotiated settlement, Japanese possession of the Hawaiian Islands, in combination with expanded pilot and aircraft production programs, might be sufficient to alter the long-term nature of the geo-strategic and national power equation in the Pacific war, thus leading to a situation where America would eventually tire of the war and President Roosevelt's political opponents would assume the ascendancy.

### **ADMIRAL YAMAMOTO'S CAPITAL W WAR REPORT CARD**

#### **• Know Your Enemy**

**D+**

He counseled against Japan joining the Tripartite Pact with Hitler and Mussolini because of how it would be perceived by the United States. He also counseled against going to war with the United States. But he was dead wrong regarding how the American people would react to Operation HAWAII. Considering his exposure to America, this was an incredible miscalculation.

#### **• Know Your Allies**

**F**

The American isolationists could have been Japan's potential *de facto* political allies in Tokyo's quest for an end-of-war negotiated settlement with the United States. Yamamoto's miscalculation regarding their reaction to Operation HAWAII was profound and fatal.

- **Determine and (if necessary) Shape the Nature of the Conflict** **F**

Although he understood that a war against the United States had to end in a negotiated settlement favorable to Japan's national goals, there was no chance of that happening after 7 December 1941. Operation HAWAII destroyed any practical possibility of breaking the will of the American people. Admiral Halsey's promise said it all:

"Before we're through with 'em, the Japanese language will be spoken only in hell." <sup>1</sup>

- **Identify Enemy and Friendly Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities** **D**

He viewed the United States Navy and America's great industrial strength as existing enemy physical centers of gravity. He understood that a certain level of public support was a necessary "Critical Requirement" to sustain a long-term American war effort. His miscalculation lay in the effect that Operation HAWAII would have on American public opinion.

In this regard he not only failed to transform a critical requirement into a critical vulnerability; more to the point, he transformed a potential critical vulnerability into a strong moral center of gravity. Operation HAWAII was not just ineffective, it radically backfired.

- **Know and Respect the Limits of Military Power**
  - **Legitimacy and the Credible Capacity to Coerce** **F**

He failed to comprehend that nearly all Americans would perceive Operation HAWAII and the associated diplomatic activities in Washington D. C. ("at precisely 1 p.m.") as extraordinarily illegitimate political and military acts, thus rendering null and void any potential for Operation HAWAII and subsequent Japanese military activities to function as effective instruments of coercion.

---

<sup>1</sup> Layton, p 318. (See above, page 73.)

◦ **Strategic Culminating Points**

**B**

He understood the concept of culminating points well enough, and appreciated the long-term limits of Japanese military power as was illustrated by his admonition that the IJN could run wild in the Pacific for six months but he could make no promises regarding the situation after eighteen months. His failure to comprehend that Japan would reach a strategic culminating point for moral reasons on 7 December 1941, as opposed to a physical or territorial culminating point later on, was rooted in errors of judgment regarding other principles of capital W war.

• **Ponder:**

◦ **Relationship between Military Victory and End State**

**D**

Within a limited war context, Yamamoto recognized that a decisive Japanese military victory would be necessary to break the American will to fight and bring the United States to the negotiating table. Unfortunately for Japan, the military victory he sought and won on 7 December 1941 produced political dynamics on the American home front completely opposite from those he had envisioned.

◦ **Alternative Strategies in case of Failure at any point**

**F**

Operation HAWAII left Tokyo with no viable alternative strategy or fallback position short of unconditional surrender (or almost unconditional surrender). Had they not undertaken (or sanctioned) Operation HAWAII, and not actively initiated the war or fired the first shot against the United States, Japan's political and military leaders would not so dramatically and completely have burned their bridges behind them.

◦ **Odds for Victory**

**D**

Again, give Yamamoto credit for appreciating that Japan had no hope of prevailing against a strongly united America. But see the first three principles of capital W war listed above. The grade for this particular principle can be attributed to a snowball effect, whereby the cumulative weight of multiple mistakes pertaining to principles of capital W war at the top of the list assumes geometric, not arithmetic, proportions – thus precluding any possibility of sound calculations or decisions regarding principles of capital W war toward the bottom of the list. Obviously, all principles of capital W war are interrelated and interdependent. But when a nation suffers defeat and failure, a direct line can usually be traced to miscalculations and assumptions relating to "Know Your Enemy."

- **Operate IAW Holistic National Strategic and Military Effectiveness (i.e., Coherent and Synergistic Actions *At and Among* All Levels of War ... *Simultaneously***

**F**

All roads in this capital W war maze return us to Operation HAWAII and the associated diplomatic activities ("at precisely 1 p.m.") in Washington, D. C. The subsequent maltreatment of Allied prisoners of war (such as the Bataan 'Death March' and the trial and execution of captured air crews from the Doolittle raid) and conquered civilian populations simply added fuel to an already white-hot fire of moral indignation, thus rendering irrelevant the long series of Japanese military victories and conquests from December 1941 to mid-1942. Operation HAWAII also rendered irrelevant Japan's long-lance torpedoes, the superiority of the new *Zero* fighter, the superior range of many of their aircraft, the superior skills of the thousand-or-so pilots in the First and Eleventh Air Fleets, superior Japanese night-fighting capabilities, and the determination and sacrifice of hundreds of thousands of Japanese soldiers from the jungles of Malaya to the coral reefs of the Central Pacific.

◦ **(to include) An Effective (Political-) Military Strategy of Perception Control** **F**

Before the sun set on the first day of Japan's war against the United States, Yamamoto knew that his political-military strategy of perception control had failed. Nor was there any possibility of recovery in the aftermath of 7 December 1941, "a date which will live in infamy."

In the final analysis, Japan would have benefited from a more intelligent, and less cunning, approach to America.

Capital W War, the Imperial Japanese Navy and *Kantai Kessen* might very well have been a winning combination.



**A Note About Chapter 3** ➤➤

Chapter 3 is the written version of a lecture presented to the USMC Command and Staff College in the spring of 1997 and 1998. The style of this chapter is, therefore, quite different from the other three chapters.

The symbol "**S:**" denotes 35 mm slides shown during this presentation. It is unfortunate that the photographs and maps cannot be reproduced for this chapter. I only hope that the reader's imagination can make up, in part, for this shortcoming.

## Chapter 3

---

# Legitimacy and the Credible Capacity to Coerce

**S:**<sup>1</sup> Popular *Perceptions* of Legitimacy and  
Credible Capacity to Coerce<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and illustrate the relationship of these two concepts. By **LEGITIMACY**, I mean mainly political legitimacy.

**S:** Legitimacy / Credible Coercion / Will

By the **CREDIBLE CAPACITY TO COERCE**, I mean the ability to win a battle of wills. It is important to understand that the capacity to kill can be either a positive or a negative component of the capacity to coerce.

**S:** Popular *Perceptions* of Legitimacy and the *Amount* of  
Coercive Force – Normally an Inverse Relationship

Normally there is an **inverse** relationship between political legitimacy and the **amount** of coercive force necessary to impose will. The **greater** the legitimacy of a given political action, generally the **less** the force that is required to enforce it.

**S:** Popular *Perceptions* of Legitimacy and the *Ability* to  
Coerce — **Normally a Direct Relationship**

---

<sup>1</sup> See "A Note about Chapter 3" at the bottom of the previous page.

<sup>2</sup> Larry E. Cable, "Reinventing the Round Wheel: Insurgency, Counter-insurgency, and Peacekeeping Post Cold War" (Undated Manuscript), p 2.

Which means that there is a direct relationship between legitimacy and the **ability** to coerce. Greater political legitimacy translates into a greater ability to coerce – in many cases simply because the **amount** of coercion required is **lower**.

**S:** Popular *Perceptions* of Legitimacy and the Application of (Interventionary) Military Force vis-à-vis *Four Different Perspectives*:

- (1) Enemy Force (direct target)
- (2) Indigenous Population (indirect target)
- (3) Own Population
- (4) Own Armed Forces

There are several components to this broad equation. First, there are two dimensions to the concept of "Legitimacy":

- ♦ There is the perceived legitimacy of a given **political act**.
- ♦ And there is the perceived legitimacy of a given **act of coercion in support** of that political act.

And second, in almost any scenario there are three different players who get to vote on what is legitimate and credible and what is not. Those players are listed (1), (2), (3) and (4) above. For example, during the Philippine Insurrection at the turn of the century, (1) was Aguinaldo's insurgent guerrillas; (2) was the indigenous Filipino population; (3) was the American public; and (4) was the American armed forces in the Philippines – whose perceptions and attitudes differed sharply with those held by part of the society which sent them there.

Never ever forget this admonition from Sir Michael Howard:

**S:** "Wars are not tactical exercises writ large. They are ... conflicts of *societies*, and they can be fully understood only if one understands the nature of the society fighting them. The roots of victory and defeat often have to be sought far from the battlefield, in political, social, and economic factors ..." <sup>1</sup>

Keep these dynamics in mind as we review some relevant aspects of six historical conflicts:

The Peninsular War (1808-1814),  
The Philippine Insurrection (1899-1902),  
The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960),  
Magsaysay's anti-Huk campaign in the Philippines  
(1950-1954),  
The First Indochina War (1946-1954), and  
The Second Indochina War (1964-1975).

## I. The Peninsular War 1808-1814: Napoleon the Emperor Versus Napoleon the General

In 1807 Napoleon's empire was very impressive, but England – the hated enemy – remained undefeated and defiant. To weaken England by economic warfare, Napoleon sent part of his army into the Iberian Peninsula to compel Portugal to participate in the Continental System. Even though Spain was his ally in this affair, Napoleon took advantage of the presence of French troops in Spain (ostensibly on their way to Portugal) to convert the Spanish Monarchy into a "more reliable" ally against Britain.

After considering a few options, Napoleon decided to place his own brother, Joseph, on the throne, and issued 'secret' orders for the arrest of the Spanish Royal Family. This 'secret' soon sprung a leak, resulting in a spontaneous popular uprising in Madrid on the 2nd of May 1808 (the *Dos de Mayo*) and the deaths of many 'surprised' French soldiers. But the French contingent in Madrid quickly rallied and retaliated with ruthless countermeasures. Shortly thereafter, Joseph entered Spain along with the bulk of the French Army (which for a time was led by Napoleon himself). Over the next several months, the French smashed one Spanish Army after another (with a few exceptions).

---

<sup>1</sup> Sir Michael Howard, "The Use and Abuse of Military History" (*Parameters*, March 1981, Vol. XI, No. 1), p 14.



When studying the Peninsular War, we often tend to focus on the military assistance provided to the Portuguese and Spanish by the British (first under Moore and then Wellington). This emphasis does not do justice to the resistance offered by the Portuguese, or the vast majority of the Spanish people who were lead by local partisan leaders, by army generals who here and there still commanded small numbers of regular troops, and by hundreds of priests and monks.

The Portuguese used scorched-earth tactics under the direction of Wellington. In Spain, the French occupation armies encountered guerrilla and partisan warfare, the nature and scale of which has seldom been seen in modern military history. That resistance was characterized by a vicious cycle of brutality. In sieges reminiscent of the Middle Ages, whole towns and cities fought to the last man, woman and child. Moreover, these towns and cities were surrounded by thousands of square miles of rugged terrain ideally suited for partisan/guerrilla warfare.

There are many typical anecdotes; here is just one: Four French soldiers (perhaps stragglers) were foraging for food. They came to a small house. Inside was a woman and her small child. The woman said she had no food, but the soldiers found some 'hidden' in the attic. Still not trusting the woman, they made her feed some of the food to her child, which she did. The soldiers then ate. Soon (but too late for them) one of them noticed the child turning blue. The mother had poisoned her own child for the purpose of poisoning four enemy soldiers. Before they died, the soldiers brutally bayoneted both mother and child.<sup>1</sup>

Partisan warfare throughout Spain was so widespread and so intense that it required an escort of 4,000 French cavalry just to get

---

<sup>1</sup> Told by Dr. Donald D. Howard (Professor of History, and Director of the Institute on Napoleon and the French Revolution, Florida State University) in MCWAR classes on the Peninsular War. For five consecutive years, Dr. Howard has served as the Marine Corps University Chair of Military Affairs for Napoleonic Warfare and Strategy (funded by the Marine Corps University Foundation).

a message from Madrid to Paris and vice versa. The French occupation army, including allied units, lost 50,000 **dead** per year (to fighting and disease) for six years before it retreated back into France early in 1814. After his exile to a small island in the South Atlantic (after his final defeat at Waterloo), Napoleon called this six-year nightmare "His Spanish Ulcer."

The Peninsular War was just the **opposite** of the kind of war he had successfully waged against earlier conventional opponents such as Austria and Prussia. It was a partisan-guerrilla war of truly national proportions. It took on elements of a class war between the Spanish upper and lower classes. And it took on a religious character that Napoleon never appreciated.

### **The Root of Napoleon's Failure.**

What lay at the root of Napoleon's failure in Spain? .... Napoleon the statesman had set Napoleon the soldier an impossible task.... [A]lthough the immediate military aims were more or less achieved, the long-term requirement of winning popular support for the new regime was hopelessly compromised. The lesson was there for the world to read: military conquest in itself cannot bring about a political victory. This was by no means a new lesson, but seldom in history has it been so amply demonstrated. <sup>1</sup>

**Legitimacy:** Napoleon, his brother Joseph, and the French armies had **none – none at all** – in the minds and hearts of the Spanish people. How about the **credible capacity to coerce?** There is a difference between the capacity to "kill" and the capacity to "coerce." Depending on the political context and the methods of killing, killing can be a productive component of coercion or it can be counter-productive. "Credible Coercion" is defined by the

---

<sup>1</sup> David G. Chandler, The Campaigns of Napoleon (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1966), p 660.

**target** of the coercion; that is, by the **will** of the target. The Spanish people decided and their **will** demonstrated that the French Army's great capacity to kill did **not** translate into a credible capacity to coerce.

### **The Limits of Military Power.**

The French occupation army numbered roughly 300,000 troops more or less throughout the six-year war. Given Napoleon's failure to admit that he had made a fundamental political mistake, given his refusal to compromise, and given his penchant to blame his generals for every military setback, and given that Napoleon the Emperor had created a problem that no general could solve with military power alone – 300,000 troops were not enough. There were many French victories, but no peace.

### **Fatal Assumptions.**

Napoleon made four poor "assumptions," the consequences of which were fatal. In that sense "Napoleon the Emperor" was the worst enemy of "Napoleon the General."

- (1) The Emperor assumed that because members of the Spanish upper class supported Joseph as King, the Spanish masses would offer only passive resistance, if any. Instead, the war in Spain took on elements of an ugly class war.
- (2) The Emperor assumed that there was a modestly large Spanish bourgeois (middle) class which would welcome the secular reforms and economic benefits of the French Revolution, as has been the case in France when the Revolutionary Government confiscated and sold Church lands to raise money and lower taxes on the middle class. Therefore ...
- (3) ... When Catholic priests and monks actively opposed the French to preserve Church lands and influence in Spanish society, Napoleon assumed that all Spaniards would see their actions as 'self-serving' (as he did) and

therefore that calls for popular resistance by the priests and monks would fall on deaf ears.

- (4) Finally, those three assumptions led Napoleon the Emperor to a seemingly logical fourth assumption: all Spanish resistance will end with the defeat of Spain's conventional armies.

**Napoleon the Emperor was wrong on all four counts.** He misjudged the Spanish people, the extent of their pride, the tenacity of their religious faith, and their loyalty to their own (Spanish) King. He thereby underestimated the severity of the military task facing him. "If I thought it would cost me 80,000 men I would not attempt it," he blandly asserted, "but it will cost me no more than 12,000." The price he paid for his arrogance and ignorance was not 12,000, but 300,000 French and allied soldiers **dead**, and ultimately his own empire and throne.

#### **Alternative Strategies in Case of Initial Miscalculation.**

Compromise – or cut your losses and get out. Both of these options were too distasteful to Napoleon. Being an early proponent of the 'domino theory,' he believed that if he was seen to have failed in Spain, that Austria and Prussia would want to go another round. And while there was some truth in this, had it not been for the few hundred thousand troops bogged down in the Iberian Peninsula, he could easily have handled the Austrians and the Prussians combined in 1805-06.

#### **The Odds for Victory, and Synergistic Military Effectiveness.**

Clear vision is required for a rational, practical calculation of such odds. Napoleon had anything but clear vision. Across the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war, there was **no synergy, no harmony**, between French political actions and French military operations and tactics. What then did it matter, ultimately, if Napoleon and his marshals conducted (or could have

better conducted) military campaigns and operations in accordance with the traditional principles of war (Mass, Maneuver, Surprise, ...)? The latter do not work well when "capital W war" is out of whack.

## II. The Philippine Insurrection 1899-1902

**S:** Aguinaldo, president and spiritual leader of the Filipino nationalist movement.

During the Philippine Insurrection of 1899-1902, Aguinaldo waged a guerrilla war for independence against 70,000 American troops.<sup>1</sup>

**S:** A Filipino infantry squad

Only a few of his insurgents were equipped with carbines.

**S:** Dead Filipino soldiers after fighting broke out in the suburbs of Manila, Feb 4, 1898.

Those who had rifles fought initially using conventional tactics. Many brave Filipino peasant-soldiers paid dearly for this mistake. Thereafter, Aguinaldo adopted guerrilla tactics and divided his forces into autonomous units which blended into the landscape. American soldiers soon began to suffer casualties inflicted by pits dug into the ground which concealed sharpened bamboo stakes, and from spears and arrows triggered by hidden trip wire.

**S:** A Filipino farmer with Bolo knife

The Philippine Insurrection now became a dirty, ugly affair against insurgents armed with bolos instead of rifles. At one small,

---

<sup>1</sup> The main source for this section is: Stanley Karnow, In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines (NY: Random House, 1989), Ch 7: "Little Brown Brothers."

"peaceful" town on Luzon, "a farmer peddling eggs approached an American sentry playing solitaire. Before the sentry could look up, the peasant severed his head from his body with a *bolo* and escaped." On Leyte, guerrillas took an American prisoner, buried him alive up to his neck, propped his mouth open with a stick, laid a trail of sugar from his mouth through the forest and let millions of ants do the rest. American troops retaliated in kind. "No more prisoners," one wrote home; the guerrillas "take none."

S: President McKinley and his cabinet  
(Secretary of War, Root, 3rd from left)

President McKinley's Secretary of War, Elihu Root, wanted to "civilize" the Filipinos, instead of killing them. More to the point, he argued that teaching the Filipinos American principles of self-government would weaken the insurgency against the American military occupation of the Islands.

S: William Howard Taft, the first U.S. civilian governor of the Philippines.

