

# THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER'S OPERATIONAL APPROACH

A Monograph

by

MAJ Timothy B. Lynch  
United States Army



School of Advanced Military Studies  
United States Army Command and General Staff College  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

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MONOGRAPH APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: MAJ Timothy B. Lynch

Monograph Title: The Supreme Allied Commander's Operational Approach

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Monograph Director  
Mark T. Calhoun, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Seminar Leader  
Charles M. Evans, COL

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, School of Advanced Military Studies  
Henry A. Arnold III, COL

Accepted this 23rd day of May 2014 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER'S OPERATIONAL APPROACH, by MAJ Timothy B. Lynch, United States Army, 45 pages.

Since the end of WWII, many historians have criticized General Eisenhower's broad front strategy. These critics have argued that General Eisenhower's employment of what we now call operational art demonstrated a lack of decisiveness and operational boldness, thereby unnecessarily prolonging the war. To highlight the errors in his broad front strategy, some critics have misrepresented General Eisenhower's operational leadership by presenting historical situations out of context or portraying his caution as timidity. However, a critical review of General Eisenhower's actions during the campaigns on the Western Front reveals a more compelling story. Thus, upon closer examination, General Eisenhower's broad front strategy or what this monograph describes as his operational approach provides substantial evidence to silence his critics. This study seeks to prove that General Eisenhower successfully employed Allied forces using operational art in the manner most effective and most appropriate to the situation the Allies faced on the Western Front in the final campaigns to defeat Germany.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I started this process with desire to gain a greater appreciation of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's role as Supreme Allied Commander during WWII. After talking with Dr. Mark T. Calhoun about my interest in Eisenhower, he suggested that I explore his broad front strategy and employment of what we now call operational art on the Western Front in WWII. Knowing very little about Eisenhower, his broad front strategy, or operational art – I immediately began my research. This monograph represents my understanding of Eisenhower's broad front strategy and employment of operational art during the final campaigns against Germany from June 1944 through March 1945.

I would be remiss if I did not publicly thank the people that supported me throughout this process. First, I would like to thank Dr. Mark T. Calhoun for his unwavering support. His exceptional mentorship and guidance enabled me to attain a much greater understanding of Eisenhower's employment of operational art than I ever expected. Second, I would like to thank my wife, Erin, and my daughters, Lucy and Ruby. Without their remarkable patience and support, I could not have completed this monograph. Lastly, I would like to thank the SAMS staff and faculty, particularly COL Charles Evans, for always reminding me of the practical application of operational art.

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## ACRONYMS

ADRP	Army Doctrine Reference Publication
AWC	Army War College
CARL	Combined Arms Research Library
CGSC	U.S. Army Command and General Staff College
CGSS	Command and General Staff School
FAAA	First Allied Airborne Army
JP	Joint Publication
MMAS	Master of Military Art and Science
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force

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## INTRODUCTION

In late 1943, the Allies remained divided on how to defeat the Axis. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall had spent nearly two years trying to convince the British that victory required a direct, strategic amphibious assault into France. Conversely, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill preferred fighting the Axis along the European periphery in the Mediterranean. Churchill remained committed to an indirect approach through Italy largely because he doubted the feasibility of an Allied cross-channel attack. With the Allies in their third year of war against the Axis in the Mediterranean and a Normandy invasion –codenamed Operation Overlord – still in question, Roosevelt needed a commander that could merge these two separate strategies into an Allied operational approach and lead a land campaign in Western Europe.<sup>1</sup>

On 7 December 1944, Roosevelt appointed General Dwight D. Eisenhower as Supreme Allied Commander for the invasion of Western Europe. Eisenhower’s mastery of what we now call operational art enabled him to integrate both the British and American strategies into one Allied operational approach. Eisenhower’s operational approach, known to historians as the “broad front strategy,” consisted of three army groups advancing into Western Germany on a front stretching from Switzerland to the North Sea. It served to link the Allied military end state –

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<sup>1</sup>R. Alton Lee, Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Soldier and Statesman* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981), 100; John A. Adams, *The Battle for Western Europe, Fall 1944: An Operational Assessment* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 63; Martin Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993), 91; Christopher Bassford, *Clausewitz in English: The Reception of Clausewitz in Britain and America, 1815-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 129. Liddell Hart’s emphasis of an indirect approach between the wars influenced British strategic thinking. As Bassford suggests, “[Hart’s] overarching goal was to find some indirect way to strike at an enemy’s strategic vitals, by passing his main strength and thus avoiding the head-to-head confrontation that had led to the bloodbaths of the Great War.” This thinking is clearly in line with Churchill’s peripheral strategy; Tuvia Ben-Moshe, *Churchill, Strategy and History* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992), 116; Jon Meacham, *Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004), 177; U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 11 August 2011), III-1, [http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp5\\_0.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp5_0.pdf) (accessed 11 August 2013).

the destruction of the German Army – to the tactical actions that occurred from 6 June 1944 through 8 May 1945.<sup>2</sup>

### Thesis

Since historians began writing about WWII, many have criticized Eisenhower's broad front strategy. These critics have argued that Eisenhower's operational approach demonstrated his lack of decisiveness and operational boldness. To highlight the errors in his approach, some critics have misrepresented Eisenhower's operational leadership by presenting historical situations out of context or portraying his practice of operational art as unimaginative. This description of Eisenhower's actions also perpetuates the claim that his broad front strategy unnecessarily prolonged the war into 1945.<sup>3</sup>

Upon closer examination, however, Eisenhower's leadership during the Allied campaigns in Western Europe, particularly after he took direct command of ground forces on 1 September 1944, provides substantial evidence to silence his critics. It also illustrates how Eisenhower successfully employed Allied forces using operational art in a manner most effective and most appropriate to the situation the Allies faced on the Western Front in the final campaigns to defeat the Germans.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Dwight Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1948), 208; U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, III-1. The military (ies) in question did not use the term "operational approach" but it aptly describes the activity referenced but in modern doctrinal terminology; Carlo D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2002), 595, 704.

<sup>3</sup>Basil Henry Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971), 566; Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (Old Saybrook, CT: Konecky & Konecky, 1952), 460; D. J. Haycock, *Eisenhower and the Art of Warfare: A Critical Appraisal* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co, 2004), 116; Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 349; Ralph Ingersoll, *Top Secret* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1946). Ingersoll claims, "in August of 1944 [Eisenhower]. . .could have ended the war by Christmas."

<sup>4</sup>Antulio Joseph Echevarria II, *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present*, ed. John Andreas Olsen and Martin Van Creveld (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 138. Echevarria

## Methodology

To ensure the relevance of the analysis to historians and military practitioners alike this monograph includes an extensive background and three case studies: Operations Goodwood and Cobra, Operation Market Garden, and the Rhineland Campaign.

Operations Goodwood and Cobra illustrate the divergent operational approaches preferred by the British and American senior leaders after the Normandy invasion. This first case study highlights the significant differences between Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, and Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery, the Allied ground force commander for the Normandy invasion and the commander of the British Twenty-first Army Group, regarding operational art and combined arms operations on the WWII battlefield. Their divergent views created not only strain in the British-American coalition, but also challenges in the conduct of operations in the first months following the Normandy landings.<sup>5</sup>

The fundamental difference between these two generals' ideas concerning operational art resurfaced in late August and early September of 1944. Eisenhower and Montgomery disagreed on the operational design for the Allied invasion of Germany. This contentious debate led Eisenhower to grow increasingly impatient with what he began to see as insubordination in Montgomery's actions, and set the stage for a possible fracture in the Allied coalition. The tension reached its peak during the planning and execution of the operation that serves as the subject of the second case study – Operation Market Garden. Eisenhower allowed Montgomery to execute Market Garden despite grave doubts about the soundness of the plan, but the campaign's outcome, although an embarrassing defeat for the Allies, provided Eisenhower with the leverage

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defines operational art as, "the 'way' that is used to move military means in a direction of achieving strategic aims." The Allies did not use the term operational art during WWII, but they conducted operations in the way we use the term today.