That "teaching" job fell to "Big Bill Taft," a prominent Ohio Federal Court Judge. Taft demanded that the President grant him sole authority in the Philippines, particularly regarding his relationship with the American military governor in Manila, and McKinley agreed. He then formed a "commission" of functional civilian experts. When they arrived in Manila, Taft told them their first order of business was to get smart about:

- ✓ agriculture, mining and health,
- ✓ the militia, the police and criminal codes,
- ✓ the courts, banking and currency,
- ✓ education,
- ✓ the civil service, and
- ✓ the disposition of public lands.

This took the entire summer of 1900. Only when they were ready (i.e., **informed**) did the Commission begin to do the job they came to do.

Taft's greatest contribution to the defeat of the insurrection was the age-old tactic of "divide and conquer." He created a Filipino political party mainly of the *ilustrados* (the upper class). The party's popular name was the *Federalistas*. Taft gave \$6,000 to the party's newspaper, *La Democracia*; banned opposition parties under a new sedition act; and granted the *Federalistas* a monopoly on all official jobs reserved for Filipinos. Whether its members joined for negative reasons (to preserve status and privilege) or positive reasons (to gain the rights of Americans), the *Federalistas* played a major role in the erosion of Aguinaldo's support.

S: American General Staff officers, Manila, 1899

Meanwhile, General Arthur MacArthur, the American "Military" Governor,

- ♦ ridiculed the notion of winning "hearts and minds,"
- ♦ believed that there was no substitute for total victory,<sup>1</sup> and
- ♦ believed that civilians had no place in war.

General Lloyd Wheaton spoke for most American soldiers of all ranks when he sneered at the tactic of "going with a sword in one hand, [and] a pacifist pamphlet in the other ...," adding that you "can't put down a rebellion by throwing confetti and sprinkling perfumery."

S: American soldiers from Kansas

"Taking it easy during a lull, Oct 2, 1899"

When Taft (condescendingly) referred to the Filipinos as our "little brown brothers," an anonymous American soldier penned these words:

They say I've got brown brothers here,  
But I still draw the line.  
He may be a brother of Big Bill Taft,  
But he ain't no brother of mine.

---

<sup>1</sup> As did his more famous son later.

In March 1901 the Americans captured Aguinaldo alive (by luck and trickery). But the insurrection continued even when Aguinaldo – under pressure from General MacArthur and his own family – issued an "eloquent proclamation acknowledging and accepting the sovereignty of the United States ... without any reservation whatsoever ... "

**S: Major General Miguel Malvar**

General Miguel Malvar proclaimed himself supreme commander of the remnant Filipino forces and concentrated his own (local) guerrilla force in Batangas, and there threatened to retaliate against any Filipinos who cooperated with the Americans.

Reluctantly, Taft put Batangas under military control. Early in January 1902 General Chaffee (MacArthur's successor) sent Brigadier General J. Franklin Bell into Batangas with four thousand men. They "swept the country," "took no prisoners [and] kept no records." They killed everybody suspected of being insurgents – men, women and children. An American correspondent covering the operation reported that most American soldiers believed that "the Filipino ... was little better than a dog." In one instance, they rounded up natives, stood them on a bridge and "without a shred of evidence" against them, shot them "one by one." They dropped "into the water below and floated down [stream] as an example to those who found their bullet-riddled corpses." Bell's strategy, whatever its ethics, worked. Malvar – chased from one place to another and deserted by his closest aides – surrendered in April 1902.

Meanwhile, on the island of Samar in August 1901, natives brandishing *bolos*, picks and shovels surprised a company of 74 Americans eating breakfast in tents at the edge of a town square. Only 20 of the 74 survived the ensuing slaughter. General Chaffee decided to give Samar the Batangas treatment, and directed Brigadier General Jacob W. Smith to end all resistance on the island once and for all. Smith gave the job to a swaggering marine



major named Littleton Waller. "... the more you kill and burn the better you will please me," Smith told Waller. "I want all persons killed who are capable of bearing arms ... against the United States." When Waller asked, "How old?" Smith replied, "Ten years" – then added that Samar "must be made a howling wilderness." (Thereafter he was called "Howling Wilderness" Smith.) Waller took four companies of soldiers to Samar and destroyed every village in his path.

**S: An Anti-atrocity American Political Cartoon:  
"Kill Every One Over Ten" <sup>1</sup>**

The American public was horrified by the slaughter on Samar in particular and was frustrated by the seemingly endless struggle in general. When the Senate Committee on the Philippines opened hearings, administration witnesses were grilled, and soldiers serving in the Islands were called home to testify about atrocities. The press (as usual) had a field day, and Mark Twain recommended that the American Flag be redesigned by painting the white stripes black and replacing the stars with the skull and cross bones.

Smelling trouble (and partly to cover his own backside), General Chaffee prosecuted Waller for murder. But when the Court learned of Smith's orders, it first acquitted Waller, then indicted Smith for conduct prejudicial to "military discipline." A defiant Smith stood by every word of his instructions to Waller. In the end, although convicted, Smith was merely "admonished." He then retired, disgraced in the eyes of the American public but still a hero in the eyes of his soldiers.

On 4 July 1902, President Roosevelt formally declared the war over and commended the American army for its courage, fortitude, indomitable spirit, and loyal devotion in defeating the "great insurrection" against "the lawful sovereignty and just authority of the United States."

---

<sup>1</sup> The cartoon reads "Every One" (not "Everyone").

"Victory" had cost the Americans 4,234 dead and 2,818 wounded – plus more thousands who died later of diseases contracted in the islands. The \$600 million price tag for the war is the equivalent of over \$4 billion in today's money.

But the Filipinos paid an even higher price:

- ♦ 20,000 insurgents dead;
- ♦ Nearly 200,000 civilians dead – from famine and various other causes, including atrocities committed by both sides.
- ♦ The number of *caribou*, or water buffalo, shrank by ninety percent during the war (without *caribou* the rural population could not plant or harvest rice, the Filipino's staple food).

A case can be made for the effectiveness of the Army's draconian 'kill all, burn all' strategy. But before we make judgments about the applicability of this model outside of this particular conflict, we must first understand that Aguinaldo was no Mao Tse-tung, Ho Chi Minh, or Che Guevara; nor was he a Thomas Jefferson or even a George Washington.

Through it all **Aguinaldo**:

- ♦ Was a member of the rural gentry;
- ♦ Courted rich provincial families to boost his own prestige, and upheld their power and privileges and gave them official positions, even though many had collaborated with the Spanish.
- ♦ Was deaf to tenant farmers clamoring for a reduction of the exorbitant rents they paid to plantation owners;
- ♦ Ignored pleas for justice from farmers whose family lands had been seized by the Spanish.
- ♦ Focused **exclusively** on winning independence; (and finally he)
- ♦ Failed to offer genuine change to the Filipino masses.

Therefore:

- ♦ **Too many** Filipinos saw him as the champion of the oppressive oligarchy; and viewed the new constitution as a

sham. [For example, in one town of 14,000 people only 73 citizens were qualified to vote during regional elections conducted by Aguinaldo's regime late in 1898.]

- ♦ Apart from the cause of independence, Aguinaldo's **LEGITIMACY** was questionable in the minds of *too many* Filipino peasants.
- ♦ Because the *Federalistas* and the Americans had more tangible benefits to offer the masses than did Aguinaldo, *too many* Filipinos accommodated both sides.
- [♦ By way of contrast, in their war against the French from 1945 to 1954 the Viet Minh gained support and strength by **simultaneously** challenging colonialism **and** promoting a revolution that pledged to improve the plight of the dispossessed peasants. In areas under their control, they liquidated landlords and distributed their property to the poor. Their popular support was based on nationalistic sentiments **and** demands for social reform – a highly effective combination.]
- ♦ The American soldier's ditty notwithstanding, Big Bill Taft's efforts to **enhance America's political legitimacy** in the eyes of his "Little Brown Brothers" (and to reduce Aguinaldo's) worked effectively as a **force-multiplier** for thousands of American soldiers who beat the bush applying credible coercion against bands of rag-tag insurgents.<sup>1</sup>

### III. The Malayan Emergency<sup>2</sup> 1948-1960

On June 16, 1948 the fierce jungles of Malaya gave birth to a systematic campaign of terror by a few thousand ruthless Communist insurgents, mainly ethnic Chinese (which the British soon branded Communist Terrorists – or CTs). While the CTs

---

<sup>1</sup> For this section on the Philippine Insurrection, I drew heavily from Stanley Karnow, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines* (NY: Random House, 1989), Chapter 7: "Little Brown Brothers."

<sup>2</sup> The British used the label "Emergency" for technical political reasons.

marked British owners and operatives of isolated rubber plantations and tin mines for assassination, they reserved special treatment for "Running Dogs," a name they gave to native Malaysians loyal to the British and holding positions in labor, business, and especially the police. Under the banner of National Liberation, CTs would seize a carefully selected "Running Dog," bury him in an ant hill, bring his pregnant wife before him, and (to enhance his suffering and as an example to others) slice open her stomach before he died a painful, torturous death.

S: Sir Robert Thompson

The British response was crafted and led by men who believed that the most effective strategy for fighting and winning this *war* was not massive counterviolence, counterterror and military power; but appropriate social, economic and political reforms combined with the right kind and amount of military power. One of the more famous of these men is Sir Robert Thompson, who lived most of his life in Malaya. In 1965 he published a book, Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam, in which he discussed five basic principles of counterinsurgency warfare:

S: Thompson's First Principle of Counterinsurgency:

"The government must have a clear [positive] political aim: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable." <sup>1</sup>

S: Tunku Abdul Rahman

Right from the start, the British promised Malaya its independence as soon as the CTs were defeated. In 1955 they sponsored elections, which were won handily by the Alliance Party, under Tunku (leader) Abdul Rahman (shown here.) The

---

<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert Thompson, Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966), Chapter 4, pp 50-51.

Alliance Party was formed, in part, to help the Chinese become loyal citizens of Malaya. It included Malayan nationalists, the Malayan Chinese Association, and the Malayan Indian Congress. The British made the heads of these various groups full members of the High Commissioner's council.

On August 31, 1957, Malaya was granted its independence.

S: Thompson's Fourth Principle of Counterinsurgency:

"The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas."

I have purposely altered Thompson's sequence. Note that he did not say "ignore" the guerrillas. **Also note that these are principles of "counterinsurgency," not counterinsurgency warfare.**

(And) the best way to defeat the subversion was ....

S: Thompson's Third Principle of Counterinsurgency:

"The government must have an overall plan. ... It must include all political, social, economic, administrative, police and other measures which have a bearing on the insurgency. ... It is essential, too, that there should be a proper balance between the military and the civil effort, with complete cooperation in all fields. Otherwise a situation will arise in which military operations produce no lasting results because they are unsupported by civil follow-up action. Similarly, civilian measures, particularly in areas disputed with the insurgents, are a waste of time and money if they are unsupported by military operations to provide the necessary protection."

Closely related to #'s 4 and 3 is #5.

S: Thompson's Fifth Principle of Counterinsurgency:

"In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first."

**S:** Sir Harold Briggs

It was for these reasons that Lieutenant General Sir Harold Briggs (shown here, purposefully wearing civilian clothes) orchestrated the greatest social experiment in Asia – the "New Village" program – commonly called the "Briggs Plan."

**S:** Diagram of a Typical Resettlement in Johore

During World War II, the Malayan economy was devastated by the Japanese occupation, and about 100,000 ethnic Chinese workers who lost their jobs in the cities and larger towns migrated (with their families) into the country and became "squatter" farmers on government lands. They were fertile ground for the CTs. The New Village program resettled 400,000 of these people into about 500 new villages (the principal locations are shown on this map). This accomplished several things:

- (1) it got them away from the CTs and into places where the Government could better control them;
- (2) it transformed them into legitimate landowners who now had a personal stake in the fighting and outcome of the war; and
- (3) many of the New Villages were located so as to add to the defensive shield around the principal population centers.

It is **important** to understand that the "New Village" program did **not** take families away from their **ancestral** villages and farms. The program was carefully planned and systematically executed. The people were treated with respect and compassion. The following story illustrates the role played by ordinary British soldiers in winning this war.

It was 5 a.m. At the edge of a village of 400 people, Peter Lucy and a Chinese affairs officer stood in front of a convoy of empty lorries [that's trucks for you non-Commonwealth folks] – one for each family. They saw parchment-faced old women, babies still at the breast, and sleepy-eyed boys and girls emerging from hovels they called homes. With no warning [for security reasons here and at the site of the new village], they just walked in, told the villagers what was going to happen, and that it was going to happen *now*.

Blank dismay filled their faces. An old woman wailed; dozens of children started crying; dogs barked; men started talking at the tops of their voices – not angry – only stupefied by shock. Many were just terrified; and it was here that the British soldiers behaved so magnificently. It would have been easy for them to regard all squatters as possible CTs and bundle them by force into the waiting lorries, but they never did. Patiently, and with an abundance of good humor, they sweltered in the tropical heat, helping people to sort out their problems and their belongings.

One young, fresh-faced soldier gently took a baby from his crying mother, crooked it in his arms, and handed it up to the father [on the lorry] before returning to the mother, politely giving her his arm to lean upon. The mother went, but the toothless grandmother refused to budge, even after an irate sergeant yelled, 'For God's sake get her in [the lorry]. We'll be here all day.'

The cockney soldier flashed back, 'Blimey, Sarge! Have you ever tried to tackle *your* mother-in-law?' With grandma finally in the lorry, the sergeant shouted 'Okay – let's go.' Suddenly the eldest son (only 12 years old) started sobbing bitterly. When a translator revealed that the boy's dog had been left behind, another young [conscript] soldier jumped down and

held his arms up to lift the boy out of the lorry. 'To hell with the dog,' yelled the sergeant. 'We'll buy him a new one!'

'Come on, Sarge,' replied the soldier. 'Didn't you ever have a dog when you were young?' (Adding to Peter Lucy in an aside, 'If the son-of-a-bitch ever *was* young.')

Not until they had found the puppy did the lorry join the convoy.<sup>1</sup>

This story typifies both the British approach to the New Village program and their strategic approach to the entire conflict.

S: Thompson's Second Principle of Counterinsurgency:

"The government must function in accordance with law."

The counterinsurgency campaign in Malaya was led by men who realized that the "authority for running the war must rest squarely on the shoulders of the civil government and the police" – and that "the troops were [only] there to help." The purpose of tough emergency laws was carefully explained to the people. CTs who were captured were tried in the courts. The Malayan "Emergency" was viewed mainly as a **police** war, which was fought and won by the "Running Dogs." Expanded to a peak of 67,000 (from 9,000), the police suffered 70 per cent of the total casualties and served as a vital political symbol of civilian authority and the rule of law. Local police were also better collectors of information about the CTs than were conventional Army intelligence units.

---

<sup>1</sup> Noel Barber, The War Of The Running Dogs – The Malayan Emergency: 1948-1960 (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1972 c. 1971 by Filmtransac, A. G.), Chapter 8, "The Social Revolution". (Also, New York: Bantam Books, 1987 paperback edition.)



**S: Scale of Rewards – Defection or Capture *Alive***  
**LOWEST Categories <sup>1</sup>**

---

District Committee Member	\$ 2,800
Assistant Company CO	
Platoon Leader	\$ 2,300
Cell, Squad Leader	\$ 1,600
Ordinary Party Member	\$ 875
Soldier or Class A Laborer	

One of the most effective weapons in the British arsenal was the payment of seemingly obscene sums of money for critical information or directly to guerrillas of all ranks who "surrendered." It was an incredibly effective instrument for passive coercion.

**S: Enemy Soldier surrendering with rifle over his head**

**S: Scale of Rewards – Defection or Capture *Alive***  
**MIDDLE Categories**

---

Province Current Affairs Member	\$ 8,750
Front Chairman / Battalion CO	
Province Committee Member	\$ 6,300
District Secretary	
District Assistant Secretary	\$ 4,550
Company CO	

**S: Wanted posters**

Wanted posters like these (above, posted in one of the "New Villages") were plastered all over Malaya.

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert W. Komer, The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect: Organization of a Successful Counterinsurgency Effort (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, R-957-ARPA 1972), p. 73.

S: Scale of Rewards -- Defection or Capture *Alive*  
 HIGHEST Categories

Chairman Central Committee	\$ 28,000
Presidium Member	\$ 22,700
Central Committee Member	\$ 18,200
Province Secretary	\$ 16,000
Regimental CO	

One guerrilla leader -- Hor Leung, guilty of several gruesome atrocities -- was paid over \$400,000 for his **own** surrender **and** the surrender of **28** of his commanders and **132** of their men.

It was ironic that while many guerrilla leaders were losing confidence even in their own bodyguards, on the British side, "men of principle" condemned the payment of rewards to "murderers." But in 1957 Tunku Abdul Rahman (now leader of independent Malaya) disagreed. The "Emergency" was costing the local (Malayan) Federal Treasury \$350,000 a day, not counting the daily British contribution, and the death toll to his own people was already far too high. It is true, he said, that Hor Leung is now "richer than any of us." But "we have to get results." And if rewards "can buy the end" of this thing sooner and cheaper, "we must" use them.

S: Osman China, David Storrier and Hor Leung

The Government employed an effective psychological warfare program, which was run by Osman China. Assisting the regular police were cloak and dagger men (and women) of the "Special Branch," who worked in secret for top Government officials. One Special Branch operative "opened a thousand blank files and told his men to fill them with 'people not numbers.' He wanted every item of information about the past lives of CT sympathizers: photographs, teacher's names, nicknames, spending, eating, lovemaking habits, until he had a list of people with fears, hates,

and loyalties he could understand." One of the best of Osman China's "Special Branch" operatives was David Storrier (shown here on your right with Hor Leung after he surrendered).

All of this brings us back to the political-military dynamics and benefits of the New Village program:

- ♦ A more secure population gave more information about CTs to the police;
- ♦ which lead to the break-up of CT organizations in the populated areas;
- ♦ which isolated the CTs from their sources of food and information;
- ♦ which (finally) forced frustrated and desperate CTs to fight in the open on poor ground.

### **Taking the fight to the CT**

**S:** Senoi guard at Fort Kemar

While the Home Guard (which expanded to 350,000) and 67,000 police provided local security, 40,000 British and native Army troops took the fight directly to the CT.

**S:** Malayan patrolman in jungle at night

During the first couple of years the British used battalion sweeps; but they soon transitioned to small-unit patrols which involved stalking, listening, and waiting –

**S:** Soldiers in jungle stream (elite, specialized troops)

often in jungle swamps with coffee-colored water, sometimes five feet deep complete with leeches, mosquitoes, and snakes; towering trees which blotted out the sun, spiky sword grass ten feet high, and a thick thorny undergrowth.

**S:** Paratrooper jumping out of plane (elite, specialized troops)

The Government pursuit of the guerrilla involved highly specialized troops, and the application of lethal violence against **precise and legitimate targets – as perceived by all parties, friend and foe, political and military (including, and especially, British public opinion.)**

**S:** Colored diagram of "The Structure of Insurgency"

The counterinsurgency strategy which triumphed in the twelve-year Malayan "Emergency" was one part military and nine parts political, social and economic. It involved a **broad-based assault on the full spectrum** of the Communist Insurgency. The strategy – built around the enhancement of political legitimacy – was characterized by three simple words:

**S: Presence, Persistence and Patience**

The engine which powered this strategy was fueled by social, political and economic reforms that took the insurgents' slogans away from them. This helped to isolate the guerrilla and make him vulnerable to psychological warfare, which (in turn) sapped his morale and thinned out his ranks.

## IV. Magsaysay's Anti-Huk Campaign 1950-1954<sup>1</sup>

This same holistic political-military counterinsurgency strategy defeated the Huks in the Philippines. From 1946 to 1950 things

<sup>1</sup> Quoted material in this section is from Major Lawrence M. Greenberg (USA), The Hukbalahap Insurrection: A Case Study of a Successful Anti-Insurgency Operation in the Philippines – 1946-1955 (Washington DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1987); and (the flag-waving but not-too-far-off-the-mark account by) Alvin H. Scaff, The Philippine Answer to Communism (Stanford University Press, 1955).

had gone from bad to worse for the government in Manila – for all the usual reasons: corruption among the economic elites, governmental indifference to poverty, and military abuse of the population. But in 1950 things began to change. Newly elected President Quirino urged Army officers to inspire confidence and a sense of security among the civilians. He formulated a policy of dealing justly and humanely with the Huks – called the "policy of attraction." He threatened swift court-martial to erring soldiers. And he began to implement a program of psychological warfare, supported by social reforms.

**S: Magsaysay beating the bush**

In September 1950 Quirino appointed Ramon Magsaysay as Secretary of the Department of National Defense. During World War II Magsaysay was a popular guerrilla leader against the Japanese. For a time after the war he had successfully operated a small transportation company; his motto (then) was, "When an engine breaks down, fix it."

Magsaysay brought this same philosophy to his new job as he began fixing the nation's armed forces:

- ♦ When the troops campaigned, he was there (as shown here).
- ♦ When soldiers were killed in action, he was often there to express his care and concern.
- ♦ When soldiers of all ranks performed acts of bravery, he was there to commend and promote.
- ♦ When the troops were in need, Magsaysay was there with supplies, increased appropriations, and logistical support.

Magsaysay:

- ♦ possessed boundless energy;
- ♦ talked to everybody;
- ♦ was there to listen to their stories when Huks surrendered or were captured, and saw that they received fair treatment;

- ♦ was seen by the people as being responsive to human need; and (he)
- ♦ rallied the nation.

Magsaysay reorganized the armed forces, integrating the Constabulary with the Army and creating a unified command under a new Chief of Staff who attacked the problem of army morale:

- ♦ Undesirable officers and men were discharged or retired.
- ♦ Effective officers were promoted.
- ♦ Performance in the field received special recognition.
- ♦ Salaries and allowances were increased (so soldiers would no longer have to pilfer from the people they were supposed to protect).
- ♦ Abuse of civilians was severely punished.
- ♦ Newly appointed civil-affairs officers participated in community activities and generated civilian support for army activities against the Huks.

Popular perceptions about the armed forces began to change.

The Huks had promised "land for the landless." Magsaysay co-opted that slogan by giving unoccupied government land to the landless. He used some of the money authorized in 1951 to create ten additional Battalion Combat Teams to establish the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) as a part of the army.

**S:** Army bulldozer clears way for a farm road to an EDCOR settlement for ex-Huks

Whole communities of ex-Huks grew out of the jungles of Mindanao. In each community, a small percentage of ex-army men functioned as a stabilizer group.

**S:** An ex-Huk & his family gather eggplant from their own garden

Philippine Army units provided security and helped the settlers to plant their first crops. Grubstakes were provided until the settlers were self-supporting.

**S:** The new EDCOR communities provide graded streets and inexpensive but comfortable houses

It was a powerful inducement for remaining Huks to surrender.

**S:** A woman working her sewing machine, in her own home, with her little girl playing in the same room

**S:** Settlers enclosed their yards with fences and fruit trees

**S:** Ex-Huks pitted their skill and brawn against the jungle instead of the government

**S:** The intellectual vigor and leadership skills once used by this Filipino in the Huk revolt were channeled instead into the town council at an EDCOR settlement

Ex-Huks with bolos swinging at their sides discussed their farm problems with unarmed settlement officers. One foreign newsman who visited these settlements to report on the role of the Philippine Army in EDCOR wrote:

"I have seen many armies, but this one beats them all. This is **an army with a social conscience.**"

**S:** Louis Taruc (after his surrender in May 1954)

Louis Taruc was the most popular Huk leader among the peasants of Central Luzon. He led the Huk guerrilla forces against the Japanese in World War II, and was an important member of the Communist Politburo, the party's top policy-making body. But by 1954 his guerrillas were on the run. Proper treatment of the civilians by the Philippine Armed forces was paying off. Every time the Huks moved from one hideout to another, someone tipped off the army. Many of Taruc's lieutenants in the Central Luzon Huk organization were captured or had surrendered. With his forces reduced to a handful of weary, battered, and disorganized men, on the morning of May 17, 1954, Louis Taruc "gave up."

## V. The First Indochina War 1945-1954

And this brings us to the French Indochina War. A long list of operational and tactical mistakes and shortcomings are common to all analyses of the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

**S:** The strip. Three *Bearcats* buzz the control tower

For example, the French based a flight of 12 F8F *Bearcat* fighters at the Dien Bien Phu air strip, along with spotter aircraft from two Artillery Observation Groups.

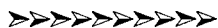
**S:** The strip, with its napalm-loaded fighters

But they could not base more fighters there (that is, before the arrival of Giap's artillery), because the French lacked transport aircraft in the quantities necessary to fly in extra quantities of aviation gasoline, napalm, etc.

The French also made a serious effort with their available airpower to interdict the Viet Minh supply lines; but they had too little air power for the job and they wildly exaggerated the effect of what little they did have. And the list goes on.

**S:** French troops parachute into Dien Bien Phu

Often overlooked, however, as a factor contributing to the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu is the ethnic composition of the allegedly 15,000 "crack troops" which the French committed to the battle. 36% of these were Vietnamese and another 19% were African, mainly North African.





ETHNIC COMPOSITION – DIEN BIEN PHU GARRISON  
(BY NUMBERS)

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>NCO's</u>	<u>EM's</u>	<u>TOTALS</u>
Vietnamese Regulars	11	165	3,876	4,052
Vietnamese Auxiliaries	–	105	1,323	1,428
French Mainland	272	780	1,758	2,810
Foreign Legion	128	440	3,363	3,931
North Africans	2	168	2,467	2,637
Africans	–	8	239	247
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>413</b>	<b>1,666</b>	<b>13,026</b>	<b>15,105</b>

ETHNIC COMPOSITION – DIEN BIEN PHU GARRISON  
(BY PERCENT OF TOTAL GARRISON)

	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>PERCENT</u>	
Vietnamese Regulars	4,052	26.8	}
Vietnamese Auxiliaries	1,428	9.5	} 36.3 % combined
French Mainland	2,810	18.6	}
Foreign Legion	3,931	26.0	} 44.6 % combined
North Africans	2,637	17.5	}
Africans	247	1.6	} 19.1 % combined
<b>TOTALS:</b>	<b>15,105</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

**The "Rats of the Nam Yum"**

**S:** The cliffs at Dominique: Home of the "Rats of the Nam Yum"

Some of those 5,480 Vietnamese troops fought well (as did some of the Algerians). But concentrated smack-dab in the middle of the Dien Bien Phu fortress were three-to-four thousand 'internal deserters' who sat out the battle in holes dug along the east bank of the Nam Yum River (shown here) and on an adjacent small island.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Which is shown on some maps and can be seen in some photographs.

Throughout the beleaguered Dien Bien Phu garrison, they were called the "Rats of Nam Yum." They were mainly Vietnamese and North Africans (but included a few Frenchmen and Legionnaires).<sup>1</sup> They made nightly forays, stole parachuted supplies – including medicine, weapons, ammunition, batteries for radios, etc. – and operated a brisk black market. Colonel Langlais considered but refrained from attacking the "Rats" out of concern that such a battle inside the fortress would risk the total collapse of those Vietnamese and North African units still in the fight. Instead, the paratroopers and Legionnaires sealed off the trenches adjacent to the "Rats" along the east bank of the Nam Yum and concentrated as best they could on the enemy **outside** the fortress.<sup>2</sup>

After the fall of Dien Bien Phu, General Navarre, the Commander in Chief of the French Union Forces in Indochina, held a press conference during which he was critical of the inability of Asiatics to withstand the volume of artillery fire that Giap's guns had unleashed against the fortress. Whereupon a Vietnamese reporter asked General Navarre how it was that the Viet Minh themselves, who were Asiatics, had been so successful in learning how to stand up under French artillery fire. At that point, all of the Asiatic reporters stood up and walked out.<sup>3</sup>

#### S: Officer candidates of Vietnamese National Army

Before the battle of Dien Bien Phu, General Navarre's goal had been to build a National Vietnamese Army of sixty battalions (funded, of course, by the United States). By the summer of 1953 it had reached the seemingly impressive figure of 150,000 men. (Shown here are some Vietnamese officer candidates.) In 1952, 7,730 Vietnamese soldiers were killed serving either with the National Army or with the French Expeditionary Corps – and

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Fall, Hell in a Very Small Place (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1967), p 453.

<sup>2</sup> Fall, Hell, p 209.

<sup>3</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change 1953-1956, Vol. 1 of The White House Years (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963), p 373.

again, this is a seemingly impressive figure. But casualty figures can be a spurious indicator of military prowess. 'Who was dying, why, and for what result?' are three crucial questions. Others are:

- ♦ How many medals were being won?
- ♦ How many NCOs were emerging from the ranks?
- ♦ How many battlefield commissions were there?
- ♦ How many units were developing cohesion and *esprit de corps*?
- ♦ What was the ratio of enemy to friendly casualties?
- ♦ How many villages were liberated **and held**?
- ♦ Finally, what was the religion of those who did serve with distinction?

**S:** Vietnamese-French recruits in Hanoi

The image of these sharp-looking recruits from Hanoi gave a false impression of the overall picture. Many of the 2,600 Vietnamese junior officers were incompetent and corrupt and less than fully committed. The best elements of the Vietnamese educated middle class had little desire to serve in an army that was still under French overall direction, and that was created to fight their own people who, even if led by Communists, were still known to be fighting primarily for national independence.

**S:** Bao Dai (former emperor of Annam)

The situation was exacerbated by the almost total lack of leadership displayed by the Vietnamese Chief of State, Bao Dai, the former Emperor of Annam, who – after being given no real power by his French masters – understandably elected to spend much of his time in the spas of Europe.

Given the whole situation it is therefore not surprising that the Vietnamese National Army never became an effective fighting force. The impact of this **political failure** on French military operations was obvious to any objective observer. In July and August 1953, **thirty** French Union battalions attempted to

surround and destroy the Viet Minh 95th Regiment in Annam by trapping it between Highway 1 and the sea.

The Vietminh 95th Regiment had long dominated Highway 1 and the sandy, salt-covered, barren coastal area between Hue and Quang Tri City. Here was guerrilla fighting at its worst – a hostile population, an enemy who faded away when approached, a land of tunnels, land mines, and booby traps. The French Expeditionary Force in bitter understatement called Highway 1 where it ran through this area, 'The Street Without Joy.' <sup>1</sup>

At the end of the "battle" in August, the French reported killing 182 and capturing 387 enemy soldiers. In fact, many of these were local Viet Minh militia and innocent farmers. Most of the 95th Viet Minh Regiment slipped through the ring and escaped to fight another day.

During 1953 General Navarre also planned ATLANTE, a three-phase operation designed to clear a large Viet Minh zone (MR V) which spread from Da Nang to Nha Trang to the Southern Mountain Plateau. Because the Viet Minh forces in this region were in various stages of development (in contrast to Giap's mature main force divisions in the north), Navarre wanted to clean them out before they had time to complete their armament, training and organization. But he was already too late given the status of his own Vietnamese units. When fifteen battalions kicked off the first phase of ATLANTE in January 1954, they suffered a catastrophic defeat, with multiple incidents of whole units of Vietnamese National troops deserting in large numbers. Navarre had seen enough and canceled the remaining two phases of ATLANTE. <sup>2</sup>

For that matter, none of Navarre's operations had been much to crow about. In July 1953, three parachute battalions had raided Lang Son on the Vietnamese-Chinese border. They surprised the

---

<sup>1</sup> General Philip B. Davidson, USA (Ret.), Vietnam at War: The History 1946-1975 (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1988), p 169.

<sup>2</sup> Davidson, pp 211-212.

local defenders and destroyed over 5,000 tons of equipment and fuel, but then had to beat a devious and precipitous exit to the sea where they were picked up (rescued) by the French Navy.<sup>1</sup> In August the French successfully evacuated Na San by air. But, in the words of Winston Churchill, "wars are not won by evacuations alone." The following September, a force of twenty French Union battalions tried to surround and crush the Viet Minh 42nd Independent Regiment which was operating permanently behind the de Lattre Line. The 42nd resisted briefly and then vanished. In October Navarre pitted six of his best mobile groups against the Viet Minh 320th Division which had recently *infiltrated* behind the de Lattre Line. Unlike the 42nd Regiment, the much larger and tougher 320th Division stood and fought until Navarre called off the operation on 7 November.

### **S: Navarre's Balance Sheet**

#### Date: Operation

- July 53: HIRONDELLE – a raid followed by an evasive retreat.
- July-Aug 53: CAMARQUE – a moral defeat.
- Aug 53: Na San – an evacuation of a vulnerable airhead.
- Sept-Oct 53: MOUETTE – a limited success defending his "secure" backyard behind the de Lattre Line.
- Dec-Jan 54: Viet Minh offensives in Laos and the Central Highlands of Vietnam.
- Jan 54: ATLANTE – a miserable failure and huge moral defeat.
- Jan-Feb 54: Navarre disperses his French Delta reserves to Laos and the Central Highlands.
- Feb 54: Viet Minh forces attack southern and western Delta areas, and the French fight hard to keep Highway 5 open.

---

<sup>1</sup> Davidson, pp 168-70 (see map, p 170).

General Navarre's rather anemic balance sheet reveals that the French were losing the battle on **both** sides of the de Lattre Line even before the battle of Dien Bien Phu.

**S:** French blockhouse along de Lattre Line

The de Lattre Line – despite its 900 forts, 10,000 automatic weapons and mortars, 500 pieces of artillery, and its 80,000 troops – had more holes than a Swiss cheese. Since early 1952 the French had to mount one operation after the other just to keep open the main road (Highway 5) from Hanoi to Haiphong. And by May 1953 the French controlled no more than 2,000 of the 7,000 villages in the Red River Delta. Colonel John McCuen, a United States Army observer in Indochina, described what took place in one subsector assigned to an Algerian rifle battalion, which was supplemented by a Vietnamese company. After "aggressive" patrolling and ambush operations over a six-month period, the commander of this force reported that his subsector was cleared of all regular, regional and local Viet Minh forces, and the Algerian battalion was shifted elsewhere. Within a couple of months McCuen reported that much of the subsector was again well on the way to becoming a Viet Minh base.

**S:** Map: Indochina July 1954 and Geneva Settlement

The map on your left depicting French-controlled areas (in white) as of July 1954 is an illusion.

- ♦ The French had the allegiance of at most 2 million of the eight million people behind the de Lattre Line, (and most of the 2 million were Catholic).
- ♦ That small white area shown in Annam was the place where 30 French Union battalions failed to trap a single Viet Minh. An entire regiment can't just melt away unless a lot of people don't talk to the French.
- ♦ Finally, this map shows a lot of white around Saigon and the Mekong Delta area.

**S:** Close-up of a different map of Viet Minh Zones 1949  
(showing Mekong Delta area)

- ♦ But I believe that this map (above) depicts a more accurate reflection, showing considerable **red** areas controlled by the **Viet Minh**. That doesn't leave the French with much, not much at all really in **Vietnam**, apart from Saigon and a couple of million Catholics up north.

**S:** Vietnamese digging a grave for Vietnamese soldier who died for France

As the Vietnamese continued to bury their dead (on both sides),

**S:** Vietnamese burying Vietnamese soldier killed for France

I wonder if the 7,000 French officers serving in Indochina honestly ever considered,

**S:** Vietnamese family mourning a Vietnamese soldier who died for "France" in 1950

on which side they would have been

**S:** Blow-up of the inscription on the tombstone

had they been born a poor Vietnamese farmer? Did they think much about their own revolution in 1792?

The French did not lose their Indochina war because they fought and lost the battle of Dien Bien Phu; they fought and lost the battle of Dien Bien Phu because they were losing their Indochina war.

### **President Eisenhower and Dien Bien Phu.**

Few Americans realized this better than did President Dwight D. Eisenhower. In a chapter entitled "Chaos in Indochina" in his presidential memoirs, he explained the French problem as he understood it. Well before the crisis of Dien Bien Phu, President Eisenhower had listened patiently as this or that military expert explained that the French could achieve greater tactical and operational success if they could only be convinced to train and fight more like the Viet Minh. But Eisenhower believed that the problem ran deeper than that – that the main problem was French *politics not French tactics and generalship*. In May 1954, Walter Bedell Smith, Acting Secretary of State <sup>1</sup> (and Eisenhower's trusted Chief of Staff during World War II), made the following remark to the French Foreign Minister, Georges Bidault:

Any second-rate general should be able to win in Indochina if there were a proper political atmosphere. <sup>2</sup>

As indicated by Bedell Smith's remark, Eisenhower was infuriated by the obstinate French attitude on the matter of offering the Associated States "complete" independence. Unless and until the French corrected this fundamental flaw in their Grand Strategy, Eisenhower realized that their struggle in Indochina was hopeless:

I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, possibly 80 per cent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than the Chief of State Bao Dai. <sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Temporarily filling in at Geneva for the ailing John Foster Dulles.

<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p 360.

<sup>3</sup> Eisenhower, Mandate for Change, p 372.