<sup>5</sup>Carlo D'Este, *Decision in Normandy* (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1994), 331–332; Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 194; D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, 356.

he needed to assume full operational control of Allied invasion forces, after which he adopted and strictly adhered to the broad front strategy.<sup>6</sup>

The final case study, the Rhineland Campaign, reveals how Eisenhower's broad front strategy led to the decisive defeat of the German Army west of the Rhine and secured the Allied strategic objective of unconditional surrender. Moreover, Eisenhower's employment of operational art in the Rhineland serves as an illustration of the manner in which operational leaders can employ operational art to achieve a desired end state.<sup>7</sup>

## BACKGROUND

On 12 February 1944, the Combined Chiefs of Staff directed Eisenhower to, "enter the continent of Europe, and, in conjunction with the other Allied Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her Armed Forces." Given this guidance, Eisenhower faced the challenge of employing Allied forces in a manner that would achieve the military, and thus the civilian end state, rendering both the German military and the German state incapable of conducting combat operations, much less starting another world war.<sup>8</sup>

To meet this challenge, Eisenhower employed what we now call operational art. Eisenhower's mastery of operational art enabled him to understand and visualize the tactical actions necessary to achieve the Allied military end state. Eisenhower relied primarily on two conceptual tools – operational design and the development of an operational approach – to

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<sup>6</sup>Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy*, 348; David Bennett, *Magnificent Disaster: The Failure of the Market Garden, the Arnhem Operation, September 1944* (Drexel Hill, PA ; Newbury [Great Britain]: Casemate, 2008), 19; Cornelius Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 85; Stephen Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), 549.

<sup>7</sup>Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 616.

<sup>8</sup>Dwight Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1948) 225.

understand and visualize the sequence of tactical actions between the current situation and the desired end state.<sup>9</sup>

Operational design, as defined in Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning* (JP 5-0), refers to “a process of iterative understanding and problem framing that supports commanders and staffs in their application of operational art.” The outputs of operational design help commanders determine exactly what military problem they must solve before they provide guidance to their staffs so that they can begin detailed planning to solve it. In this process, commanders use their education and experience to “generate a clearer understanding of the conditions needed to focus effort and achieve success.” In May 1944, Eisenhower and his planners at Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) developed their initial operational design of the invasion “aimed at the heart of Germany” and the “destruction of her armed forces.” They recorded the outputs of their operational design in a document entitled, “Post Neptune Courses of Action After Capture of the Lodgment Area.” Based on the Combined Chiefs’ guidance, planners considered Germany’s wartime industry the heart of its ability to resist the Allies’ eastward assault. The German military industrial complexes located in the Ruhr Valley and the Saar Basin regions fueled the German war effort. The Allies understood the necessity of destroying these two objectives in order to cripple Germany’s war making capability, thereby facilitating achievement of their military end state.<sup>10</sup>

JP 5-0 defines an operational approach as “a commander’s description of the broad actions the force must take to achieve a desired military end state.” An operational approach

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<sup>9</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, III–18.

<sup>10</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, III–1 – III - 2; Geoffrey Perret, *Eisenhower* (Holbrook: Adams Media Corp., 1999), 310; Adams, *The Battle for Western Europe, Fall 1944*, 62; Martin Blumenson et al., *Command Decisions* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1959), 482; D’Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier’s Life*, 791; Adams, *The Battle for Western Europe, Fall 1944*, 62, 55.

serves as the commander's basic concept for application of the resources available, in the specific context of the military situation, to achieve the desired military end state. In an operational approach, commanders visualize and describe "possible combinations of actions to reach the desired end state given the understanding of the operational environment." On 3 May 1944, the SHAEF planners presented Eisenhower with an operational approach consisting of three objectives from which to choose. He immediately dismissed Berlin a viable military objective, focusing instead on the two operational objectives tied to the German military's means—its industrial base. Then, Eisenhower sketched three lines across a map stretching from the western edge of France to the Ruhr Valley. According to General Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff:

The First sprang from Normandy across northern France and Belgium, reaching the Rhine north of the Ruhr. From southern Normandy, a second line followed the Loire, dipped across the Seine below Paris, and then began converging toward the northern line of march just below the first. A third line broke off from the second in a southeasterly direction somewhere in eastern France. This was the offensive, which we hoped might explode into Germany through the Frankfurt corridor. This line drove below the Ardennes and pushed for the Rhine in the general direction of Coblenz.<sup>11</sup>

This sketch formed the basis of Eisenhower's visualization of an Allied advance along a broad front, culminating in a double envelopment of the Ruhr Valley.<sup>12</sup>

#### General Eisenhower's Broad Front Strategy

One can find the foundation of Eisenhower's intellectual development that led to his mastery of operational art in three of his pre-war assignments. Eisenhower's first key intellectual

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<sup>11</sup>Walter Bedell Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1956), 157.

<sup>12</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, III-5, III-14; D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, 594; Matthew F. Holland, *Eisenhower between the Wars: The Making of a General and Statesman* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2001), 144; Adams, *The Battle for Western Europe, Fall 1944*, 55; D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, 594; Perret, *Eisenhower*, 310. In Perret's words, "[Eisenhower's] design was simple, feasible and negated the defender's traditional advantage of operating on interior lines."

broadening experience occurred during his three-year assignment in Panama with the Commander of the 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, Brigadier General Fox Connor. In 1922, Connor had Eisenhower reassigned to his brigade to serve as his brigade adjutant. Connor was famous for serving as General John J. Pershing's operations officer on the Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF) staff during WWI. Connor developed a reputation as the "brains of Pershing's AEF headquarters," and this reputation preceded Connor throughout the remainder of his Army career. Connor appreciated Eisenhower's keen intellect and invested a considerable amount of time developing his young protégé, preparing him to achieve his maximum potential.<sup>13</sup>

Because the 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, like most units during the 1920s, lacked the necessary personnel and supplies to conduct effective training, Eisenhower found himself with plenty of free time at the end of each duty day. He took full advantage of this opportunity to invest in his professional development. With Connor's help, Eisenhower improved his military proficiency by studying the lessons of military history." Connor transformed Eisenhower's perspectives on the concepts of war and warfare by introducing him to the connection between military history and theory. Eisenhower spent the majority of his time studying two key sources – Ulysses S. Grant's *Memoirs*, and Carl Von Clausewitz's *On War*. Connor also stressed to Eisenhower his belief in the inevitability of another world war and the importance of building a unified Allied command structure when the time came. When Eisenhower left the 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade for his next assignment, he possessed an unusually well-developed understanding of military history and theory, and their practical usefulness in leading military operations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Holland, *Eisenhower between the Wars*, 98–99; Perret, *Eisenhower*, 87.

<sup>14</sup>Holland, *Eisenhower between the Wars*, 100–102; Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, 160. Bassford explains how Connor "questioned Eisenhower relentlessly on the meaning and implications" of the concepts and theories presented in Clausewitz's *On War*; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 18.

The experience and education Eisenhower gained under the tutelage of Fox Connor prepared him to excel during his other key broadening assignments during the interwar period, first while attending the Command and General Staff School (CGSS), and later as a student at the Army War College (AWC). Eisenhower graduated first out of 275 officers in the CGSS class of 1926. During the nine-month course, Eisenhower applied Connor's lessons on military history and theory to the problem-solving framework espoused at the school. Eisenhower embraced the doctrinal and organizational challenges of integrating the Army's various arms and branches to overcome the complex tactical problems posed by the curriculum.<sup>15</sup>

In particular, CGSS convinced Eisenhower of the importance of maintaining the initiative through offensive operations. Historian Michael R. Matheny described this concept as "continuous concentric pressure to overwhelm the enemy." Although Eisenhower first heard the concept while working for Connor, his attendance at CGSS provided him with the opportunity to apply what he had learned. The school taught its students the tactical concept of applying continuous concentric pressure by attacking an enemy from the front, flanks, and rear with overwhelming firepower, to maintain the initiative. Students at the school tackled a variety of different tactical exercises from a varying number of staff and command positions. Eisenhower excelled in finding novel and winning solutions to the various tactical problems he and his fellow students encountered at CGSS.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Holland, *Eisenhower between the Wars*, 117; Lee, *Dwight D. Eisenhower, Soldier and Statesman*, 54.