When Vice President Nixon said publicly that, "If it were not for the Communists in Indochina, there would be no war," Eisenhower knew better:

Willingness to fight for freedom, no matter where the battle may be, has always been a characteristic of our people, but the conditions then prevailing in Indochina were such as to make unilateral American intervention nothing less than sheer folly. <sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Eisenhower found himself in a domestic political quandary as Nixon and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Arthur Radford – joined by right-wing elements in Eisenhower's own party – called for direct American intervention to save Dien Bien Phu. Although Eisenhower believed that what they proposed was foolish, he did not want to look soft on the issue of international Communism.

Fortunately, help came from three disparate quarters: General Matthew Ridgway, U.S. Army Chief of Staff; Congress; and Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill. Ridgway sent a large Army fact-finding mission to Indochina which concluded that an American intervention, to be successful, would be expensive in terms of troops, money, and casualties. The Senate Democratic Majority Leader, Lyndon Johnson, made it known that the Senate would not support American intervention in Indochina unless two conditions were met: First, the French would have to promise unconditional independence; and second, the British would have to go in alongside the United States.

Although he could not say so publicly, privately Eisenhower was relieved when he announced to the American public that the British categorically refused to intervene in Indochina. <sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Eisenhower, *Mandate for Change*, p 373.

<sup>2</sup> ... although he was disappointed that Prime Minister Winston Churchill was at first cool to the idea of forming up some sort of Southeast Asia NATO organization to draw the line on future Communist expansion in Asia after Dien Bien Phu and the Geneva Conference resulted in Viet Minh control of North Vietnam.

**S: Delegates in Saigon demand full independence (October 1953)**

But when the French continued to withhold full independence from the Vietnamese, President Eisenhower – given the Cold War mind-set of the time – had no real political choice other than to continue to support the French but without direct American military intervention. Therefore, when two hundred delegates from several Vietnamese political movements and parties met in Saigon in October 1953 to demand full independence from the French, you can readily imagine Eisenhower's personal feelings as he directed American officials to ask the convention to tone down its demand, lest it further embarrass and weaken the French effort in Indochina.

**The Ultimate Irony.**

**S: Thousands in Hanoi hear Ho Chi Minh (September 1945)**

On 2 September 1945 (while the Japanese formally surrendered to General MacArthur on the deck of the *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay) tens of thousands of Vietnamese gathered in Hanoi to hear Ho Chi Minh declare Vietnam's independence. As Ho Chi Minh quoted Thomas Jefferson and the American Declaration of Independence,

**S: Major Patti, OSS, with Giap when band plays the 'Star-Spangled Banner'**

Major Archimedes Patti and other members of the **American** OSS stood next to General Giap.<sup>1</sup> During and immediately after World War II, American policy opposed a French return to Indochina.<sup>2</sup> While the Americans supported Ho Chi Minh's Viet Minh in the north, in the south the **British** worked with three divisions of

---

<sup>1</sup> Office of Strategic Services (the forerunner of the CIA).

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately this policy would soon be sacrificed when the French demanded as much as a condition for their cooperation with the United States in forming an anti-Soviet bloc in Europe.

Japanese troops to "restore order" and prepare for the return of the French. In the words of one British soldier, it was an "extraordinary situation" in which the British – assisted by Japanese troops who were just months ago their enemies – were fighting an American-backed independence movement of Annamites with whom the British "had no real quarrel at all." Major Patti (then and later) characterized the situation as "Disgraceful! Simply Disgraceful." Meanwhile, command of French forces in Vietnam (few as they were at the time) had fallen to General Jacques Philippe Leclerc. But both he and French occupation troops en route from France had been stuck in Ceylon by a worldwide lack of shipping created by American and British efforts to return millions of war-weary soldiers to their homes and families as soon as possible.

When the first echelon of French troops (from France) eventually arrived in Saigon – courtesy of Japanese river barges and navigators – they went about putting down the Viet Minh and other nationalistic resistance groups with a very heavy hand. This was the beginning of the cycle of violence and atrocities which characterized the French Indochina War. British Sergeant Major Douglas Greensmith, 114th Field Regiment, R. A., recalled an early incident. A party of local rebels had taken over a house on the outskirts of Saigon, and had brutally murdered the owner and his wife. A patrol of local French colonials – "a real rag-tag mob" – was sent out. When a few shots were fired at them, the unit opened up with every gun they had. Whistles were blown, and the French then went in. Soon they returned with a "terrified old man." When it became evident that the French were about to hang the man (on the spot) with some nearby telephone wire, the commander of the attached small British unit, which had only observed the action (as per orders from the British commander in southern Vietnam) approached Sergeant Major Greensmith: "We're pulling up, Sergeant Major. I will not be a party to cold-blooded murder."

In an interview years afterwards Lord Callahan, then a young Member of the House of Commons, recalled telling a friend in the

French Government in Paris that they (the French) "had no sense of minimum force.... I thought they were behaving with monstrous stupidity.... They themselves were ignorant (no doubt based on the slenderness of their own intelligence) of what was taking place in the people's minds there."

**S:** Ho Chi Minh in Paris, June 1946

Some days ago all of you saw (in an excellent video on Dien Bien Phu) that in 1946, in northern Vietnam, political ground truth had compelled the French to recognize Ho Chi Minh as a 'Head of State.' (And) that the French had invited him – as a 'Head of State' – to Paris to discuss details relating to Vietnam's status as a member of the French Union. (And) when Ho Chi Minh fully realized the true nature of these '**details,**' he withdrew from the negotiations and the First Indochina War began. In fact, the French Government had designed the negotiations to fail in a manner which would make the Viet Minh appear to be the villain in the eyes of the French people.

Given their stubborn refusal to grant the Vietnamese complete independence, it was a war that the French could not win.

**S:** Sometimes it's over *before* it's over.

With all due respect to that great American baseball philosopher, Yogi Berra, sometimes it's over **before** it's over.

**S:** Sometimes the 'Fat Lady' sings early.

And sometimes the Fat Lady does sing early.

### **General Leclerc Soon Saw the Light**

**S:** General de Gaulle and General Leclerc inspect the French 2nd Armored Division in Paris, 26 August 1944.

One French general saw this clearly as early as 1946. He was Jacques Philippe Leclerc (shown here with General Charles de Gaulle inspecting Leclerc's French 2nd Armored Division shortly after it had liberated Paris in August 1944). Leclerc's judgment was not clouded by the joyous welcome he had been given by the French population of Saigon in the pouring rain in October 1945. And over the next few months he came to believe that the Viet Minh could not be defeated by force of arms alone. When the French Government in Paris largely ignored his recommendations for a political solution to the Indochina problem, a frustrated Leclerc resigned his post in September 1946.<sup>1</sup>

The military situation continued to worsen. In January 1947 Leclerc was offered command of all French troops in Indochina. He refused. A short while later he was offered the post of High Commissioner (in Indochina) with broad powers. Leclerc's conditions for acceptance were "full civil and military power for himself," and genuine "independence for the Vietnamese within the French Union." When the French government rejected these conditions, Leclerc once again refused. He publicly warned his countrymen that military force and anti-communism would be useless tools as long as the problem of nationalism remained unsolved.<sup>2</sup> A year later General Leclerc was killed in an air crash – and for the next seven years his admonition was generally ignored.

## **Charles de Gaulle**

### **S: de Gaulle and Leclerc in Paris**

There is some evidence that Charles de Gaulle, the first President of the new Fourth Republic, shared Leclerc's assessment of the Indochina situation. After all, both of these men had been prominent leaders of the Free French forces in World War II.

---

<sup>1</sup> Just six months after the last British soldiers had left Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen Hammer, *The Struggle for Indochina 1940-1955* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1967 © 1954, 1955), p 195.

**S:** German troops marching past the Arc de Triomphe in June 1940.

Both generals, along with most of their countrymen, suffered the humiliation and heartbreak of seeing *their* country – *La France* – humiliated and occupied by a foreign invader.

**S:** General de Gaulle in England during Nazi occupation of France. "In the absence of armoured divisions, a microphone is a weapon."

During his 4-year exile in England, de Gaulle, in particular, learned that a microphone is a powerful weapon.

**S:** General de Gaulle in front of the Arc de Triomphe, talking with Resistance leader, Georges Bidault.

Here he is in Paris talking with Resistance leader, Georges Bidault, soon after the liberation of Paris in August 1945.

**S:** General de Gaulle marching down the Champs-Élysées with Bidault (left) and Leclerc (right)

For four years de Gaulle had worked with leaders of the French Resistance **both inside** and outside of France and came to appreciate the power of a patriotic nationalism vented against a hated foreign occupier.

During 1945, President de Gaulle spoke publicly about his intention to give *eventual* independence to French Indochina. But he spoke these words softly and without conviction in contrast to his passionate praise for the glory and the virtues of the French Empire – a feeling which came from his heart and which was also intended to please his right-wing and centrist political allies in France and in Indochina upon which he depended.

De Gaulle was, in fact, too much of a political prisoner for his own liking – President Eisenhower had the same feeling – and in 1946, thoroughly disgusted with the machinations of French politics – he retired as President. Thereafter, successive French governments were too weak to make decisions that would be deeply unpopular among Frenchmen at home and in Indochina.

History will never know what 'might have been' if President de Gaulle in 1946 or President Eisenhower in 1954 had boldly stepped forward to educate their nations on "Legitimacy," the "Credible Capacity to Coerce," and political and military realities in Indochina. Both de Gaulle and Eisenhower could have begun their public tutorials with the words which Eisenhower himself spoke in a different setting and time:

S: "No Mastery of Command Can Substitute for  
an Intelligent Comprehension of  
the Economic Goals,  
the Political Impulses,  
the Spiritual Aspirations,  
that Move Tens of Millions of People."

## VI. The Second Indochina War 1964-1975

During this section, I will briefly review seven aspects of the **Second** Indochina War which relate to the general subject of "Legitimacy" and the "Credible Capacity to Coerce." They are:

- (1) The political legitimacy of Ngo Dinh Diem as **perceived** by non-Catholic South Vietnamese.
- (2) The North Vietnamese perception of legitimacy in general during the Second Indochina War.
- (3) President Lyndon Johnson – A Political Prisoner of the Cold War (and his 'Great Society' Agenda), Despite his Personal Reservations.

- (4) American Ignorance, Arrogance and/or Blind Loyalty, with emphasis on Robert S. McNamara.
- (5) Coercion à la the traditional American Way of War in the Second Indochina War.
- (6) The American Reaction to the War before and after TET.
- (7) Waiting too long to take a "Good Look Around."

**#1: The Political Legitimacy of Ngo Dinh Diem  
(and his Catholic Successors)  
as perceived by non-Catholic South Vietnamese.**

**S: Eisenhower Greets Diem in 1957 Visit to the U.S.**

President Eisenhower unfortunately heralded Diem as another Ramon Magsaysay, and as the George Washington of South Vietnam. In reality, Diem compared more closely to Aguinaldo; only Diem could not even claim the mantel of fighting for national independence against a western colonial power.

- ♦ Diem was a northern, Annamite Catholic; 14 million of South Vietnam's 16 million people were Buddhists.
- ♦ Diem seldom visited the rural farms and villages, and cared little about their welfare.

**S: Evacuees from the North (1954).**

- ♦ Diem's political support came mainly from the 800,000 northern Tonkinese Catholic refugees who fled the Red River Delta after the 1954 Geneva Settlement.

**S: A Northern Catholic Peasant and His Family Begin Anew in South Vietnam.**

When they arrived in the south to begin a new life, Diem provided for their welfare, sometimes at the expense of local South Vietnamese Buddhists.



**S: Map of South Vietnam Provinces**

Diem appointed northern Catholic cronies as Province Chiefs, and in some cases even as Village chiefs throughout much of South Vietnam. Many of the top officers in the new Army of the Republic of South Vietnam (ARVN) were also northern, Tonkinese Catholics.

**S: The Ultimate protest: a Buddhist is Enveloped in  
Flames after an Act of Self-immolation in Saigon.**

Diem's deteriorating relationship with the Buddhists culminated in scenes like this (above) seen frequently on the streets of Saigon in 1963. The most famous of these "sacrificial" protests was that of the venerable Thich Quang Duc:

**S: Thich Quang Duc Setting Himself on Fire.**

**S: Thich Quang Duc on Fire.**

**S: Thich Quang Duc on Fire.**

**S: Thich Quang Duc – Fire out.**

**S: Monk Cradles the Burned-black Heart of  
Thich Quang Duc.**

Here, a monk cradles the heart of the venerable Thich Quang Duc as it is being placed on display in the Xa Loi Pagoda.

The Buddhist problem continued long after the assassination of Diem in 1963.

**S: Buddhists Tear at Barbed Wire in Saigon.**

In May 1966, the Buddhists protested the regime of Nguyen Coa Ky – another northern Catholic. In Saigon, Buddhist civilians tore at barbed wire with their bare hands (above).

**S:** Assailed by Tear Gas, Rebellious Monks Huddle within Saigon's Vien Hoa Dao Pagoda, May 22, 1966. For many, Protest Ended in Imprisonment or Death.

Government police attacked Buddhist Monks inside their Pagoda with tear gas, and later executed or imprisoned many of them.

**S:** A Rebel Soldier Lies Dead in Da Nang Moments after being Summarily Executed by Loyal ARVN Troops. Ky Effectively Crushed the Buddhist Uprising by Taking Control of Da Nang on May 22, 1966.

At Da Nang ARVN troops fought and crushed other ARVN troops who supported the Buddhist protest.

**S:** Thieu and Ky with U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, 1969.

I will not dispute that Ky, and President Thieu who followed him, were "better" than Diem. But they were still Catholic – although Thieu was at least a southerner. And they still were masters of cronyism and political intrigue – civil and military – to the detriment of the struggle against the Communist enemy.

## **#2: The North Vietnamese Perception of Legitimacy in general during the Second Indochina War.**

**S:** Maps: Areas of Indochina Controlled by the French and Viet Minh in July 1954 Compared to the 1954 Geneva Settlement.

Why should Americans in 1964 (and thereafter) have expected North Vietnamese people to feel any differently about "liberating" South Vietnam and "reunifying" their country, than Northern Yankees felt about reuniting their country and "liberating" the South (from slavery) during the American Civil War? Secondly,

why should Americans have expected North Vietnam to feel any differently about the legitimacy of United States support for South Vietnam in 1964 (and thereafter) than Northern Yankees felt about the possibility of Britain and/or France recognizing the Confederate States of America and intervening with military force on their behalf? While you may be able to explain the difference to me and your classmates, that difference was surely lost to the North Vietnamese (and to some South Vietnamese) some thirty-five years ago. The important point here is that although they (Hanoi) played the 'we aren't involved in the South' game in the courts of American domestic and international public opinion to achieve political and military advantages vis-à-vis the United States, personally they cared not one iota that the United States branded them as Hitler-like aggressors and expansionists. Surely the United States played the same game for the same reasons. But in case any American political or military leaders sought to prove their infiltration into the South, like casting a bright light on a thief in the dark, in order to make the North Vietnamese feel the least bit "ashamed" of their "dastardly" deeds, the thinking of those American leaders was monumentally flawed.

**S: In 1954 Many Viet Minh Soldiers and Cadres Said  
Farewell to Their Families in the South and Regrouped  
North of the 17th Parallel.**

After the Geneva Settlement of 1954 which temporarily divided Vietnam at the 17th Parallel, roughly 100,000 Viet Minh soldiers and guerrillas said farewell to their families and went north. (Adding wives and children, the grand total came close to the 800,000 who fled the north. But then, the American people didn't see their plight on movie newsreels or photographs on the pages of U.S. News & World Report.) They expected to return when Ho Chi Minh won the national elections scheduled for 1956. But those elections never took place. In time, they came **back** down the trail to help those who had stayed behind in the struggle against an illegitimate Saigon regime, and brought with them arms and supplies from North Vietnam.

Meanwhile, the United States had organized, trained and equipped the ARVN, and by 1963 had 16,000 "advisers" in South Vietnam. (We now know that many of them did more than simply "advise," which, of course, the VC and North Vietnamese knew then.) Moreover, from North Vietnam's perspective, it really did not matter whether the folks coming down the trail were former southerners or Tonkinese regulars. They believed that the latter had as much right to liberate the South as Union soldiers believed they had the right to reunite their country a hundred years earlier. American political and military leaders should have realized that in 1964.

**S:** Execution of VC Lieutenant in Saigon by National Police Chief Nguyen Ngoc Loan (TET Offensive).

Which brings us to this slide (above). As a previous speaker told you the other day (and as Obi-Wan Kenobi told young Luke Skywalker), the truth always depends on a "certain point of view." Statements like, "This man deserved to die like this," reflect a political and moralistic judgment from a certain point of view, a point of view that was not shared by everyone in South Vietnam, much less in North Vietnam (or, as we'll get to in a moment, by everyone in the United States).

**#3: President Lyndon Johnson –  
A Political Prisoner of the Cold War  
(and his 'Great Society' Agenda)  
Despite his Personal Reservations.**

On 24 May 1964 President Johnson had a phone conversation with Senator Richard Russell, who was then Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Johnson spoke movingly of not wanting to endanger U.S. soldiers in Vietnam. "I've got a little old sergeant that works for me over there at the house, and he's got six children ... Thinking about sending that father of those six kids in there [Vietnam] ... and what the hell we're going to get out of his

doing it? It just makes the chills run up my back." "It does me, too," said Russell. "We're in the quicks[and] and up to our neck, and I just don't know what the hell to do about it."

Three days later, on 27 May, Johnson had a similar phone conversation with his National Security Adviser, McGeorge Bundy. Johnson again said: "The more that I stayed awake last night thinking of this ... it just worries the hell out of me. It's damned easy to get in war. But it's going to be awfully hard to ever extricate yourself if you do get in." "It's just the biggest damn mess I ever saw."

**S:** Ho Chi Minh in 1968 (10 months before his death).

But in 1964 Lyndon Johnson was a prisoner of his historical view of the world. He had learned from Munich that bullies should be resisted, not appeased. In his eyes, Ho Chi Minh was a bully, not a national patriot. Moreover, Lyndon Johnson was not going to lose Vietnam the way President Truman had lost China. (And) he was not going to risk his Great Society agenda by alienating political conservatives on a foreign policy matter.

And that brings us to ....

#### **#4: American Ignorance, Arrogance and/or Blind Loyalty with emphasis on Robert S. McNamara.**

**S:** McNamara Briefing the Press at the Pentagon.

McNamara either (1) failed to warn his boss that he was about to make a terrible mistake because he himself failed to realize it, or (2) he took his cue and orders from his boss, *despite* his own personal reservations about the war, and proceeded to be the foremost cheerleader of the President's Vietnam policy.

S: Cover of In Retrospect: ...The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam.

According to his Vietnam War memoirs (title above), McNamara would have us believe the first of these two alternatives:

"I had never visited Indochina,  
nor did I understand or appreciate  
its history, language, culture, or values."

"When it came to Vietnam,  
we found ourselves setting policy  
for a region that was terra incognita."

"Was our judgment of Diem correct?  
Were our views of the problems we faced realistic?  
Would our plans to deal with them succeed?"

"How were we to know, when we were moving  
in an alien environment, alongside a people whose  
language and culture we did not understand  
and whose history, values, and political traditions  
differed profoundly from our own?"

" ... it is very hard, today, to recapture  
the innocence and confidence  
with which we approached Vietnam." <sup>1</sup>

S: Innocence  
Confidence  
Ignorance

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert S. McNamara (with Brian VanDeMark), In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam (New York: Times Books [div of Random House], 1995), pp 32, 32, 43, 43 and 39 (for the five quotations).

There is a subtle distinction between 'Innocence' and 'Ignorance.' Take a look, for example, at these soldiers who fought for the French in Indochina:

- S: A White and a Black Soldier Fighting for France.
- S: A White and a Black Soldier Fighting for France.
- S: A White and a Black Soldier Fighting for France.
- S: A White and a Black Soldier Fighting for France.

-----  
S: Soldiers of the U.S. 25th Infantry Division questioning a V.C. Suspect.

Now look at this picture (above) of (white and black) soldiers from the U.S. 25th Infantry Division questioning a V.C. suspect.

When a *Korean* farmer during the *Korean* War looked up from his rice paddy and saw black and white American troops, he saw those who had liberated his country from Japanese colonialism and oppression at the end of World War II. But when a Vietnamese farmer during the Vietnam War looked up and saw black and white American troops, he saw French colonialist oppressors. Vietnam was **not** Korea! In this respect and others.

- S: Innocence
- Confidence
- Ignorance
- Arrogance

Furthermore, there is a difference between "Confidence" and "Arrogance."

- S: Innocence and Confidence
- Ignorance and Arrogance
- Hubris
- Ethnocentrism

And when arrogance is based on ignorance, it often leads to "Hubris," which is exaggerated pride or self-confidence which often results in retribution or disaster. This is especially the case when perceptions of reality are distorted by "Ethnocentrism," the attitude that one's own group, culture, or race is superior to another.

But McNamara's apology and professions of innocence and ignorance were only part of the story. His claim that there was a lack of Vietnam and Asian experts (as a consequence of the decimation of the "Liberal," "Commie-Loving" 'China Hands' in the aftermath of the China debacle of 1948-49) to correct the innocence and confidence then prevalent in Washington only partially rings true. While there may not have been as many Asian experts around as there should have been, the truth is that McNamara and others failed to listen to those who were available. Would a greater number have made a difference? Given the political straightjacket the President believed he wore, and the mind-set and/or blind loyalty of his 'Boy-Wonder' Secretary of Defense, I doubt it.

**#5: Coercion à la the traditional American Way of War  
in the Second Indochina War.**

S: Signs and trainees at Fort Polk, Louisiana, Spring 1966.

S: Close-up of two of the signs:

**"Bong the Cong"  
&  
"Aggressiveness and Firepower Will Win."**

S: Search and Destroy (U.S. Troops Jump from Chopper).



"Search and Destroy." Many thousands of Viet Cong and NVA dead are a testament to the awesome military effectiveness of the traditional American Way of War. But that military success was offset by two key political failures:

- S: A South Vietnamese Woman and her Child Take Shelter During a FireFight.
- S: Napalm attack on V.C. huts south of Saigon.
- S: Terrified Vietnamese Children Fleeing from an Accidental Napalm attack by GVN Planes.
- S: Refugees from a Mekong Delta village.

One of the measures of effectiveness of this strategy was the number of refugees created – **the more refugees the better** – so as to get them away from V.C. control and influence. Many villages suffered the fate of Ben Suc, a large village complex northwest of Saigon, considered to be an important V.C. base:

- S: An American Bulldozer Crushes a Hut at Ben Suc.
- S: Orchards of Mangoes, Jackfruit and Grapefruit Disappear as Ben Suc and its Environs are Stripped by a Bulldozer.
- S: The village of Ben Suc is No More.
- S: An Old Woman and Baby Uprooted from Their Home.

Ben Suc was a village with a recorded history going back to the late 18th century. But from the *American point of view* that village and the people who lived there *deserved* this fate. But how about all the other villages that received the Ben Suc treatment?

- S: A Proud and Dignified Vietnamese Man.

Who could tell? More to the point, why bother to discern? We'll simply remove the guilty **and** the innocent from the clutches of the V.C. You know, like the British did in Malaya.

**S: Hastily Erected Canopies at Phu Loi which Sheltered  
Thousands of the Former Inhabitants of Ben Suc.**

Consider the thoughts and emotions of two million refugees – innocent and guilty – as they entered camps like these all over South Vietnam and saw big banners that said: "Welcome to Peace and Freedom." And the thoughts and emotions of refugees – guilty and innocent – who ended up living in:

**S: Shanties on the Backwaters of the Saigon River**

**S: Shacks and Houseboats,**

**S: and in the Sewer Pipes of Saigon.**

But there was an even darker side to "Search and Destroy."

**S: An American Nurse Holds a Dying Vietnamese Child.**

The vast majority of American servicemen and women who served in Vietnam went to fight the good fight for the good cause and displayed the best side of the American national character,

**S: An American Doctor/Dentist Pulls Out Tooth of a  
Vietnamese Child.**

and scenes and deeds like these

**S: American Soldiers with Refugee Children.**

occurred millions of times throughout all of Vietnam.

**S: An American Corpsman with Two Young Boys in a  
Refugee Camp.**

But, this ugly Asian war also generated some different images,

**S:** American Troops Burning a V.C. Hut at Night.

**S:** Photo of GI Using Zippo Lighter to Torch a Hut.

images of American soldiers at war with women and children.

**S:** Close-up of the inset photo (above) of Morley Safer.

**S:** Burning Hut; Woman and Small Children Turned into Refugees.

**S:** Search & Destroy (My Lai).

Then came news of My Lai (and rumors of other My Lai's),

**S:** My Lai villagers Seconds Before They Were Shot.

and images of terrified women moments before they were executed.

**S:** My Lai – Man and Young Boy Shot Dead.

**S:** My Lai – Two Boys Lying in a Road.

The older boy (in the photo above) tried to protect his younger brother.

**S:** My Lai – Dead Men, Women and Children.

**S:** My Lai – Burn Everything.

When the killing is over, burn everything, including the bodies.

**#6: The American Reaction to the War,  
Before and After TET.**

**S:** U.S. National Guard troops confronting anti-war protesters.

Although college students (including draft-dodging Hippies) dominated and characterized the early anti-war protesters, as the war dragged on,

**S:** Three Middle-aged Women Protesters.

and more Americans came home in body bags,

**S:** A Clean-cut Anti-war Protester.

and as one "light at the end of the tunnel" faded away and the next one was proclaimed,

**S:** Businessmen Join Anti-War Rally on Wall Street,  
15 October 1969.

the faces of the protesters changed.

**S:** President Johnson Overcome With Emotion (after listening to a tape from his son-in-law about his combat experience in Vietnam).

Until it all got to be too much, even for President Johnson – especially the cruel chants: "Hey, Hey, LBJ! How Many Babies Have You Killed Today?" In March of 1968, it was a broken man who announced that he would not be a candidate for reelection. President Johnson had paid a terrible political **and** personal price for his decision to plunge America into a brutal, ugly, seemingly never-ending, Asian war.

## **# 7: Waiting Too Long to Take a "Good Look Around."**

### **S: Taking a Good Look Around.**

Frustrated by the conduct and direction of the war, in February 1966 Senator William J. Fullbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee, decided to open hearings on the administration's Vietnam policy and strategy.

**S: George Kennan testifying before the Fullbright Subcommittee that he "knew of 'no reason why we should wish to become involved [in Vietnam], and I could think of several good reasons why we would wish not to.'**

George Kennan, the father of "Containment," testified that he knew of "no reason why we should wish to become involved [in Vietnam], and I could think of several good reasons why we would wish not to."

**S: Lieutenant General James Gavin, USA (Ret.), a Critic of the War Strategy, Testifies at the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee's Hearings on Vietnam.**

Lieutenant General James Gavin, USA (Ret.), who had commanded the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II, testified that our strategy was deeply flawed. Instead of dissipating American forces along the Cambodian and Laotian borders in "Search & Destroy" operations, he advocated the "Ink Blot" strategy, which entailed securing the main population areas **first**, then gradually advancing out from them.

**S: A South Vietnamese Civilian Pleads during Interrogation by American Soldiers.**

Gavin contended that it was counterproductive (almost immoral) to force people to take sides when they could not be given adequate and constant protection.

**S:** 1969 Pacification Photo of Villagers Working in Paddy With SVN Flag Conspicuously Displayed.

Demanding that villagers openly side with the government when friendly forces were "here today and gone tomorrow," was tantamount to asking them to sign their own death warrant.

**S:** A South Vietnamese Woman Weeps Over the Body of Her Husband Who had Recently Informed on the V.C. (mid-1967).

**S:** Map of South Vietnamese Population and Military Regions (and Ethnic Distribution).

Gavin looked at where most of the people lived: around Saigon, the Mekong Delta, and the coastal strip,

**S:** Map: The New U.S. response 1969-1972.

and recommended that the United States adopt the strategy in 1966 which was eventually adopted in 1969.

### **S: The "Other" War**

Although General Gavin's "Ink Blot" strategy was rejected, Johnson did agree to pay more attention to "**Pacification**," which came to be called "the Other War."

**S:** President Johnson and Robert W. Komer in the White House Mulling Over the Lengthening War.

And he sent Robert "Blow Torch" Komer to Vietnam to head up this "Other" War. The short of it is, Komer did the best he could with the resources he was given – which unfortunately were not

much. "The annual budget for my entire pacification program," he told the MCWAR Class of '97, "amounted to the money that was spent for the bombs and bullets we used in a single day."

But money was not the only problem. For example, on the occasion when the Marine Corps CAP program was briefed in great detail to General William Westmoreland, with a suggestion that it be adopted throughout all of Vietnam in a careful, logical, and methodical manner, the General's response was:

"There are 2500 villages in all of South Vietnam. Surely you don't think I have enough troops to put a squad in every one of them?!"

S: 2500 times 15 = 37,500

And given the American military doctrine of shoot, move and communicate that prevailed in Vietnam, from his point of view, he was probably correct.

## VII. Conclusion

S: Lenses  
Filters  
Blinders

We view the world around us through the lenses of our own eyes and minds. These lenses filter everything we see, hear, and experience. We must be very, very careful that they do not also become blinders.

S: Good Ground

Operational and tactical commanders pride themselves on their ability to see and utilize "good ground." The concept of "good

ground" also relates to the strategic level of war. And being able to detect/select and utilize good ground at this level begins and ends with a skillful application of the principles of capital W war (see Chapter 1). These Principles deal with the still waters that comprise the cultural, political and physical character of a nation.

S: Principles of Capital "W" War  
-----

**Look before you leap;  
still waters run deep.**

In Indochina, those "still waters" ran very, very deep.

S: Principles of Capital "W" War  
-----

**When to hold.  
When to fold.**

War and poker have a lot in common. In both, it helps a lot if you "know when to hold 'em and when to fold 'em."

### **Legitimacy and the Credible Capacity to Coerce - An Inverse Relationship**

And the best time to hold 'em is when the "Legitimacy" factor is high (or can be made high) regarding both political and military policies and acts. Conversely, the time to fold 'em is when the "Legitimacy" factor is low (and cannot be improved).

Napoleon applied a ton of military coercion in the Peninsular War – all for naught.

The Americans applied a hefty amount of military coercion in the Philippine Insurrection, but it was matched by a goodly amount of legitimacy (supplied by Taft's reforms) on the American side. Moreover, Aguinaldo's own legitimacy suffered in the eyes of too many of his own people.



In Malaya, the British "Legitimacy" factor was extremely high, enabling them and their local Malayan allies to win with a relatively modest amount of carefully and precisely-applied military coercion.

In the Philippines, the Government's "Legitimacy" factor was low regarding both its political policies and its military tactics, that is, until the advent of Ramon Magsaysay. Thereafter, it was the perceived legitimacy of the Huk cause and Huk tactics that suffered in comparison to the Government's political and military reforms.

In Indochina, the French attempted to win their war with a modicum of political legitimacy backed by a heavy military fist. As long as they refused to grant the Vietnamese genuine political independence, the French could not have won that war with double or triple the amount of military power they brought to bear (although, admittedly, they would not have lost either – at least as long as the will of the French people held up).

During the Second Indochina War, the legitimacy of the Saigon Government and its American ally was low in the eyes of many South Vietnamese and virtually all the people of North Vietnam. The United States offset this perceived lack of legitimacy with an awesome amount of high-tech, high-mobility, high-firepower military coercion. By 1972 the Americans (and their South Vietnamese allies) had obtained (what could be called) a draw in South Vietnam – which, even then, was largely the courtesy of an enemy miscalculation and self-emasculation during the 1968 TET Offensive. But, regardless of whether the situation in South Vietnam in 1972 could be called a draw, a win, or a loss, the fact remains that over a six-year period (from 1967 to 1972 inclusive) the United States applied an amount of military power against the Viet Cong and North Vietnam in the jungles of Southeast Asia, that rivaled the military power that NATO would have generated in response to a Warsaw Pact invasion of West Germany.

In conclusion to my conclusion, I have something to say to those who believe (1) that despite our mistakes in Vietnam, the United States actually "won" the war by 1972, and (2) that we subsequently betrayed and abandoned South Vietnam because of Watergate and a general American desire to be rid of a frustrating war once and for all. Even if we assume, for the sake of discussion, that this is a valid thesis, and that we could change the bad ending (i.e., the betrayal and abandonment) the next time around, what about the obvious question? Would we still want to fight the next Vietnam-type war the same way we did the last one (up to 1972) with the same cost in lives, resources and treasure? Obviously not.

And for those who believe that a Linebacker II/Christmas Bombing air campaign was the clearly superior strategy of choice back then, and could be again, I have two questions. First: What if the early stage of a future Vietnam-like situation is accompanied by the same kind of confusion and debate (domestically and internationally) that characterized the early stage (1961-1965) of the Vietnam War – i.e., confusion and debate about the extent of the "aggressor's" involvement inside the "invaded" country/location, and the legitimacy of his actions? Second: In that event, is it reasonable to expect that "The United States of America" would respond quickly, massively and decisively against the "aggressor" with a Linebacker II-style air campaign? (That is, before the confusion and the debate are resolved?) I, for one, don't think that expectation *is* reasonable.

This then brings us back to what we could *likely* do in the early stage of a future Vietnam-like situation. First, I hope that we, as a nation, will be able to investigate the moral and political dynamics of **all** parties involved with more objectivity and sophistication than was the case last time. This investigation would include a realistic appreciation of the capabilities and determination of our potential enemy, including **his** perception of legitimacy. The same goes for our "invaded" ally, to include the legitimacy of its government and political institutions as perceived by its own

population (and not just ours). Secondly – should our government choose (or feel compelled) to intervene before the resolution of our own national confusion and debate – I hope that we will be able to make a wiser decision regarding the employment of American ground forces than was the case during the Vietnam War after 1965. "Wiser" regarding an effective political-military strategy for defeating the "aggressor," and "wiser" regarding the possibility that forces already committed during this uncertain period might have to be unceremoniously *withdrawn* when the American national confusion and debate *is* resolved (but not in a manner favorable for the "invaded" country/location).



## Chapter 4

---

### **Non-Traditional Military Missions: Their Nature, and the Need for Cultural Awareness and Flexible Thinking**

A presentation to The Armed Forces Staff College  
on "Non-Traditional Missions" <sup>1</sup>  
4 June 1994

by

**Major General Anthony C. Zinni, USMC**

Deputy Commanding General,  
Marine Corps Combat Development Command,  
Quantico Virginia

My intent today is to give you a flavor for these operations other than war, and kind of focus on what I think is remarkably different about these operations compared to what we normally go through in planning, and making decisions and carrying out combat operations – our primary role. I have been involved in four operations to some degree or another that could be categorized as operations other than war – humanitarian intervention, peace operations and that sort of thing. I think I would have told you after the first operation that we can handle these things without any special kind of training or emphasis in our professional military education; but I've backed off of that after the fourth time. I do

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a slightly edited version of an oral address delivered by General Zinni without notes to the Armed Forces Staff College on 4 June 1994. Every attempt has been made to preserve General Zinni's personal style, as he **talked** to the students of the Armed Forces Staff College on this important subject, so as to make this invaluable addition to this book even more special. (Dr. Joe Strange)

think that these are so remarkably different in a number of ways – especially when it comes to the planning, decision-making and interaction with the other things that are happening on the humanitarian and political side – that we do need to think about them and apply a decision process in a different way. After each operation I walked away with a few more things that I saw happening consistently enough to be categorized as trends. Let me begin with a little grocery list of some of the non-traditional – it seems to be the operative term these days – kinds of tasks that I have experienced.

### **A Police Force ...**

In Somalia, I experienced having to establish a police force, and then being put nominally in charge of that police force because it was a UN requirement – to, in effect, be the Frank Rizzo of Mogadishu. Now, my only qualifications were that I am from Philadelphia and I am Italian, but that's the sum total of my abilities and talents regarding the establishment of police forces. I also learned that there are some U.S. laws regarding the U.S. military establishing national police forces, and that these laws require you to be very careful about what you are doing. The necessity for a police force was there. We didn't foresee it. We didn't plan to do it, certainly, from the Unified Task Force perspective; but it needed to be done. And we were merrily going about our way establishing a police force. We were very proud of what we were doing. The police force was well received by the people. (There was a tradition of Somali respect for their police.) Clan and militia bias didn't affect it that much. It seemed that the old policemen coming back and assuming their positions on the streets was having a positive effect on the people in the area. So, we wanted to start this. And we couldn't get the UN to do it, for whatever reason, so we initiated it.