<sup>16</sup>Peter J. Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II*, Modern war studies (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 110–111. Schifferle describes the method of instruction espoused by CGSS in the 1920s as the "Applicatory Method." According to Schifferle, "The fundamental principle taught at Leavenworth was to attack and thereby reduce stabilized fronts in order to generate decisive operations in, open, or mobile, warfare."; Perret, *Eisenhower*, 93; M.R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945*, Campaigns and Commanders (University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 259; Holland, *Eisenhower between the Wars*, 108, 123. According to Holland, Connor insisted in the "importance of attacking the enemy without respite on a broad front." Holland also writes, Connor believed in "the strategy of Ulysses S. Grant in keeping the pressure on the enemy and keeping them guessing until they made the wrong move."



In 1927, at the age of thirty-six, Eisenhower began the yearlong Army War College. Repeating his outstanding performance at CGSS, Eisenhower once again graduated first in his class in the spring of 1928. The curriculum focused less on tactical actions and more on campaign planning, and consisted mostly of committee work with students organized in the standard general staff structure (G-1 through G-4), working together to find novel solutions to real-world problems. At the AWC, Eisenhower learned how operational art applied to the intricacies of successful campaign planning. The college stressed the importance of understanding how commanders and staffs linked, in historian Michael Matheny's words, "battles and major operations to achieve strategic objectives in a theater of war or theater of operations." In particular, Eisenhower and his peers studied how America mobilized and deployed military forces for war, focusing, as they did at CGSS, on the AEF experience during WWI.<sup>17</sup>

### The Broad Front Strategy

In early May 1944, Eisenhower and SHAEF planners conducted the operational design for post-Normandy Allied operations. During this critical planning phase, Eisenhower relied on his three broadening assignments to help him construct an operational approach rooted in history, theory, and doctrine. On 27 May, Eisenhower first announced his intent to pursue a broad front advance after the Normandy landings. This decision provided SHAEF planners with a conceptual framework that described how the Allies would achieve their strategic and military end state. Eisenhower's broad front strategy was appropriate to the situation the Allies faced on the Western

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<sup>17</sup>Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the U.S. Army War College* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa: Alumni Association of the United States Army War College, 1984), 211; Grant W Jones, "Education of the Supreme Commander: The Theoretical Underpinnings of Eisenhower's Strategy in Europe, 1944-45," *War & Society*, vol. 30, no. 2 (August 1, 2011): 117, <http://openurl.ingenta.com/c/content/xref?genre=article&issn=07292473&volume=30&issue=2&spage=108> (accessed 24 January 2014). Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945*, 259. It is worth noting how closely this resembles the modern definition of operational art found in *ADP 3-0 Unified Land Operations*, "operational art is the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time space and purpose."; Ball, *Of Responsible Command*, 215.

Front in the final campaigns to defeat Germany because it successfully balanced three elements of operational art and design: tempo, operational reach, and risk.<sup>18</sup>

First, the broad front strategy allowed Eisenhower to control the tempo of his army groups' advances. According to *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Unified Land Operations*, tempo is "the relative speed and rhythm of military operations over time with respect to the enemy." By managing the tempo of the Allied advance, Eisenhower could leverage Allied air superiority and the plentiful American artillery in support of maneuver while strengthening logistical lines of communications, so that Allied forces could capture or defeat as many German forces as possible. Eisenhower's education ensured that he understood the operational benefits of attacking German forces along multiple lines of operation – a way of controlling tempo as defined in modern U.S. Army doctrine, and an element of his operational approach that benefited the Allied war effort by maximizing effectiveness of the forces available while minimizing risk.<sup>19</sup>

Second, the broad front strategy allowed Eisenhower to ensure the Allies maintained the necessary operational reach to defeat any level of German resistance. *JP 5-0* defines operational reach as, "the distance and duration across which a joint force can successfully employ military capabilities." It relies on the ability of key units and capabilities (i.e., logistics, intelligence, and protection) supporting the tactical actions unfolding on the front lines. Eisenhower favored a broad front advance because – in his words – he had "more troops in hand than could possibly be used on a single line of communication."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, 594; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 228–229; Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945*, 200.

<sup>19</sup>U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Unified Land Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 4–7; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 228–229; Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945*, 200; Jerry D. Morelock, "Eisenhower Under Fire – Ike's Warfighting Strategy and His Military Competence Were the Targets of Savage Attacks by British and American Allies." *Armchair General*, n.d., 31.

His understanding of Allied logistical systems came from his time at CGSS and the AWC. Eisenhower's decision to array his forces along multiple lines of operation stretching from the Netherlands to Switzerland ensured these lines of communication remained uncongested. For example, Eisenhower and his planners determined, "the lines of communications north of the Ruhr could not support more than some thirty to thirty-five divisions for any penetration into Germany." Estimating the number of possible logistical lines of communication helped determine not only how many lines of operation the Allies could pursue but also the operational reach of each line.<sup>21</sup>

Lastly, Eisenhower's broad front strategy employed the elements of tempo and operational reach to minimize risk. *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Unified Land Operations*, "a good operational approach considers risk and uncertainty equally with friction and chance." An advance on a broad front was the concept of continuous concentric pressure espoused by Connor and taught at CGSS and the AWC during the interwar period. His operational approach enabled his army group commanders to fight from a relative position of advantage across the German border. Eisenhower favored a more deliberate tempo of operations because it catered to Allied strengths by providing his forces with the best opportunity to maximize their resources. It also prevented an Allied salient from developing, which would give the Germans an unwanted opportunity to mass their forces. Eisenhower's use of tempo and operational reach enabled him to create operational and tactical opportunities while simultaneously limiting the risk to his armies.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, III-33; Dwight D. Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 21 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 2183; Jerry D. Morelock, "Eisenhower Under Fire," 31.

<sup>21</sup>Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 21:2128.

<sup>22</sup>U.S. Department of the Army, *Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, Unified Land Operations*, 4-9; John A. Bonin and Mark H. Gerner, *Continuous Concentric Pressure* (Institute of Land

## CASE STUDIES

### Operations Goodwood and Cobra

With the success of the cross-channel attack on June 6, 1944, the Allies finally opened the long sought after second front against Germany. They next planned to expand the beachhead into a theater-level lodgment. As described in the initial Overlord plan, the Allies anticipated expanding the lodgment almost immediately following the invasion, but that plan changed in the face of stiff German resistance, failure to capture key initial objectives, and extremely difficult terrain that the Allies had not planned for adequately. Nonetheless, Eisenhower and his subordinate commanders knew that they needed to move inland as quickly as possible so that Allied forces could generate the necessary combat power to sustain offensive operations on the continent.<sup>23</sup>

For the initial phases of Overlord, Eisenhower had temporarily given Montgomery operational control of the Allied ground forces. Montgomery's Twenty-first Army Group therefore served as the higher headquarters for both the Second British Army, led by General Miles Dempsey, and the First U.S. Army, led by Lieutenant General Omar Bradley. After the Normandy invasion, the Allied forces remained arrayed along a thin front stretching approximately seventy miles with First U.S. Army positioned in the west and Second British Army in the east. By July 1944, with nearly one million men and 150,000 vehicles on the

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Warfare, Association of the United States Army, 2003), 5, [http://www.ausa.org/SiteCollection Documents/ILW%20Web-ExclusivePubs/Land%20Warfare%20Papers/LWP\\_43.pdf](http://www.ausa.org/SiteCollection/Documents/ILW%20Web-ExclusivePubs/Land%20Warfare%20Papers/LWP_43.pdf) (accessed 15 November 2013); Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945*, 259; Schifferle, *America's School for War*, 7. Schifferle writes, "The only school in the interwar army that taught the necessary principles, procedures, and techniques for this new form of combined arms warfare (combined infantry-artillery-tanks-airpower, controlled by a staff and led by a commander separated from immediate tactical decisions) was the Command and General Staff School at Leavenworth."