### **... and a Judiciary System.**

What we didn't realize, of course, is that policemen tend to arrest people, and they tend to want to know what to do with the people they arrest. So, we then got into developing a prison system and a jail system, and creating (or recreating or re-establishing) jails and prisons. Some of them were connex boxes with bars on them, some of them were more elaborate prison complexes that had existed before, which we helped rehab, and set up a means of feeding and providing for the prisoners. Pretty soon the police came and said, "We have arrested people. We have prisoners. What do we do with them now?" Oh, well, we need a judiciary system. So we established a judiciary committee and found a bunch of old Somali judges, and dusted them off and brought them out, and said, "You're now judges. Go forth and try cases. You've got plenty of prisoners." They said, "What law is it you would like us to use or apply here?" And we hadn't thought about that too much. Our staff judge advocate said, "There's an old Italian code here that they used to use; sounds pretty good." So, we established a judiciary committee and a set of judges. We had a law in place, a prison system and police. We were ready to go. Then we had our first murder case, and the judge eventually found the guy guilty and decided on execution as a sentence. He decided the execution ought to be carried out that night, outside the courtroom, and decided one of our policemen should do it. So, he dutifully checked out his weapon and took the guy out and shot him seven times in the street, left him in the mud on a rainy night. And justice seemed served. Well, by now our staff judge advocate had decided we needed to review our involvement, even if indirect, in this system.

### **Resettling Refugees.**

I've been involved twice with resettling refugees. Now, if you ever want to see a bureaucracy, you deal with the UN High Commission on Refugees on the resettling of refugees. Processing refugees and moving them isn't easy. You have to account for

them every inch of the way. And they have to sign 52 forms explaining that they're doing this of their own will. And you have to provide way stations to insure that there is security for them, and that someone's caring for their well-being. In accounting for every one of them, you run into problems. Some of them die or give birth, and soon your numbers get all screwed up. And, of course, we military guys don't like screwed-up numbers. With the Kurds, I remember, we couldn't just bring them down into a nice temporary military camp that we built with nice lined-up tents, everything very military, very organized. Kurds don't like to live that way. They live in bajeers, which are their communities, inside of which they have zozans (their villages) and little gunds (their neighborhoods) in which all the shelters and buildings need to be facing inboard and all the head facilities facing in a certain direction, but there has to be a certain layout. So, we were into building little Levittowns with little cul-de-sacs throughout northern Iraq to temporarily house the Kurds. And this became a very, very trying and difficult effort. As they get there, as Somalis get there, as Kurds get there, and others that I've experienced, they have to get their little starter kits, a couple of goats, some seed; got to make sure they're off in the right direction in life. And for military guys, basic infantrymen like myself, this is an all new experience.

### **A Negotiator and a Diplomat.**

You encounter, as I did in PROVIDE COMFORT and in Somalia, the requirement to be a negotiator and a diplomat. Now, twice in my life I put on a three-piece suit and was seconded to an ambassador, Ambassador Oakley in the latter stages of Somalia and Ambassador Armitage when we went into the former Soviet Union on Operation PROVIDE HOPE. And I learned how you have to get involved in negotiating for release of prisoners, negotiating cease-fires, negotiating disarmament, negotiating economics issues. In Somalia we got involved with fifteen political factions in negotiating cease-fire and disarmament. Some of the colonels had to send back and have their wives send them

their civilian clothes because their chocolate chips (uniforms) wouldn't do as they went off to Addis Ababa and sat around with the fifteen factions and began to negotiate cease-fire, disarmament agreements, and other political things.

**And a Few Other 'Throw-in' Items,  
Such as Disease Control ...**

I use this as a little short list. Now, I could add a lot more. I can add having on your staff a member of the Communicable Disease Center, Center for Disease Control. When the biggest thing in your life is trying to stop cholera epidemics and measles; when you have to learn about well-baby care; when in the hills of northern Iraq you have to establish a pediatric clinic, because seventy percent of the females at child-bearing age are pregnant. Mothers throwing babies in the backs of our helicopters as they're coming in dropping off food because they don't think they can care for them, and every helicopter coming back with a couple of kids in the back who we can't figure out who they belong to and we've got them.

**and PSYOPS.**

I can tell you about trying to deal with providing information, running a psyops organization that publishes a newspaper every day, runs a radio station and drops leaflets. And the biggest headache you have is engaging in getting the translations right; making sure what's being said and put out is compatible with what is actually going on on the ground; countering anti-U.S./UN rhetoric that's coming across one of the 'warlord's' radio stations; making sure the messages that we put out are right, are consistent, are accurate, are the right theme; that we understand the right target audiences. And you become, really, the media czar in these areas. Now, these are all really non-traditional kinds of missions, especially if you think of them as primary missions. I mean, these are the points of main effort. These are, at given times, the major focus in these kinds of operations.



### **A Fuzzy or Vague Mission ...**

At the very beginning of each of these operations, they were characterized by something that starts us off in the military in the wrong way. And that's a fuzzy or vague mission. We have a military mind-set that begins by taking a mission, analyzing it, drawing from it specified or implied tasks, and then going about our military requirements to meet those tasks. Never ever do you get a mission that you can deal with in that manner. The missions are vague; they're fuzzy; whatever the conditions are that got you in there quickly either change on the ground or weren't relevant or applicable to begin with. Your ability to distill military tasks from these political objectives just isn't there. I've never seen it. And you look at some of the tasks that are being put out now, or military objectives.

### **Such as "Monitor Heavy Weapons"(?) ...**

Take Bosnia, for example. I just read that the Vance Owens plan, and other plans after that, stipulated that the military *will monitor heavy weapons*. Now, who in this room can tell me what "monitor heavy weapons" means to the military? Do you want me to blow them up? Do you want me to capture them? Do you want me to put them in a cantonment and make sure nobody uses them even though they can provide their own people in there to guard them or to keep possession of them? Do you want me to watch them shoot and tell you that they shot, who shot [and who they shot at]? But what did the diplomat mean by "monitor?" And how did he envision that would be translated down to military action?

### **or "Marginalize, Isolate and Minimalize."**

When we left Somalia, UNITAF, after five months, and UNISOM II came in, there was a stated political objective by the UN and the U.S. policy-makers that said they intended to, and I quote, "marginalize, isolate, and minimalize the 'warlords.'" Now, I can go to my JTF Pub-1 and look up marginalize, isolate and

minimalize. Does that mean I shoot them? Does that mean I capture them? Does that mean I chase them out of town? But what does that mean? In effect, it never got translated into military action, except by General Aideed who understood what it meant – he understood that we were deciding that he was the enemy. And, of course, we picked the wrong guy, picked an enemy we didn't need to make, and went about things in a very heavy-handed way. The incident on the 5th of June, in trying to inspect the authorized weapons storage sites and the radio stations, was a complete disaster.

**Implications and Reality –  
from a Distance ... and on the Ground.**

Sometimes the policy-makers or the political decision-makers don't understand the implications of a given mission to those of us *on the ground*, often because they don't understand political and cultural realities *on the ground*. Let me give you three examples, again from Somalia.

First example: Aideed's radio station. One is the radio station that Aideed ran. Now, I got to tell you, the radio station was a mild pain in the butt, at best, and never exceeded anything more than that. The only people that listened to his radio station were American intel officers – certainly no self-respecting Somali listened to it. Occasionally, American diplomats listened, too, because they're the only ones that got excited or hyper over the radio station. Our radio station "RAJO," which means "hope" in Somali, put out anti-Aideed stuff when he put out anti-UNITAF, UN, or U.S. stuff. And I would get summoned to his compound and he would rant and rave about RAJO. Now, there's another Somali word which means "trouble" that sounds like RAJO, and that's what he would call it, radio trouble. And I said, "General, if you would lower your rhetoric, we'll lower our rhetoric." He did; and we did. You know, the end of the story. That's about the way we carried on business in our time there. If that radio station were used in a hostile manner, as a command and control facility, to

incite violence, that's one thing. But I couldn't get too excited about the radio station. We were being pressured to take out the radio station, physically destroy it. My problem with that is we're not here to make enemies. We're here to set the right example. We're here to teach them about democracy and self-determination. And the first thing some American policy-makers want to do is take out a radio station because they don't like what's said. We could burn the library there in Mogadishu, if they had one, if we don't like what's written. That's sure teaching them the right way to go about recovery and establishing a democratic government. But that's what happened. That's what the policy-makers certainly influenced UNISOM II into doing. And they were openly vocal about wanting to take this out. That's why there is a misunderstanding when the Pakistanis go in and there is a confrontation at the radio station. A couple of Somalis are killed, and the next thing you know people pour out into the streets and there's a so-called "deliberate ambush" – which is impossible if you know the facts – on the Pakistanis. It wasn't a deliberate ambush. It was a spontaneous reaction by the faction who thought they were under attack and were about to be subjected to eradication, their political faction and their clan. And so, what happens is something like this radio station, then, becomes a flash point or a catalyst for violence. You create an enemy you don't need.

Second example: a 'secure environment,' 'stabilization' and 'Somali arms.' Let me take another issue. When we went in to Somalia, UNITAF, our mission said, "provide a secure environment for this humanitarian operation that's going on." Now, we understood or we translated the task from this down to how we would physically provide that secure environment. The UN saw it another way, that a secure environment could only be achieved if we physically disarmed the Somalis. And that led the UN to say that it would not take over from UNITAF, as either implied or promised to the Bush Administration, until that had occurred. Consequently, when we went in and thought we were only going for a month or so – we went in on the 9th of December,

thought we'd be out by the 20th of January or beginning of February – and, of course, you get into the dreaded "stabilization phase," which is just a euphemistic way of saying, "we completed our mission but nothing has happened, and so we just mark time here." So, you have to call it something. So, every operation I've been in we call it the stabilization phase. And it lasts forever, until somebody figures how the hell to get you out, or somebody screws up and then you've got to leave. We go into this stabilization phase, and there is insistence on physically disarming the Somalis. And there's pressure from our government and political decision-makers about, "Geez, don't you think you guys might want to disarm them? Isn't that a good idea? Shouldn't we disarm Somalis?" Well, let me give you the perspective of the guy on the ground.

First of all, 'arms in Somalia,' 'weapons in Somalia' is like 'crack cocaine' on the streets of Washington, D. C. I don't have a clue how much is there, but I'm sure it's a lot. And if I took some out, I couldn't tell you if I'm doing well or not; no clue. And I'm sure that if we have a good rainy season in Somalia, the trees are going to sprout AK-47s because they're buried everywhere. And I know for sure that if I go house-to-house, building-to-building and attempt to take weapons in that manner, physically disarm Somalis, two things are going to happen. I'm going to piss off the Somali people. And I'm going to take casualties while killing a lot of Somalis in the process. Now, is that what you want me to do? And when I get the weapons, what do I have? Do I have a Somali's little AK-47, under his mattress, that he protects his goat herd and his wife and kids with? If I find this big arms cache, what have I got? I've got a cache that belongs to the militia of a clan or a political faction. And, by taking that cache are they now vulnerable to attack by rivals? Are they now ostracized from any process of resolution or follow-on government because they no longer have a power base or a means to protect themselves? So, what do you gain by disarmament, by going in and physically doing it?

We were attempting to get a political decision to disarm, willing disarmament. We, in fact, got all fifteen factions to sign a cease-fire and disarmament agreement. We took them to Addis Ababa and had them sign it. We left UNISOM II with this agreement and a plan for implementation: transition camps for their militia where they can come through and be retrained and give up their weapons; at the same time creating national police forces and small, lightly armed militia to take their place and re-establish security; and, to help counterbalance their influences, we train them up. A plan the UN really wanted no part of, because they really wanted to get into this physical disarmament. It seemed right. And all these guys were 'warlords' – the operative term.

Third example: marginalization and legitimacy – from a distance and on the ground. There are two big mistakes in thinking that you can conveniently and easily marginalize 'warlords.' One is the term "marginalize," which sounds very, very nice; very, very sanitary; very, very political. But "marginalize" to an Aideed, or one of these 'warlords,' means "You have made me the enemy. You have decided to take me out of a process that I rightfully belong in." I was at the State Department two days ago, and one of our State Department folks who was in favor of this marginalization of the warlords said, "You don't understand, General, when we say 'marginalize,' we didn't intend to make this break out into military confrontation. We wanted to effect a political marginalization of Aideed." I said, "That's all well and good, if Aideed cooperates with that and understands it." But what if he instead stands up and says:

Let me get this straight now. I'm a general, a legitimate general, trained in Odessa, trained in Rome, a general of the Somali Army, very successful in the Ogaden War, respected by my men, by my officers, the only one with tactical successes in the Ogaden War. I'm the chairman of the largest political faction in Somalia, the Somali National Alliance. I was a statesman in my own right, a member of Siad Barre's cabinet, Ambassador to India for six years. I'm intelligent, articulate, well-educated.

I'm the leader in my clan, one of the major clans now in power, and a member of the largest clan family which is definitely in power and at odds with his fellow family clansman, Ali Mahdi. I am the one who beat Siad Barre, twice defeated him. I mean, I am viewed by some of my constituents as the George Washington of Somalia. I suffered six years imprisonment under this dictator, lived in a hole in the ground, read nothing but the Koran, but fought him much like Mandella – I am the Mandella of my country to some people. And you tell me now, when you come cruising in, that I'm to be marginalized? I own the largest militia force and military. I hold some claim to the remnants of the Somali Army. I've got control of more area than any other faction leader, militia leader, or clan leader. And you're telling me now, YOU have decided that I can't participate in where Somalia goes, and in the government? And I'm to be marginalized?

And it surprised the UN and the U.S. policy-makers that he actually had the gall to fight over this, you know. So, I think from the perspective of on the ground, you can see that policy-makers at a distance have a problem coming to grips with reality.

### **Americans as Peacekeepers.**

What scares me about Bosnia is NATO, the UN, and a heavy U.S. commitment, with the popular support and sentiment here which said, "We aren't sending troops unless we lead." I mean, I don't think we can get away with subordinating U.S. troops to any other kind of organization; perhaps NATO, because it may be viewed by the American people that it really is American led, with SACEUR and the four-star Navy Admiral in Naples running the operation. There's nothing wrong with us being subordinated militarily. There's nothing wrong with us working for (especially) other NATO nations, and many other nations in this world military. But I'm here to tell you, I just don't think the American people are going to buy it. I just don't think any President can put

U.S. troops under command of other than a U.S. commander. Now, can it be layered down below; there's an ultimate U.S. commander maybe three layers down; there's some battalion that's working for a brigade from another nation? I think that could work. I think in the NATO architecture it could work. But I don't think it's going to work otherwise. There is nothing militarily wrong with it. But if you try to throw up the fig leaves of OpCon, TaCon, etc., I don't think that Americans are going to buy it. You know, that's not what the Constitution says, and that's not why we elected a commander in chief. And Americans aren't going to have those decisions being made [by some foreigner]. Are Americans wrong in feeling that way?

If you put a battalion of Fijians on a street corner, the chances are that most people won't notice. Put a battalion of Americans on that street corner, where do you think the Molotov cocktails, the demonstrations, and the theater is going to occur? Where those Americans are. If you run a little convoy down the road and that convoy has Scandinavian security and a little ragtag militia group comes out, a bunch of old ladies and some guys with AK-47s, and says, "This convoy with these tanks can go no further until you pay me money, give me food; and, I won't let you go down there and help them, my enemy." And like good peacekeepers, not wanting to make enemies, not wanting to have a confrontation at that point, the Scandinavians dutifully say, "Okay. We'll back off now. We'll send some people up to talk to you. Let's negotiate our way through this. And we'll come back in a couple of days." Unnoticed. Smart move. Intelligent way to go about business. Smart peacekeeping.

Now, let's put American troops down there and you go whiz-banging down that same road, and you get stopped by this little ragtag outfit, and you elect to back off. What are the headlines in *The Washington Post* and *New York Times* going to read? "American Military Embarrassed," "Americans Intimidated," "Foreign Policy Failure," and "Inability to Deliver Food." When it comes to employing American troops, it is important that

American commanders understand all the baggage we bring, – and they also need to realize that others may not understand all that baggage. And that's how Americans end up in situations like that in Somalia: with a U.S. led, U.S. forces only, U.S. commanded only, nobody else in the chain of command or in the chain of information, and we're out there hunting so-called 'warlords' in the streets of Mogadishu, and the American people are saying, "What in the hell is going on?" And then we say (brushing hands together), "It's a UN operation." Come on.

I mean, I read a statement that said, "Well, those guys that conducted the operation on the 3rd of October were peacekeepers. They were there for humanitarian reasons." A lot of those guys are friends of mine; they aren't peacekeepers; and they weren't there for any humanitarian reasons. Those guys on the 3rd of October, as General Aideed said, "They are very dangerous people." I said, "Yes, they are." And they were sent there for one purpose and one purpose only. How did we get to doing that, if we are not controlling events and we are not leading the military operation?

In Somalia, on the ground in Mogadishu, when I went back with Ambassador Oakley to negotiate the release of Chief Warrant Officer Michael J. Durant and a Nigerian soldier, with General Aideed, [and] when we got there Oakley said, "As we go out into Mogadishu – hairy enough with Aideed's security being our security in the middle of town – it would be nice if no one fast ropes on our head while we're talking to Aideed and his militia. How about making sure, Zinni, that we shut down any potential military operations out here." And that wasn't easy because there was a unilateral cease-fire on Aideed's part, but no reciprocal agreement on anybody else's part. So, as I went merrily along making sure that we shut down all these operations, I found there were four separate military chains of command. I mean, they didn't come together, certainly, anywhere in the Horn of Africa, let alone on the continent. And the principle of war, unity of command, had escaped me as, I guess, being applicable. I confirmed the shutdown of four operations. I didn't realize that no



one was paying attention to the PSYOPS campaign and that it wasn't connected to anything operationally, because while we were out there talking to Aideed and his people, little leaflets floated down that said that Aideed is a criminal and a crook. You know, at a delicate point in negotiations, we didn't need this. "Disregard it, General, bad translation. You know, we can move on to other things."

### **Don't Make Enemies – But If You Do \_\_\_\_.**

The important thing in these operations is not to make an enemy. Don't make an enemy. If you decide you're going to make an enemy – I have a countryman by the name of Niccolò Machiavelli that once advised the Prince, "Don't ever do your enemy a small harm. Slam dunk him, if he's your enemy." And I thought Niccolò had it right. We either have an enemy or we don't. Don't talk about 'marginalizing' people. Don't talk about 'monitoring' heavy weapons. You know, I can't understand this air strike business. Let me get this straight. This guy shoots when we told him not to shoot. And then what we do is tell him that we'll attack him when he shoots, which means he has the initiative, he has the momentum, he controls the tempo; in other words, when he pulls the lanyard is when the action starts. So, he can pick the time and place when the action is going to occur. Yeah. And then we're only going to attack those things that shot. So, he knows everything else that didn't shoot, he can continue to move around and everything else; we're just going to shoot the things that shot. And let me get this straight. What we're out to kill, this organization that shot that's now ringed with air-defense weapons, since he knows that's where we're coming – and that's in fact what the Serbs are doing. And when we go after that target we're going to kill the corporals and PFCs that pull lanyards and pull triggers. We're going to shoot arrows out of the air and then let the archers sit back there. Now, that's a tough concept for me to grasp.