<sup>23</sup>Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 4; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 427; D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, 337.

beachhead, the Allies simply did not have enough space to simultaneously expand their lodgment and conduct combat operations in depth.<sup>24</sup>

Though both Allied armies fought with determination throughout June, German forces successfully resisted all Allied efforts to achieve and exploit a penetration – particularly around the city of Caen, a major logistical hub in the Twenty-first Army Group sector and the Allied main effort for the first two months after D-Day. By the end of June, the Allies had only advanced between five and twenty-five miles inland from their beachheads. This lack of depth generated a sense of anxiety among the Allies. The possibility of Normandy turning into a WWI-like stalemate greatly concerned Allied senior leaders on both sides of the Anglo-American partnership.<sup>25</sup>

In response to the resulting political pressure to start achieving more significant success, Eisenhower visited Normandy in early July to observe the progress of operations. Although Eisenhower disliked “interfering with the operations of his subordinates,” on 7 July 1944 he wrote a letter to Montgomery explaining his desire to see the stalemate broken. At this point in the war, Eisenhower believed in Montgomery’s leadership abilities and trusted him to take this new guidance and refine his operational approach. Despite Montgomery’s lackluster performance since D-Day, Eisenhower supported Montgomery regardless of the political and operational pressures mounting on him to achieve a breakout, and increasing doubts about the ability of his ground force commander to achieve this objective.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 4–9.

<sup>25</sup>Martin Blumenson, *The Battle of the Generals: The Untold Story of the Falaise Pocket: The Campaign That Should Have Won World War II*, 1st ed. (New York: Morrow, 1993), 109; D’Este, *Decision in Normandy*, 304.

<sup>26</sup>D’Este, *Decision in Normandy*, 302-309; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander the War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 434–435. Montgomery had failed to seize Caen, despite several attempts at great loss, and even though the Allies initially anticipated taking Caen within twenty-four hours after D-Day.

Because of Eisenhower's desire to see a breakthrough, Montgomery arranged a meeting with Dempsey and Bradley on 10 July to discuss future operations. In their discussion, Bradley proposed a new plan to break through the German resistance. His plan served as the impetus for both a British offensive, codenamed Operation Goodwood, and the American offensive, codenamed Operation Cobra. Prior to the discussion that generated Goodwood and Cobra, Montgomery believed that his "eastern flank was 'a bastion' on which not only the U.S. Army main effort but also the whole future of the European campaign depended." Montgomery's operational approach consisted of executing limited offensive operations, through a set-piece battle concept, in an attempt to attrite the German panzer force along the Allied front. Dempsey knew Montgomery favored this more defensive minded, indirect approach. After Bradley left the meeting, Dempsey persuaded Montgomery to make one more attempt at a breakthrough. Montgomery, sensing pressure from both his subordinates and his superiors alike, agreed to Dempsey's proposal.<sup>27</sup>

### Operation Goodwood

Goodwood commenced on the morning of 18 July 1944 with a massive Allied aerial bombardment followed by an armored thrust led by the British Eight Corps towards Caen. However, on 19 July, a day into Goodwood, Eisenhower received an update from his Deputy Supreme Commander, British Air Chief Sir Marshal Tedder, which described Montgomery's

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<sup>27</sup>Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 189; D'Este, *Decision in Normandy*, 354; Stephen Hart, *Montgomery and "Colossal Cracks": The 21st Army Group in Northwest Europe, 1944-45*, Praeger series in war studies (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2000), 7, 11. Hart suggests that Montgomery's operational technique consisted of "a protracted series of set piece battles" where his forces would "grind the enemy down by attrition based on massive fire power until the battlefield situation became so favorable that the Allies could undertake mobile operations that would complete the defeat of the Germany army in the West." Montgomery called this technique "Colossal Cracks." Like Churchill, Montgomery insisted on pursuing a more defensive minded and indirect operational approach because, as Hart suggests, "it utilized the British army's strengths [massive fire power on a narrow front], limited German exploitation . . . accurately reflected the limited personnel resources, and achieved the British war aims."; Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, 129; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 436.

slow advance. In the final line of the update, Tedder wrote, “It is clear that there was no intention of making this the decisive [operation] which [Eisenhower] so clearly indicated it should be.” Although Montgomery’s deception bothered Eisenhower, he was equally concerned with his decision-making. Eisenhower had supported Montgomery’s attack with a wealth of air support based on the premise that his forces would attempt a significant breakthrough – something they seemed upon execution both unable and unwilling to achieve.<sup>28</sup>

Two days later, having failed to penetrate the German front line and conduct the planned exploitation, Montgomery withdrew his armored forces. By the time Goodwood culminated on 21 July, Montgomery’s troops had seized only thirty-four square miles of ground, including the rest of the city of Caen, at the cost of nearly 3,000 men and 500 tanks. Just as significantly, the tactical actions that unfolded during Goodwood ran counter to what Montgomery had promised Eisenhower, who expected Montgomery to “drive across the Orne from Caen and [conduct] an exploitation toward the Seine Basin and Paris.” Therefore, in the aftermath of Goodwood Eisenhower felt both disappointed and deceived. After Goodwood, Eisenhower for the first time started to doubt Montgomery’s fitness as the overall ground forces commander.<sup>29</sup>

### Operation Cobra

By the time Goodwood commenced on 18 July, Bradley’s First U.S. Army, acting as a shaping operation, had successfully seized St. Lo. Although its capture allowed Bradley’s forces to continue to move inland, First U.S. Army suffered nearly 11,000 casualties in fourteen days. In fact, Allied efforts to penetrate the German resistance and move off the Normandy beachhead had pushed Allied casualty totals beyond 100,000. Therefore, any operation seeking an Allied

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<sup>28</sup>Merle Miller, *Ike the Soldier: As They Knew Him* (New York: Putnam’s Sons, 1987), 662.

<sup>29</sup>Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 193; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 439; Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 194.

breakthrough had to minimize risk – the pursuit of significant gains could present opportunities to the enemy that might lead to catastrophic losses.<sup>30</sup>

On the Allied eastern flank, Montgomery's cautious operational approach worried Eisenhower. On the Allied western flank, Bradley's forces continued to struggle inside the severely restricted terrain of the Bocage region. Lodgment expansion was critical to the Allies to build up logistical capabilities on the continent. Despite many setbacks since D-Day, Eisenhower remained confident that Bradley could orchestrate this breakthrough.<sup>31</sup>

On 18 July, Montgomery approved Bradley's plan for Cobra. In his plan, similar to Goodwood, Bradley made the Allied air forces integral to the operation. He believed a breakthrough would require the Allied air force to "obliterate the German defenses along Periers-St. Lo Highway." In support of this concept, Bradley designated a small area (2,500 by 6,000 yards) where he would concentrate Allied aerial bombardments. Once the Allied air forces destroyed the German resistance in this area, mechanized columns would rush "through the gap before the enemy could recover."<sup>32</sup>

Cobra commenced on 24 July but subsequently stalled because of poor weather conditions. Without adequate air support, Bradley decided to delay the operation for twenty-four hours. On 25 July, weather conditions improved and the Allied air forces conducted their bombardment. Although the effects of the aerial bombardment caused a significant number of

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<sup>30</sup>Forrest Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1989), 192; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 458–459.

<sup>31</sup>Michael D. Doubler, *Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 33–40. Doubler describes the terrain First U.S. Army encountered on their advance inland. He writes, "For centuries Norman farmers had followed the practice of enclosing the plots of their arable land, pastures as well as orchards, with thick hedgerows known to the French as *bocage*."; A.R. Millett and P. Maslowski, *For the Common Defense* (Free Press, 1994), 423; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 462.

<sup>32</sup>Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 215; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 199; Omar Bradley, *Bradley: A Soldier's Story* (New York, NY: Holt Publishing, 1951), 318.



allied casualties, it also “pulverized the enemy in the carpet,” allowing Bradley’s ground forces to advance rapidly. On 26 July, the commander of the VII Corps, Major General J. Lawton Collins, took advantage of this opportunity and committed two armored columns into the opening created by the aerial bombardment. Collins’ bold and independent decision to attack led to the destabilization of the entire German front. On 27 July, Bradley further exploited the breakthrough by allowing his forces to advance to the outskirts of Coutances. By 28 July, Bradley’s forces had advanced twenty-one miles and taken over four thousand German prisoners. Cobra achieved far greater success than the Allies had anticipated.<sup>33</sup>

#### Analysis of Operation Goodwood and Cobra

Although Montgomery claimed that Goodwood and Cobra made up two parts of one large operation, the historical record casts doubt on the idea that he envisioned it that way. Before Goodwood, Eisenhower reinforced his desire for a bolder, more aggressive operational approach and Montgomery failed to meet his expectations. In a letter he sent to Montgomery on 7 July, Eisenhower explained the strategic and operational implications of failing to achieve a breakthrough. Then, he reviewed Montgomery’s current operational approach and requested that he devise a new one that used “all possible energy in a determined effort to prevent a stalemate.” Although the letter was brief and not very prescriptive, Montgomery clearly understood Eisenhower’s intent, as one can see in his response: “My whole eastern flank will burst into

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<sup>33</sup>Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 229, 236. Two separate Allied bombing incidents occurred during Cobra. On July 24, Allied bombers prematurely released their payloads killing 25 soldiers and wounding an additional 113 from the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. On July 25, a similar bombing incident killed 111 soldiers and wounded another 490. Among the casualties was Lieutenant General Lesley McNair, commander of the Army Ground forces.; Bradley, *Bradley: A Soldier’s Story*, 358; D’Este, *Decision in Normandy*, 404; Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 252; L. F Ellis and A. E Warhurst, *Victory in the West : The Battle of Normandy*, vol. 1 (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1962), 383; Charles B. MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor: The American War In Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), 308.

flames on Saturday [the start of Goodwood]. The operation on Monday may have far reaching results.”<sup>34</sup>

Conversely, Bradley adapted his operational approach for Cobra in response to Montgomery’s difficulties on the eastern flank and the severity of the situation. This led Bradley to develop a more aggressive plan than he initially envisaged for the operation. Bradley planned to use medium bombers in a non-standard manner, directing them to target enemy concentrations along the German front lines to “smash a division from the air and tamp right through it.” He also made the decision to keep his soldiers as close as possible to the saturation bombing area. He knew that “no matter how many bombs and shells were unleashed, riflemen and tankers still had to root the Germans out of their prepared positions.” Although this decision resulted in over one hundred U.S. soldiers’ deaths, the saturation bombing set the conditions for Bradley’s forces to achieve and exploit the first significant penetration of the German defensive front since D-Day. Bradley, unlike Montgomery, changed his operational approach to meet Eisenhower’s intent, thereby achieving overwhelming success.<sup>35</sup>

Eisenhower knew Montgomery’s behavior warranted some degree of reprimand. Even Churchill argued that Montgomery’s conduct during Goodwood warranted his removal, but Eisenhower wanted to avoid the potential damage to Allied cohesion that such a decision might cause. Instead, Eisenhower responded by writing a highly prescriptive letter to Montgomery that

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<sup>34</sup>Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 189; Stephen T. Powers, “The Battle of Normandy: The Lingering Controversy,” *The Journal of Military History* 56 (1992): 456. According to Powers, after the war Montgomery contacted Eisenhower to corroborate their versions of Goodwood and Cobra. It was only then that Montgomery explained to Eisenhower, as Powers’ suggests “that he had never intended the breakout to occur on the eastern flank, but rather to draw and to pine the German forces there, while the Americans gathered their strength for the thrust.”; Dwight D. Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 3 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 1982; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 188.

<sup>35</sup>Bradley, *Bradley: A Soldier’s Story*, 339; Doubler, *Closing with the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945*, 291; Robert Michael Citino, *Blitzkrieg to Desert Storm: The Evolution of Operational Warfare*, Modern War Studies (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 110.

clearly outlined his intent for future Allied operations. On 21 July 1944 Eisenhower wrote, “I have been going over the major considerations that, in my mind, must guide your future actions.” The letter represented a shift in Eisenhower and Montgomery’s relationship and exposed the growing disparity between the American and British perspectives on operational art.<sup>36</sup>

### Operation Market Garden

In August 1944, the tension between Allied leaders and Montgomery began to manifest itself in the outcomes of operations. Montgomery’s abrasive attitude and his performance during the Normandy Campaign continued to irritate Eisenhower. On 19 August, Eisenhower notified Montgomery that on 1 September 1944, he would assume direct operational control of all Allied ground forces in Western Europe.<sup>37</sup>

Eisenhower’s choice enraged Montgomery, who viewed the command shift as a demotion. In an effort to minimize the impact of Eisenhower’s decision, Churchill responded by promoting Montgomery to field marshal on the same day Eisenhower assumed command. Because of Montgomery’s popularity in Britain, Eisenhower attempted to conceal the true tension that existed between him and Montgomery. At this point in the conflict, Eisenhower was primarily concerned with holding the Allies together long enough to finish the war.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 3:2018.

<sup>37</sup>Martin Blumenson et al., *Command Decisions*, 412; Martin Blumenson, “Eisenhower Then and Now: Fireside Reflections,” *Parameters*, Summer 1991, 13, <http://strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/parameters/Articles/1991/1991%20blumenson.pdf> (accessed 5 November 2013); M.D. Krause, R.C. Phillips, and Center of Military History (U.S. Army), *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, Center of Military History Publication (Center of Military History, United States Army, 2006), 406. Krause claims that Montgomery refused to coordinate tactical actions with Bradley and Patton during critical episodes of the Argentan – Falaise Pocket operation; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 529; Dwight D. Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, vol. 4 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 277. In the letter, Eisenhower explained to Montgomery that he would assume operational control of the Allied ground forces on 1 September 1944.

<sup>38</sup>D’Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier’s Life*, 599-601. Churchill’s decision to promote Montgomery to field marshal infuriated the other American commanders; Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 161; Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, 77.

Beyond Eisenhower's problems with Montgomery, the Allied supply apparatus was not yet mature enough to fully resource his broad front strategy. By late August 1944, the breakneck tempo of the Allied eastward advance had outpaced the Communication Zone (the organization responsible for supplying Eisenhower's armies) capabilities. SHAEF planners had never envisioned Allied divisions driving towards the German border in early September 1944. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the Allies only controlled one major port (at Cherbourg, France) in which they could receive and distribute supplies. From the Normandy depots to the front line in Antwerp, logistical lines of communication stretched over three hundred miles. In spite of their best efforts, the Communication Zone lacked the ability to transport the volume of provisions necessary to continue resourcing the Allied eastward advance.<sup>39</sup>

With an operational pause imminent, both Bradley and Montgomery vied for Eisenhower's support (knowing that he controlled the necessary resources) for a bold eastward advance conducted exclusively by their portion of forces making up the overall Allied organization in Western Europe. Bradley (and his Third U.S. Army commander, Lieutenant General George S. Patton) argued that with sufficient logistical support, Twelfth Army Group could execute a southeastern thrust to seize Saarbrücken, Mannheim, and Frankfurt. Conversely, Montgomery argued that the Twenty-first Army Group could execute a northeastern thrust around the Siegfried Line through Holland to seize the Ruhr. In fact, Montgomery claimed that with enough resources he could drive beyond the Ruhr to Berlin and finish the war.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Martin Blumenson et al., *Command Decisions*, 423; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 493-94. Ambrose suggests that Allied planners "had not contemplated reaching the German boarder until D plus 330" but because Eisenhower decided to cross the Seine, his Armies were there by D plus 100.; Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, 72; Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit*, 689; Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 270-271.