### **Precise Objectives – Understood by All ...**

I told some folks at the State Department that there are two questions you need to ask when you employ the military. The first is, the military people are going to want to know what is it exactly you want me to do. What is it exactly that I'm supposed to accomplish on these air strikes, or in this marginalization process, or whatever it is? What is it exactly? And if you don't know, let's sit down and work it out. Let's take this term and say in a military term this means neutralize, destroy; this means blow up; this means capture. Let me give you some military words and tasks to put with this nice, smooth, sanitary, diplomatic-sounding task or objective that you framed.

### **'And Then What?' – The Dreaded Stabilization Phase.**

The second question that has to be asked after, "What is it you want me to do?" – and the most important question in all these operations – is the "And then what?" After you get there, after you do what this guy thinks you're going to do, after you run this air strike, after you feed five hundred thousand or two million or whatever it is, after you stabilize the area, "And then what?" After you invade Haiti, destroy the army, "And then what?" Is there a ship coming at D plus 20 that I pack up and get on? Is there a UN force that we have a commitment to that's going to replace us?

I went off to Operation PROVIDE COMFORT on April 11, 1991. The mission was to conduct ten days worth of air drops to support the Kurds in the Juhdi Mountains on the border of northern Iraq and Turkey. April 11th – a ten-day operation. Today, PROVIDE COMFORT is still going on. It's the "Energizer Bunny," like all these operations are. On December 9, 1992 we went off for Operation RESTORE HOPE. Out by inauguration day. All you got to do is jump-start – the term we heard – the operation. The UN will come back in, in a more robust operation; they're already on the ground. You have to get in to all these areas,

about half the size of the state of Texas, and start the delivery of food. Seventeen days after we got there, we had accomplished our mission. Decided it's a good idea to have a little bit of stabilization, give it a month. Definitely a month later, definitely by the 20th of January, it was accomplished, the stated mission, the task that we drew out of it and briefed everybody on. But there ain't nobody there coming and getting us. No UN force coming in. No end to that operation. That operation finally ended by Congress and the American people forcing the President and us to withdraw – over a year later.

These operations tend to start out okay, or to start out well-intentioned, but the classic case of understanding how you're getting out, what the end-state conditions are, and whether they're even relevant in what they mean, because you get to the end-state conditions and you say, "We've achieved them," and you brief them, and they're on the butcher paper, and they're on the briefing slides, but you're still there – in the dreaded stabilization phase that lasts forever.

### **Coalition Peacekeeping Operations.**

Let me switch hats and talk to you about coalition operations and your international partners in all of this. These things attract a lot of people who want to play for all kinds of different reasons and motivations. They come and span the spectrum from forces that are highly skilled, like our brother Canadians, in these kinds of operations, that understand the nature of these operations, have a long history and experience in these kinds of operations, to those that are seeking to participate for reasons other than humanitarian or willingness to provide some sort of coalition resolution to the problem at hand. It may be that they want to participate with us because they want to gain credibility and respect for their military, help a demoralized military regain some sense of purpose, show that they can work side by side with us because down the road it will let them get into some security arrangement with us. So there are millions of motivations that could lead someone to want to be

involved in this or that operation. UN Peacekeeping is a good business. There are militaries around the world that support their entire military structure through UN Peacekeeping. It's a good deal for small countries. And they become career peacekeepers. I met an officer from a country who had spent the last seven years of his life on UN Peacekeeping duty.

### **Compatibility**

Coalitions come and are formed oftentimes on scene. What you hope you get as a commander or a planner is a force that is compatible. Compatible meaning that politically we're in the same direction. Now, you're not going to find political uniformity. You're not going to find everybody with exactly the same political purpose for being there. But you would hope that your purposes for being there don't conflict or rub up against each other. And this can happen. You can find yourself in a region with a former colonial power whose reason for being there might be a little different than your purpose. You can find forces in there that are quietly supporting one or more factions while you're trying to maintain the vision or the impression of neutrality. You can find forces coming in from countries which, politically, are after an end that is opposed to what you have stated, or are after an end that's diametrically opposed to another coalition partner. Take the Kurds, for example. There were elements of our coalition that felt the Kurds ought to be completely autonomous. There were others, like the Turks, who didn't think that was a good idea. And, of course, they provided the bases and the infrastructure that we had to use to support the Kurds or get at northern Iraq. So you have to be careful about the political compatibility. There has to be some cultural compatibility in what you're doing, too. If there isn't, you could run into problems. If an element of the coalition has sided with one of the indigenous (local) forces or factions, or if for religious or ethnic reasons they are viewed as pro one faction or the other, they may be in danger and may be a detriment.

Military compatibility is a problem which we call interoperability. Doctrinally, technically and procedurally it has got to come together in some form. If your philosophy of operating is totally different, and now we're pulling in forces from the former Soviet Union and/or former Warsaw Pact, whose basic philosophical way of doing business is different from ours, life gets more interesting. And the doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures have to be worked out. We come to the operation technically unable to interoperate. Our radios don't talk to each other. I mean, you bring in – as we did in PROVIDE COMFORT – 1400 short-tons of American comm equipment over and above our T/O and T/E because we had to be able to provide interoperability in the backbone of command and control.

Procedural interoperability. It would be nice if the guy on your right flank and the guy on your left flank are operating off the same Rules of Engagement you are. But I've been on a number of these operations where we aren't. Some guys are much more liberal; some guys are much more conservative. The conditions upon which you shoot would be nice if they were consistent throughout the force. I'm under Chapter VI. He's under Chapter VII. I shoot at hostile intent. He shoots only at hostile action. All those things interpret and wash out differently in the end. And the subtleties of that have to be worked out, especially if your organization is being clustered in small units.

### **OpCon, TaCon and Hand Shake Con.**

But somebody back in Washington or New York thinks more is better. So every day we would get faxed our little matrix of potential contributing countries. We were up to forty-four when we left, twenty-six had actually shown up – usually unannounced right at the airport. And you're trying to figure out what to do with these forces, because of all these conditions of employment. Some of them won't help you out by logically subordinating their contribution to some larger force. Somebody rolls in with his 150-man medical unit, or his 26-man truck detachment, and you'd

say, "You know, if I could take you and put you under this big brigade I've got here from this other nation, that would really work well." "I cannot do that. I must report directly to the U.S.-led coalition command headquarters." And so, if I showed you the wire diagram of the chain of command and how it worked (turning as if pointing to a large reproduction of the chain of command), you'd see UNITAF or CTF, or whatever I've had in some of these operations, and then fifty million little blocks – some of these [being] twenty-man detachments, a 5,000-man brigade, a 100-man truck company, a 3,500-man combined arms brigade. It makes no sense – and the lines that come down.

In PROVIDE COMFORT the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked me an embarrassing question: "The lines in your command chart, the command relationships, what are they? OpCon? TaCon? Command?" "Sir, we don't ask, because no one can sign up to any of that stuff." "Well, how do you do business?" "Hand Shake Con. That's it." No memoranda of agreement. No memoranda of understanding. You know – Mike brought a bottle of champagne to start off the operation. We consumed that on the first day. It was probably the best thing we did because it's the only thing that could get us focused on how to do business in this environment. But the relationships are worked out on the scene, and they aren't pretty. And you don't really want to try to capture them for an audience like this, distill them, and say as you go off in the future, you're going to have this sort of command relationship. Some guy comes in; is a senior commander; is a national commander; and he brings with him his forces. His forces are passed to you to use in a way that he agrees upon. We sit down quietly and we engage in a little discussion as to how we might use those forces, what kinds of missions, tasks, positions on the ground we can give them. And through a consultative, handshake process they agree to do it. And we don't change that [mission, task, position] unless there is a quiet, behind-the-scenes, consultative process that takes place.

If you naively think that you're going to go up and tell a force, "I've changed your mission. You now go from this sort of peacekeeping mission and you're going to go downtown with your tanks, and shoot up and become a quick reaction force." "Hey, I'm checking with my capital; that's not in my charter." And you wonder why. I mean, the military way is: I got more stars than you; I tell you what to do and you do it. Not in these operations; it doesn't happen. I mean, it is Hand Shake Con and that's the way it works. It is consultative. It is behind-the-scene. You don't embarrass any coalition partner. You don't give them a mission or an order that hasn't been well greased beforehand. Now, a logical point is, what if you get into an emergency? What if you need reinforcements? What if you need a quick reaction force? What if you need a reserve? What if you need fire support to help somebody out? What you usually do is find one or two nations that are willing to provide that up front, pre-arranged, pre-agreed, are willing to actually operate under those conditions, and use them.

### **Cultural Intelligence ... and Abstract Enemies.**

Let me give you another point of consideration. Intelligence. Our intelligence system is designed to support a 'Cold War kind of operation. We are 'Order-of-Battle' oriented. We are there to IPB the battlefield. Report all this data to me. Let me lay it out. Let me template it. And I'll tell you you're facing the 3rd Combined Arms Army, the 1st Squad of the 5th Platoon, or whatever. That's the mentality and approach we have. It is designed to examine an enemy. It is designed to break down that enemy, to show you how he's disposed, how he's positioned, what his intentions are. It doesn't fit here. It just doesn't seem to work in these kinds of operations. There is no physical enemy. And you're trying not to make one. And if there are different groups out there that you can effect confrontation with, they aren't organized. They aren't monolithic. We can't think in terms of the General Aidedes having positive control over some organization that lends itself to block charts and diagrams. That's not the way it works.

What we need is cultural intelligence. What I need to understand is how these societies function. What makes them tick? Who makes the decisions? What is it about their society that's so remarkably different in their values, in the way they think, compared to my values and the way I think in my western, white-man mentality? My mentality, which has absolutely zero applicability here but which drives everything I do. My decision-making, my military way of METT and T, my way of building my synchronization matrix, my top-down planning, and my battlefield geometry – all is worth absolutely zip in this environment where the enemies are abstract: starvation, anarchy and disorder. Where the problems you're going to face have nothing to do with military operations which are a small piece, secondary to everything else. The situations you're going to be faced with go far beyond what you're trained for in a very narrow military sense. They become cultural issues; issues of traumatized populations' welfare, food, shelter; issues of government; issues of cultural, ethnic, religious problems; historical issues; economic issues that you have to deal with, that aren't part of the METT-T process, necessarily. And that rigid military thinking can get you in trouble. What you need to know isn't what our intel apparatus is geared to collect for you, and to analyze, and to present to you.

An assumption going in is that you know what's best for them; that you're trying to implant Jeffersonian Democracy, ultimately. Jefferson, Locke and Rousseau all have one thing in common in a place like Somalia – they're three dead white men. End of discussion. So, try to implant these theories by all us great western nations, and you might have a little problem. If you don't understand the tribal structure of the Kurds, if you don't understand who Chaldeans are, and the Assyrian Christians, and Uzbeks, and Uzars; if you don't understand Habr Gedir, and Issaq, and Abgals; if you don't understand the complexity of the clans and their interrelationships in Somalia, you're in trouble. And if you understood that there is no concept of individual responsibility in Somalia, then you wouldn't do a stupid thing like put out an arrest warrant on Aideed and a \$25,000 reward on his head. When you



do this, you declare war on his clan. Only the clan can accept responsibility. And if they do, they pay a dia, in effect blood money, in payment of a wrong that they have accepted as a wrong that they have committed, or a member of their clan has committed. When you go fight them then, why is it that the women and kids are out in the street committing atrocities on American bodies? Because you went to war with the clan. You declared war on the clan. You're there to eradicate the clan. Your enemy is Habr Gedir. And when you go to war with the clan, the whole clan fights. And you can't understand that in a western context or a western view of the world. Because what you're out to collect and what your decision process is all about is alien to that particular environment.

**Broader Knowledge, More Flexible Thinking –  
Even Different Thinking and Different Logic.**

In the time we've spent together this morning I've tried to touch on some of the things different about the nature of these operations. And while we covered a lot of ground (here in about an hour), there are areas in planning and on the operational side that I think are unique that I haven't touched on. There are functions, like logistics, that are unique, that you have to do slightly differently. There's the dealing with the media, which is entirely different in this environment than it is in a DESERT STORM, in a Vietnam, or in a World War II or a World War I context where you're out at war, in a military operation, in effect in a declared combat situation. Everything that seems to happen requires a different approach, a different mind-set, a different way of doing business. Now, for the young sergeant, soldier, sailor, sirman and marine on the street, his life isn't much different. There are techniques that he needs to specialize in; and it's important that he be highly disciplined, highly restrained, that the small unit leadership be highly effective. It's more important than in conventional-type combat operations that he be kept highly informed on the environment around him. He's going to be dealing

with some difficult situations. He's going to be immersed in cultures that are so different from his that it will be hard for him to understand. He's going to have difficulty understanding why he's feeding this kid and his brother is throwing rocks at him, and his perspective has to be maintained. But basically his world is not much different than the way it would be in combat. The pressures and the techniques are altered. And maybe some of our training needs to be oriented to emphasize some of that, but I don't believe we need to create different kinds of forces. That's a controversial point; but I don't believe we need to go that far.

But, at your level, and on to my level, we need to think and approach this differently. The planning process, the decision-making process, the thinking process, is remarkably different. You need to be much broader-based in your knowledge. You need to be much more flexible in your thinking. You've got to be prepared to take things that all your life have been completely logical – that if you do "A" and "B," it logically leads to "C" – and understand that it does not apply. You may have to think entirely differently about cultures, about history, about the effects of the environment, and about the given situation you're in, that will lead you to do things that you would never arrive at in a way of a decision using your normal, logical thinking process – either your military process of making decisions or one you use day-to-day based on your culture and your upbringing. Doesn't apply.

**This Messy Kind of Stuff –  
You Can't Ignore It and You Can't Get Away From It.**

Okay. What I hope to have conveyed to you is that this kind of enterprise or operation is (1) remarkably different and (2) it is the wave of the future. If Van Creveld is right in his *Transformation of War*, if Bill Lind and his fourth generation warfare, if what Toffler is writing about, and Kaplan is writing about, if it's a new world out there, a new world of disorder, and the disorder and the conflict is going to come from these kinds of things, not only

internationally, but domestically: the Hurricane Hugos, the Hurricane Andrews, the LA riots, the floods, the fires, aging infrastructure on fault lines, an old city infrastructure that's falling apart, on flood plains, along physical faults in the earth that are going to crumble and destroy an economy that isn't there to repair it and fix it, a society that's in a form of malaise as a result, crime is rampant, and anarchy that we're on the verge of in places. The mission you and I get now isn't two MRCs, and it isn't going off to fight the 'big one' nice and clean, and end it with some sanitary standoff weapons system that we can put through the porthole of a command bunker. It's going to be this messy kind of stuff. And you can't ignore it and you can't get away from it. And you are going to earn your paycheck in this.

Okay. I'm open for questions.

**Question #1.** Sir, how do we distill the experience of commanders like yourself, and other people who participated, so that as we engage in contingencies and activities in the future like the ones you've been telling us about, we can avoid some of the pitfalls, but we can also be proactive and make some of the right decisions when the time comes?

GEN ZINNI: Well, I think we're starting that now. We have enough of these under our belt to realize two things: they're here and they're going to involve the military; and we need to get in there and figure out what's different about these kinds of operations. All the services, in a joint way, with certain services in the lead, are beginning to put out these sorts of things, capture the lessons learned, put the manuals on the street, write the doctrine. There's an interagency interest in this: the State Department, the people that come in and play on the humanitarian side, the relief workers, the associations of the private relief organizations, and everything. Keep seeing how we never quite get it totally right. Can we do it better? How do we cooperate on the ground? What are the right relationships? What are the right agencies we need to put in place?

You're going to find a whole new world, for example, in humanitarian operations with these private voluntary organizations, or non-governmental organizations, these NGOs. We have fifty of them in northern Iraq. We had sixty in Somalia. I understand there are 120 of them in Bosnia and in the former Yugoslavia. Now, let me tell you, they are disparate organizations. They come from all over the world. And they answer to no one. There's no cohesive body or organization that pulls them together. Their charters, oftentimes, won't let them cooperate with the military. They often view the military as an adversary. Some of them by their charter can't get too close to any military organization, like the International Committee of the Red Cross, because they have to maintain neutrality, and it has to be a highly visible neutrality, because they deal with POWs, and on both sides. They can't be seen as accepting, say, even security openly from a given military source. Others for religious reasons may not be able to do that. Others for political reasons. And you're going to find yourself out there trying to pull these disparate groups together. This is just one way of answering your question, one area.

We've experimented with things like a civil-military operations center, where we kind of bring their representatives together, ask them to form some sort of grouping or association that we can deal with so we can coordinate issues of logistic support, security, command and control. And a lot of them are resistant to that. They come in and go as they please, and operate where they please, in a lifestyle totally alien to good security and good common sense from our perspective. So, the cultures are different, even on that side. But that's one aspect of what you've got to learn.

On the political side, the same thing, when there are dozens of ambassadors running around your area, and they're all making little decisions and cutting deals that affect your life. And this traumatized population that you're there to help, or you're involved with or whatever, naively views [all of] us as a monolith – 'that, well, there's a master plan behind all this confusion. Obviously all these guys running around are in cahoots.' And they (the people

we are trying to help) don't understand that we (the various helpers) are not acting in cahoots. And this political confusion, believe me, leads directly to your kind of confusion.

One thing that troubled me about Bosnia is: where are the political decisions going to be made? Brussels, where they have a political arm of NATO or a supervisory political committee; New York, because the UN is involved and that's where they make their political decisions; Washington, who has the biggest investment of troops and everything else, and is the only superpower playing in the game; or, all three places? Not to mention other nations' capitals that come in. And that's what happens on the ground.

Physically, on the ground, you can't lose sight of one thing – security of the force. Don't ever trick yourself into believing that everybody likes you and nothing can happen to you. Don't ever let your guard down. Will we repeat Beirut? I mean, I was horrified at our approach to Haiti. You've got to be kidding me. We go bobbing down there in a little LST with a bunch of engineers and some guys – you know, MPs – with nine millimeters. You send a military force in, small enough to get intimidated; thank God they decided to not let them land. Once they landed, if they [the Haitians] had done something, then we would have had the embarrassment of pulling them out or reinforcing them, and dribbling in, and then we start off on the wrong foot. If that's all the military force that was required, contract Brown and Root to do the job. When you put the military in, put the military in. I mean, the way to go into Haiti is the way you went into Panama. Let's change the situation in 24 hours, and then start from there. Don't dribble military forces in, and don't put just enough in to get yourself in trouble, and don't put enough in to get intimidated. You shouldn't have military force in if you begin with that kind of thinking.