<sup>40</sup>D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, 601, 605; Jean Edward Smith, *Eisenhower: In War and*

However, Eisenhower dismissed both Montgomery's and Bradley's bold, single-thrust proposal. Unlike his subordinate commanders, Eisenhower believed that the Allies lacked the necessary operational reach to win a "deep battle within Germany." The rapidly declining logistical situation meant that the Allies would have difficulty amassing the necessary means to fully resource either of these ambitious single thrust concepts, even with the other commander's portion of the Allied front remaining in a defensive posture.<sup>41</sup>

On 4 September 1944, after weeks of debating his operational approach with Montgomery and Bradley, Eisenhower issued his commander's intent. In the one and half page directive, he provided Montgomery and Bradley his visualization for post-Normandy operations.<sup>42</sup> Eisenhower, in keeping with his operational approach, would continue to support both commanders' lines of operation. This reaffirmed his commitment to the idea of a simultaneous, two-pronged attack into the Ruhr and Saar regions, emphasizing that the destruction of enemy forces remained his priority. Based on these fundamental operational concepts, he described Montgomery's and Bradley's separate lines of operation. Montgomery's armies were to "secure Antwerp, breach the sector of the Siegfried Line covering the Ruhr and then seize the Ruhr." Eisenhower also placed priority on the northern offensive by task organizing the First Allied Airborne Army (FAAA) under Montgomery's command. Simultaneously, Bradley's armies were to "[capture] Brest, [protect] the southern flank of the

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*Peace* (New York: Random House, 2012), 398; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 511. In keeping with Liddell Hart's concept of an indirect approach, Montgomery's plan to the end the war involved launching a single forty-division northern offensive on a narrow front aimed at Berlin. This remains one of the most controversial episodes of WWII. Despite Eisenhower's reluctance, Montgomery insisted that he could have ended the war in 1944 if Eisenhower had allocated him enough resources.

<sup>41</sup>Adams, *The Battle for Western Europe, Fall 1944*, 91.

<sup>42</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 11 August 2011), II-8, [http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3\\_0.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/jp3_0.pdf) (accessed 11 July 2013). Commander's intent is "the commander's clear and concise expression of what the force must do and the conditions the force must establish to accomplish the mission."

Allied Expeditionary Force, and occupy the sector of the Siegfried Line covering the Saar and then Seize Frankfurt.”<sup>43</sup>

Despite Eisenhower’s directive, Montgomery continued to question his operational approach. Montgomery insisted that, if given priority of logistical support, he could establish a bridgehead over the Rhine, creating the opportunity to advance rapidly to Berlin. From 5 to 9 September 1944, Eisenhower and Montgomery exchanged multiple letters in an attempt to reach a decision regarding their conflicting views on the Allies’ next move. Upon recognizing he could not put the matter to rest through indirect communication, Eisenhower, at Montgomery’s request, flew to Brussels to settle the conflict.<sup>44</sup>

On 10 September 1944, Eisenhower landed in Brussels. His meeting with Montgomery began very poorly. Montgomery argued that having priority of logistical support was simply not enough. He wanted Eisenhower to halt Bradley’s armies along his line of operation directed towards the Saar. Just a few days earlier, Montgomery’s Operation Comet, an Allied airborne operation designed to seize a key bridgehead over the Rhine, had been cancelled because of a lack of manpower and increasingly effective German resistance in Second British Army’s sector. Montgomery argued that he needed every capability Eisenhower could provide in order to succeed.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 4:2115; U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations, Joint Operations*, II-8. Commander’s intent is “the commander’s clear and concise expression of what the force must do and the conditions the force must establish to accomplish the mission.”; Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 4:2116. Eisenhower does not clarify which line of operation would receive priority of logistical support. He does, however, task organize the FAAA to Montgomery’s Northern Army Group.

<sup>44</sup>Bernard Law Montgomery of Alamein, *The Memoirs of Field Marshal Montgomery* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1958), 244. On 4 September 1944, Montgomery explained, “I consider we have now reached a stage where one really powerful and full blooded thrust towards Berlin is likely to get there and win the war.”

<sup>45</sup>Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, 85. At one point during the conversation, Montgomery’s outlandish behavior prompted Eisenhower to reach out and place his hand on Montgomery’s knee exclaiming, “Steady, Monty! You can’t speak to me like that. I’m your boss.”; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The*

Although Eisenhower firmly rejected Montgomery's Berlin proposal, he listened closely to Montgomery's new plan, codenamed Operation Market Garden. The plan called for a combined airborne and armor-heavy ground advance towards Arnhem in an attempt to secure a bridgehead over the Lower Rhine River. Market Garden involved two distinct but integrated operations executed simultaneously. First, the airborne operation (Market) would rely on the recently formed FAAA to seize multiple bridgeheads from Eindhoven to Arnhem in an attempt to open up a passageway for the Allied ground offensive. Second, the Allied ground offensive operation (Garden) would involve operations by the Second British Army, advancing along a narrow avenue of approach stretching approximately sixty-four miles to link up with Allied airborne forces en route to Arnhem. Market Garden was ambitious, bold, and risky – unlike any campaign Montgomery had led since D-Day. It also offered an opportunity to employ the FAAA, a high Allied priority. Consequently, before leaving Brussels, Eisenhower reviewed and authorized Montgomery's revised plan for a northern thrust across the Lower Rhine.<sup>46</sup>

### Operation Market Garden

On 17 September 1944, Market Garden started according to plan with the largest airborne operation of the war. In approximately 80 minutes, 20,000 soldiers from four different airborne organizations landed in Holland (refer to Figure 1: Market Garden). From Eindhoven to Arnhem, the FAAA's subordinate airborne divisions began securing their objectives over the key waterways along the Allied axis of advance. At approximately the same time, XXX British

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*War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 515; Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, 84; Charles B. MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1993), 120, [http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/007/7-7-1/CMH\\_Pub\\_7-7-1.pdf](http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/007/7-7-1/CMH_Pub_7-7-1.pdf) (accessed 1 November 2013); Bennett, *Magnificent Disaster*, 257.

<sup>46</sup>Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 281; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 516.

Corps, led by Lieutenant General Brian Horrocks, initiated its attack from the Belgian-Holland border towards Eindhoven.<sup>47</sup>

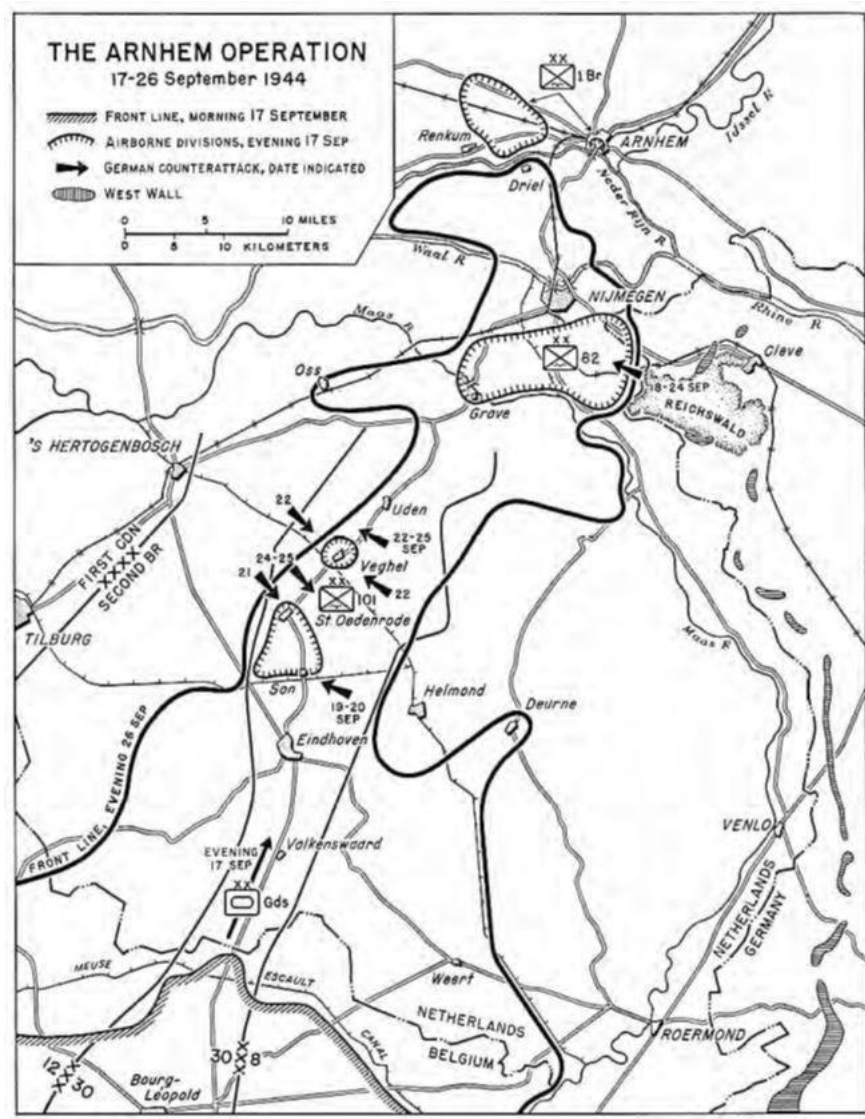


Figure 1: Market Garden

Source: Forrest Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1989), 285.

<sup>47</sup>MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, 132-39; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 284.



Almost immediately, however, Market Garden started to unravel. On the first day of the operation, German resistance stopped the Guards Armored Division, which was the lead element of XXX Corps' advance six miles short of its objectives in Eindhoven. Over the next few days, the XXX Corps eventually reached Eindhoven (linking up with the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division) and Nijmegen (linking up with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division), but the Allied ground advance remained behind schedule. As a result, the lightly equipped and completely isolated British First Airborne Division, fighting in and north of Arnhem, was on the verge of collapse. Having planned to fight only two days before linkup with XXX Corps, the airborne organization had sustained significant casualties inflicted by German forces, including powerful armored formations.<sup>48</sup>

By 21 September, German reinforcements continued encircling the First British Airborne Division in northern Arnhem and blocked XXX Corps' advance at Nijmegen. The lack of alternate routes along Horrocks' axis of advance made subsequent Allied objectives extremely predictable. This made it quite easy for the Germans to anticipate XXX Corps' movements and shift forces around the battlefield to slow their advance by ambushing their long and vulnerable columns (in Figure 1 the converging arrows represent German counterattacks). Allied attempts to maneuver around German resistance proved very costly. Spread over a sixty-mile salient, the Allied lines of communication from Eindhoven to Nijmegen provided German reinforcements with a multitude of options for counterattacks.<sup>49</sup>

Over the next four days, after several desperate attempts to get to Arnhem, the Allies failed to achieve a breakthrough. As a result, on September 25, Horrocks and the British Airborne Corps Commander, General Fredrick A.M. Browning, developed a plan to withdraw the First British Airborne Division from northern Arnhem. After nine days of fighting, the division had

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<sup>48</sup>Bennett, *Magnificent Disaster*, 94; Rick Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light: The War in Western Europe, 1944-1945* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2013), 273; Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, 412.

<sup>49</sup>MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, 184; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 287.

lost over seven thousand British and Polish paratroopers north of the Rhine. Its remaining two thousand troops withdrew from their fighting positions along the north bank of the Neder Rijn River. This retreat marked the end of Operation Market Garden.<sup>50</sup>

### Analysis of Operation Market Garden

In Eisenhower's first three weeks as the Allied ground force commander, he watched Montgomery execute an operation, which he had approved, that created a long and extremely vulnerable salient. German resistance during Market Garden smashed the operational illusion held by Eisenhower's subordinate commanders that a bold and ambitious thrust into the German defensive line could prove decisive. The Allies had underestimated the German military's uncanny ability to reconsolidate, reorganize, and quickly commit units thought to be combat ineffective back into the fight. Montgomery's operational approach (and Eisenhower's decision to proceed with Market Garden) cost the Allies dearly. During the nine-day operation, the Allies suffered nearly 17,000 casualties.<sup>51</sup>

Three considerations shaped Eisenhower's decision to proceed with the Market Garden. First, the long-awaited breakout and pursuit after Operation Cobra created a sense of euphoria among Allied leadership. Second, Marshall and Lieutenant General Henry H. Arnold, the Chief of the U.S. Army Air Forces, had long sought a viable option to employ the FAAA, a large and elite force that they could not accept holding in reserve any longer. Lastly, Montgomery's persistence incensed Eisenhower, but achieved the desired effect. Although Eisenhower remained ambivalent regarding the change in approach that Market Garden would require, he reluctantly

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<sup>50</sup>Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 287; MacDonald, *The Siegfried Line Campaign*, 198; Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, 591. Ryan writes, "Of Urquhart's original 10,005-man force only 2,163 troopers, along with 160 Poles and 75 Dorsets, came back across the Rhine. After nine days, the division had approximately 1,200 dead and 6,642, missing, wounded or captured."

<sup>51</sup>Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, 599. Ryan writes, "In the nine days of Market-Garden combined losses – airborne and ground forces – in killed, wounded, and missing amounted to more than 17,000."

allowed Montgomery to attempt a bold, risky, deep strike against the still-dangerous German Army.<sup>52</sup>

Eisenhower felt the pressure of catastrophic success. No Allied planner had envisioned the operational possibilities that took place during the breakout and pursuit from 15 August to 5 September 1944. These events created the operational illusion that one concentrated thrust to Berlin could lead to an early end to the war, possibly by the end of the year. This illusion resonated inside the minds of almost every Allied leader on both sides of the Anglo-American partnership. For example, in early August 1944, Field Marshal Lord Alan Brooke had commented the Germans were already defeated, “It was only a matter of now and how many more months [they] can last.” Marshall also wrote to his commanders, “cessation of hostilities in the war against Germany may occur anytime, it is assumed in fact that it will extend over a period commencing anytime between 1 September and 1 November 1944.” Finally, in the weekly SHAEF intelligence summary ending on 16 September 1944, the SHAEF G-2, British Major General Kenneth Strong, estimated that the Germans could not hold the Siegfried line with their limited forces. Strong estimated the Germans had less than “eleven infantry and four armored divisions” arrayed along the West Wall. Although Eisenhower did not necessarily concur with Brooke or Marshall’s assessment that the war would end before the New Year, their opinions coupled with the SHAEF intelligence estimate played a role in Eisenhower’s decision.<sup>53</sup>

Both Marshall and Arnold also placed a great deal of pressure on Eisenhower because they “wanted a major airborne operation in Europe before the end of the war.” The breakneck tempo of the Allied advance during the pursuit made planning airborne operations nearly

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<sup>52</sup>Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far*, 83.

<sup>53</sup>Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 510; Alistair Horne and David Montgomery, *Monty: The Lonely Leader, 1944-1945*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1994), 153; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 510; Martin Blumenson et al., *Command Decisions*, 437.

impossible. In fact, the Allies planned and cancelled eighteen airborne operations prior to Market Garden. With the ambitious SHAEF intelligence estimate in mind, both Generals wanted Eisenhower to employ the newly created FAAA “in actual operations deep in enemy territory.” The Allied leadership on both sides of the Anglo-American partnership searched for an opportunity to employ Allied airborne forces and found one in Market Garden.<sup>54</sup>

As for Montgomery, he simply did not believe in Eisenhower’s broad front strategy. His desire to remain an influential figure during the Allied advance into Germany provided the impetus for Comet and subsequently Market Garden. As early as 23 August 1944, Montgomery argued that Eisenhower’s operational approach would result in Allied failure. Instead, Montgomery advocated for a decisive forty division northern thrust towards the Ruhr through Arnhem. He believed a single thrust could bypass German resistance north of the Siegfried Line and penetrate the Ruhr industrial complex. Montgomery, like all the Allies, wanted to end the war quickly and believed he could do so by seizing a bridgehead over the Rhine.<sup>55</sup>

Although these three factors shaped Eisenhower’s decision to launch Market Garden, it was the wrong decision – and Eisenhower knew it. His willingness to appease Montgomery and his superiors alike led to another Allied operation that seemed to offer great promise but instead resulted in an embarrassing defeat. Market Garden failed because it ran counter to Eisenhower’s broad front strategy. It favored a high tempo vertical envelopment that ignored German defensive capabilities and overestimated the Allies’ operational reach, creating an inordinate amount of risk.