But those are some of the lessons I think we've learned from our recent experiences. I think we're doing a better job of trying to come to grips with these types of operations at all levels, at all

agencies, policy makers, people that are on the ground doing the humanitarian side, and we in the military. I see it in the schools. I see it in the exercises and training that is happening. The Army is working down at their JRTC at Fort Polk, and has run some exercises. Marines out on the West Coast have run an exercise where they invited in humanitarian relief agencies and folks from the State Department to participate. In the work-up and training for some of our forward deployed units, they're putting in packages that emphasize some of the techniques involved in these kinds of operations. The manuals are coming out, as I mentioned. In the PME schools like this, I mean, I find my calendar full of invitations from the War Colleges and Command and Staff Colleges to talk about these things. So, collectively, we are beginning to capture these things. In all our lessons learned systems, in the Marine Corps Lessons Learned System, in the Army CALL System, in each of the services and in the joint community, the JOLS System, more and more of this is coming back in and people are getting access to it and are trying to apply it to tactics, techniques, procedures and doctrine. It's beginning to be captured. And we won't necessarily capture it all right away. And we'll probably make some mistakes in judgment in the interim, but we'll get there.

**Question #2.** Some people say this is all against the law, that unless it increases readiness, Title 10 says we can't do it. And I would challenge you to say that the troops that came into Somalia were better trained when they left for combat operations, the same in Bosnia and northern Iraq. Do we need a change in the law or do we need to get out of this business?

GEN ZINNI: Well, we need to change the strategy. I understand your point. We have a military. We're building on a military strategy that says two near simultaneous MRCs or whatever. Some of this stuff, some of it, we can do additionally, and maybe not endanger our ability to accomplish the military objectives in that military strategy. But we can't do a lot of this without endangering that ability. So, you need to change the strategy from the beginning and say the strategy is two MRCs plus.

Then, the chiefs of service and the CINCs and everybody else are able to concentrate on the training, organization and equipping of forces able to do this.

Now, let me go to the second part of your question. Were the troops that came out of Somalia better able to go to combat? In certain respects, yes. I will tell you that the Marines that were in Mogadishu can go to any urban area in the world after that and handle urban patrolling and urban operations, after taking down a few compounds and being involved in some night patrolling on the streets. Now, were they ready to zip off and jump into APCs and tanks, and do other things that had to be put aside because they weren't training? No. When British units train for Northern Ireland, they undergo concentrated training for this kind of thing. Army units, airborne units, Royal Marines, etc., all go through this training, go to Northern Ireland for their six-month deployment, come back, and then go back through their normal training. They're on a cycle. Now, some of these [urban] skills are fantastically applicable to combat. But it's a narrow range of skills that they [the British] specialize in, at the expense of other skills that they would work into; and, therefore, they lose their broader capabilities, I feel, as we would if we specialized in this. If we go into Bosnia and we put units on the ground, and we put units in there and they're working that narrow perspective of doing whatever they do there, the work-up to that, the period that they're there, the little stand-down period after they come back, in effect, they're going to have skills that will atrophy that they might need in combat situations. Some certain skills they might actually increase. It would be a mixed bag. Overall there would be, over time, a definite decrease in readiness of those units. And, overall, if these commitments become major and we have a lot of them on the board, our ability to accomplish the strategy is [thumbs down], even if we could do it now, which I doubt. I mean, even with the existing forces, I don't think we could do the strategy. I think there are certain areas, like strategic lift, and other things that aren't going to make it and stretch that far, and they get even more taxed in these situations.

So, your point is well-taken. I don't think it requires a change in the law, but a change in strategy.

**Question #3.** Sir, I'd like to get your views, see what you think about the State Department. Are they learning from your inputs, from your critiques? Are they getting any smarter in the use of our military?

GEN ZINNI: First of all, the answer is yes on both sides. But we need to learn from them, too. I mean, there are times when the military takes an action not understanding the political ramifications. There is a bigger picture. There is an objective, sometimes, that you can lose sight of when you're down there in the grass and trying to do what's right on the ground. You can lose sight of a bigger political objective that's a valid one. So, the education process has to work both ways.

I will say this about our State Department. I've always seen high-quality people in the field: ambassadors like Armitage, Oakley, and Ambassador Abramowitz who was in Turkey when we worked Kurdish relief operations. I've seen superb leaders in the field. Oakley, for example, felt it key to integrate the military and political sides very tightly. On the first day that we arrived, he came to us and said that he wanted to establish a connectivity that was so intermeshed that, virtually, we were in lockstep as we went on. Now, understand, we answered to different chains of command. The commander, General Johnston, answered to the CINC, CENTCOM, and, of course, Ambassador Oakley is answering to the State Department back in Washington. Let me explain some of the things he did on the ground. He wouldn't send a cable back to the State Department without running it through us first. Consequently, we did the same thing. We didn't send messages back that were sort of overviews, or situational updates or reports, or opinions or views, without showing Oakley first or getting him involved in it. Any discussions that my boss had, he shared with Oakley. Any discussions Oakley had, he shared with General Johnston. There was an agreement that our political advisor of UNITAF would also be Oakley's Number Two guy, his



DCM. So, in effect, we had another method of coordination. Oakley asked us to put some colonels on his staff. As a matter of fact, he had a general as an advisor in the early stages of the operation, and then we moved several colonels down to the U.S. Liaison Office as part of his staff, sort of seconded them to him during the operation. We gave Oakley briefs every day on media business, on operations that occurred, on intelligence reports so he was well up-to-snuff. His goings about, handling things political, he always gave us that same kind of reciprocal briefing and back brief of what happened.

We ran our operations so that before we went into an area, we put eyes on target out there, we put reconnaissance and intelligence efforts on the ground. Oakley went in next to make contact with the political leadership, whether it was village elders, faction leaders, or whatever, to explain what we were there to do. We did a little bit of a short PSYOPS Campaign with some leaflets and other things, explained the military force, how they're coming. And when the force came in about two or three days after this process, it came in in force, the road already prepared, politically and in every other way, and we came in with the humanitarian relief workers. Strangely enough, General Aideed gave us this advice: He said, "Don't go out there with just guns or you're just another gun-toting faction. Go out there with food, so the first time they see you in force with your guns, there's also food and medicine and they'll associate you as being something different than the other militias and gun toters." And, he said: "Prepare the way – don't surprise anyone – so you can avoid conflict." If you go into an area, unannounced and quickly, in large numbers, someone may not understand why you're there, may not understand what your purpose is, and then you get in a confrontation that you didn't need. So, our preparations reflected this advice and also showed the interoperability with the State Department. They are very interested in trying to understand the ground commander's perspective. They are very interested in trying to find more of a sense of cooperation in things like this and to formalize it, to kind of get the interagency tactics, techniques and procedures down as

to how we should do business this way. So, the answer to your question is, yes, I see a strong willingness to understand and learn. I see a strong willingness on their part, too, to help us understand where they come from and how they operate, and the different culture that exists among diplomats doing their kinds of business that we aren't used to.

**Question #4.** Sir, regarding problems caused by cultural differences and things of that nature, we are told that the draft of the national security strategy has as one of its pillars something called democratization. Could you shed some light on democratization and how do you see that playing out in the kinds of operations you've been talking about today?

GEN ZINNI: Well, you know, certainly I'm no political science major, but I was involved in the initial military-to-military contact with Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. And I got sent over for the first contact with the Russian Army. And the purpose was for us to share with them how a military functions in a democracy. And *us* was a group of Western generals, NATO generals. The Russians laid out all their warts in the military and said, "we're ready to learn about democracy." So, we got up to give them a series of lectures on democracy. And the first guy up was, I think, from the Netherlands. And he started to tell them why their military needs to be unionized because it's the only way it can function in a democracy. And they took plenty of notes. And we stood up and said, "Don't unionize your military; it's the worst thing you can do. It'll never work." And they said, "Okay, you've confused us."

My point is, that when we get into the democratization of the world, we better understand (1) will it work everywhere and (2) will it work in generally the forms that we know it. Let me use another term: self-determination. Now, if that self-determination manifests itself in some form of democracy, maybe it isn't pretty and it has a long way to go. But I think democratization is a process. We can't walk in and decide Jeffersonian democracy tomorrow for Somalia; you know, that we are going to instill it;

that all of a sudden all the women's groups are going to rise up and take charge. And we're going to go out to the little town of Afgooye and get the old guy up and say, "You're going to be part of the political process and lead Somalia." Huh? I mean, all he wants to do is sit under his acacia tree and tend to his goats, and you all are going to instill democracy here and all the intricacies of democracy. Maybe you can't get there from here. Maybe you need the beginnings of self-determination; the beginnings of a participatory system. And the process has got to be viewed that way. I want to see Somalia in fifteen years be a reasonable, viable, democratic-like government. Instead, some folks went in and said, "We can put democracy in here in two years." You've got to be kidding. I mean, they weren't on the same planet that I was on out there. And it won't work. There may be some more basic things that you need, like let's stop them from shooting each other, let's stop them from starving to death. You know, let's get them to the point where they can at least eke out a living, gain some stability in life, some order in the way things go about here. And if we can get those kinds of things started for right now, that might be a good goal in the first two years. And democracy is way out there (in the future). So, I get a little frightened by this kind of idea that it's going to be *democracy in our time*. Obviously, it's a noble goal. Obviously, we want it. But I would rather see us frame it in the early stages in much more achievable and reasonable steps. We want to begin a process that leads to some form of self-determination. And it will begin with some degree of stability, some degree of a reasonable life expectancy, free of want and fear. That's our first step. And then maybe decades from now we (or they) can get to the ultimate goal. So, when I hear comments like that or statements like that, I think it's a little too fast – it's a zero-to-sixty kind of mentality that seems to be implied in all that, and it has got to be a much simpler approach.

One thing that impressed me in all of these operations is the fact that you're going to see things that make you swallow hard. I didn't particularly think that Aideed was the greatest guy in the world. And eating goat meat and drinking grapefruit juice with

him at dinner and pretending like I liked him was a little tough. But probably a guy like that can bring a degree of stability in the short-term that no one else in that country can. Maybe not him alone, but those of his ilk, the other faction leaders. They're the only ones that – to use Aideed's terms – have the capacity to administrate and to lead. Now, is there a way, at least initially, that those so-called 'warlords' have to be part of the process? And I can use a carrot and stick, and a little leverage on them to say, look, obviously you're going to have to be responsible for the leadership in the near term, but it's going to have to be under certain conditions or else there won't be the support? And we can say: If you want the support and the contributions in economic growth, there are rules you're going to have to play by? They will have to be part of the process initially, even though we don't like their means and the way they do business. To do it otherwise is too noble, too ambitious and too unachievable in the short-term. The problem we have is stomaching that in the short-term. It's just too hard to contemplate sitting down with somebody that ruthless, and having to deal with them in some sort of civil manner, and having to accept his position of leadership. In some places that's the only alternative in the short term to success. And if we are going to subject ourselves to the self-criticism that that's not full democracy, and it's either that or nothing, then you can't succeed in these places in the third world. You can't get there that fast.

Even the Soviet Union. When I went in the former Soviet Union and went around with Armitage, we were looking at a recovery process, politically, toward a democratic government, and economically, toward a free-market economy. And I said, "Man, this is the other superpower? They can't get there." I mean, it's going to be tough enough to get there politically and get to some form of democracy, which is really going to be hard. I didn't see free-market economy. You've got to be kidding me. I mean, when a kid goes into a store, stands in line for five hours, buys something, goes out on the street corner and says, "I'm going to sell it, right here, for two rubles more as a service charge for standing in line," we say, "Go-getter, entrepreneurship. Love that

kid." But the old ladies beat him with umbrellas because trying to get ahead is viewed as wrong in this society. You don't ever try to get ahead. You don't ever try to express a form of entrepreneurship or personal ambition. It's alien to everything we know. You go into a store and go up to a clerk; there's only four things on the shelf; and you say I want one of the four things. Well, this clerk writes you out a big sheet of paper, hands it to you. You go stand in another line and wait to hand it to another clerk, to pay that clerk, who gives you another sheet of paper; and, you go back and find another clerk, who goes and gets it and wraps it for you. And you say, you know, for an inventory of four, which I've depleted by 25 percent right now, you probably only need one employee, get rid of the other two, and have the cash register right there where you deal with the customer, and you're going to succeed. Are you kidding me? That means two people would be fired. It's alien to their way of thinking. If you tell them that free-market economy means four butcher shops on a corner, let them go at it, the one that succeeds is the one that stays and is the strongest. The other three fail; that's what it's all about. We can't have three butcher shops fail. That's impossible. You know, so trying to convey even to a modern civilization a concept of democracy isn't easy, and certainly in the short-term. So, that's my concern. It may be wishful thinking to think we can do that in the short-term.

**Question #5.** Sir, I appreciate your advocacy for knowledge about the environment – physical and cultural. The discipline that specializes in this is geography. Where in our military education system do we find any geography being taught as a requirement? From the academies, to the basic courses, advance courses, service command and general staff colleges, even the war colleges, it's not part of our educational development. You mention lessons learned. I would like you to comment, perhaps, on your perspective on where the educational system should go in this regard, and who is going to further that in our leadership.

GEN ZINNI: Well, I just read recently where Richard Nixon's favorite subject was geography as he was growing up, and he attributes a lot of his understanding of the world and his capacity

and capability in international relations to that love of geography, initially. So, I mean, it supports what you're talking about. Knowing the world as it is physically and as it lays out is important. And I think tied with that is history. And it's understanding cultures. We have some concepts – I'm treading a little dangerous ground here – I think, that require a little closer scrutiny. We have a tremendous respect for sovereignty. Sovereignty means that we respect the right of a given government to oversee everything in a given space on the ground. Not everybody shares that. I mean, when I was in northern Iraq, we had a stated policy that we would respect the sovereignty of the Iraqi Government over what was Kurdistan in northern Iraq. Kurds don't understand that. Maps lie. Many boundaries laid out by former colonial powers cut across tribal and clan lines. But we nevertheless attribute a tremendous amount of respect to those boundaries, and we give it a very noble term – "sovereignty." To the people on the ground, it means absolutely nothing. To nomads, like the three major clan families in Somalia, there is no association with a given piece of ground. It's a nomadic life. You move from viable pasture area to viable pasture area. And association with the ground, permanently, in given positions is alien; yet, to us it's not. So, these concepts – this is kind of getting off the things that we kind of hold dear in terms of boundaries, in terms of sovereignty – are not necessarily shared. If you don't understand cultures and you don't understand history, you don't understand that.

What is remarkable, kind of following on this point in these operations, is the need to absolutely decentralize your military effort and to have mission-type orders and sectors for people to operate in. What we find difficult to understand in the U.S. is how you can travel five or six miles, or short distances like that, and go into remarkably different areas where the ethnic make-up is so remarkably different, where the physical environment is so remarkably different, where religion, where cultural behavior is different, where the lack or degree of government, of order, tribal in this area, some form of government in this area, an armed militia in that area, complete anarchy in this area. And those areas are so

compacted and condensed in such short distances. Difficult for us to realize. That you try to form a consistent policy, a consistent plan throughout these areas, and you find what's applicable here in this sector is completely 180 degrees the wrong approach several miles in the other direction. And just understanding the concept of distance and the ability to change.

I don't think we should study things in isolation. I don't think a geographer is going to master anything, or an anthropologist is going to master anything, or a historian is going to master anything. I think it's a broad-based knowledge in all these areas. The ability to dissect a culture or an environment very carefully and know what questions to ask, although you might not be an expert in that culture, and to be able to pull it all together. Again, an intelligence analysis that isn't an order-of-battle, militarily-oriented one, but one that pulls these factors together that you need to understand.

You know, in Somalia there are some remarkably simple things that you better get a grasp on in the environment. The snakes spit at you. I mean, the troops took a while to learn that the spitting cobra and mamba not only bite you, but they spit stuff in your eye that could make you go blind, until we had seven cases of that. You know, you learn about sending reconnaissance units up the Juba River in their boats. Pretty soon the hippos and the crocodiles made it not a good idea to be doing reconnaissance in small boats up rivers. And that all sounds kind of simple stuff and stuff the military goes after, but it's stuff you better have a grasp on. I mean, as simple as the flora and fauna all the way up to basic geographic differences, environmental differences – cultural, religious and everything else. That becomes your life as a planner, or as the director of operations, and as the key decision maker.

How do we get there? Our schools need to work, and not only military schools. Our whole educational system in this country needs to be revamped. Certainly from a professional military education basis, we need to broaden the base. And it can't be narrowly militarily focused. The military soldier-statesman idea is

coming back into play. We're going to need more Marshalls, or Marshall-like figures in the future. And we will be well served by a broader base of officers (functioning as planners) who have had exposure to that kind of broad-based thinking, education and experience.

Thank you.







## About the Author



**JOE STRANGE**

PROFESSOR OF STRATEGIC STUDIES  
DIRECTOR: WAR, POLICY AND STRATEGY



MARINE CORPS WAR COLLEGE  
MCCDC  
2076 SOUTH STREET  
QUANTICO, VA 22134-5067

(703) 784-4082  
DSN: 278-4082/4081  
FAX: (703) 784-2384  
E-MAIL: STRANGEJ@QUANTICO.USMC.MIL

Ph.D., University of Maryland (1984) in Modern Military and Diplomatic History; B.A. and M.A. in History from Mansfield University, PA (1969, 1975).

Assistant Professor of History, United States Naval Academy, 1981-1982. Visiting Lecturer in Military History, University of Delaware, 1982-1983. Professor of Strategic Studies, Air War College, 1983 - December 1989. Professor of Strategic Studies, Marine Corps War College, January 1990 to the present.

Served in the United States Army, November 1969 to August 1971; trained for 11 Bravo (Infantry) at Fort Jackson, SC; served at Fort Hood, TX; Honorable Discharge at rank of Specialist Five. United States Army Center of Military History Research Fellow, 1980-1981. Moncado Prize Award by the American Military Institute, Military Affairs, 1982.

Air War College Faculty Lecturer Awards: 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 – thanks guys!

Over the years has conducted lectures/classes for Air Command and Staff College, Canadian Defense Forces College, USMC Command and Staff College, USMC Command and Control Systems School, USMC School of Advanced Warfighting, Navy-Marine Intelligence Training Center (Virginia Beach), and small groups at the Central Intelligence Agency and the Pentagon.

Author: Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities: Building on the Clausewitzian Foundation So That We Can All Speak the Same Language. Marine Corps University *Perspectives on Warfighting* Series, Number Four, 1996 (1997 Second Edition).