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<sup>54</sup>Stephen Badsey, *Arnhem 1944: Operation Market Garden* (London: Osprey, 1993), 156; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 281; Martin Blumenson et al., *Command Decisions*, 435; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 279.

<sup>55</sup>Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, 133. Bassford writes, "Montgomery was very enthusiastic about Liddell Hart, a personal acquaintance of forty years." Montgomery was a disciple of Liddell Hart's relentless belief in the indirect approach or concentrated strategic thrust; Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 155–159; Winston Churchill, *Triumph and Tragedy* (New York: Rosetta Books, 2002), 191, <http://public.eblib.com/EBLPublic/PublicView.do?ptiID=137274> (accessed 17 October 2013); Perret, *Eisenhower*, 314.

Its failure, unlike Goodwood, exposed the inadequacies of Montgomery's operational approach. After Market Garden, and for the first time since D-Day, Eisenhower could refute Montgomery's ill-conceived efforts to execute a single strategic thrust into Germany. He now possessed all the evidence he needed to maintain his broad front strategy and associated operational approach, despite consistent pressure to deviate from it.<sup>56</sup>

### The Rhineland Campaign

From October 1944 to late February 1945, the Allies encountered significant levels of German resistance as they advanced to the Rhine River. Most notably, on December 16, 1944, the Germans launched a major offensive through the Ardennes forest that resulted in the Battle of the Bulge. Although the success of the initial German advance created a sixty mile salient deep into the Allied rear area, Germany lacked the necessary strategic reserves or logistics to reach Hitler's desired objectives and achieve decisive results. By late December 1944, Eisenhower successfully redirected his armies to converge on and halt the German advance, reduce the salient in the Allied defensive line, and restore the broad, cohesive Allied front. Hitler's last-ditch attempt to regain the initiative on the Western Front had failed.<sup>57</sup>

The fighting in the Ardennes and the Alsace regions, although resulting in German defeat, exacerbated an already critical Allied manpower shortage. Allied losses during the counteroffensives totaled nearly 105,000. At the beginning of January 1945, Allied operational end strength on the Western Front stood at seventy-one divisions, and the slow stream of poorly

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<sup>56</sup>Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 263.

<sup>57</sup>Charles Brown MacDonald, *A Time for Trumpets: The Untold Story of the Battle of the Bulge* (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 48; Charles B. MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, ed. Maurice Matloff (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1993), 23, <http://history.army.mil/html/books/007/7-9-1/index.html> (accessed 24 July 2013); Ken Ford, *The Rhineland 1945: The Last Killing Ground in the West* (Oxford: Osprey Military, 2000), 7; Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 4:2356. On 18 December, Eisenhower sent a cable to Generals Bradley and Devers redirecting them to "take immediate action to check the enemy advance."

trained American replacements could not maintain either the combat strength or expected quality of these units. Eisenhower anticipated needing approximately eighty-five divisions to advance beyond the Rhine and into the heart of Germany. In an effort to man these divisions, Eisenhower converted support units into combat units and asked Marshall to transfer units from other theaters to the European theater. He also began coordinating with the Russians, confirming their plans to conduct major offensives throughout the winter and spring on the Eastern Front, which would mitigate the Allies' manpower problems.<sup>58</sup>

The lack of manpower, the results of Market Garden, and the level of German resistance along the Siegfried Line convinced Eisenhower, in keeping with his broad front strategy, to modify his desired end state for the Rhineland Campaign. In the words of General Walter Bedell Smith, Eisenhower's Chief of Staff,

Instead of a holding operation along the rest of the front while the main Rhine crossing in the north was being developed, we would embark on successive coordinated offensives. We would clear out the enemy as far down as Moselle first, using the river as the strong southern flank. With that achieved, the power crossing north of the Ruhr could proceed without danger of interruption. The remaining offensives would then explode south of the Moselle till the entire west bank was clear.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup>D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, 630; Atkinson, *The Guns at Last Light*, 488; Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 4:2407–09; Ted Ballard, *Rhineland*, vol. 72, 25 (Army Center of Military History, 1995), 26, <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/Rhineland/rhineland.html> (accessed 24 January 2014). Ballard describes the Allied force breakdown, “[Eisenhower] had 71 divisions available and anticipated having 85 divisions by the spring: 61 U.S., 16 British, and 8 French.” This also illustrates the fact that Americans provided the preponderance of forces at this point in the war.; R. R Palmer et al., *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2003), 226, [http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/002/2-2/CMH\\_Pub\\_2-2.pdf](http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/002/2-2/CMH_Pub_2-2.pdf) (accessed 10 February 2014); Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 392, 412; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 366. It is also important to note that throughout this episode the Allies were coordinating with the Russians. In fact, in January 1945 Eisenhower sent several of his key staff officers to include Air Chief Marshal Tedder (Deputy Supreme Commander of SHAEF) to Moscow to share their plans for future operations with the Russians. By late January 1944, Eisenhower knew they were planning major offensives on the Eastern Front.

<sup>59</sup>Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945*, 122. According to Smith, this was the “fourth of the [Eisenhower's] six great decisions” because “of its determining effect on the remaining battles in the heart of Germany.”

Eisenhower insisted that this change would ensure Allied forces, upon consolidation after operations to cross the Rhine, possessed the necessary combat power to finish the war in Western Europe.<sup>60</sup>

This decision triggered a vehemently negative response from Montgomery and the British Chiefs of Staff. Similar to the debate that arose prior to Market Garden in September 1944, the British Chiefs advocated for a single thrust by Montgomery's Twenty-first Army Group across the Rhine and into the Ruhr. The British Chiefs and Montgomery insisted that the Allies avoid dispersing their forces along a broad front and instead concentrate their efforts into one major offensive. They also argued that Eisenhower's modified end state would significantly delay an attack across the Rhine and thereby extend the duration of the war. Because of these objections, on 10 January the British Chiefs requested that Eisenhower submit to the Combined Chiefs of Staff an outline of his plans through spring of 1945.<sup>61</sup>

In response to the objections raised by the British Chiefs, on 15 January Eisenhower wrote a letter to Marshall justifying his decision to modify the Rhineland Campaign's end state. In the letter, Eisenhower argued, "Unless we get a good natural line for the defensive portions of our long front, we will use up a lot of divisions in the defense." To add credibility to this statement, Eisenhower described three scenarios demonstrating the necessity of clearing the

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<sup>60</sup>U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operational Planning*, III-21. A military end state, as defined in JP 5-0, refers to "a set of required conditions that defines achievement of all military objectives"; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 370; D. K. R. Crosswell, *Beetle: The Life of General Walter Bedell Smith*, American Warriors (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 123; Jones, "Education of the Supreme Commander," 113; Millett and Maslowski, *For the Common Defense*, 426; Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 576; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 607; MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 55; Richard Lamb, *Montgomery in Europe, 1943-1945: Success or Failure?* (New York: Watts, 1984), 339; Crosswell, *Beetle*, 848.

<sup>61</sup>Lamb, *Montgomery in Europe, 1943-1945*, 339; Crosswell, *Beetle*, 848; MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 56; Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 576; Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 739; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 409; Crosswell, *Beetle*, 837.

Rhineland and establishing a defensive line along the river. In each scenario, Eisenhower outlined the reserve requirement for an Allied advance into Germany,”(a) 25 [divisions] if we have the Rhine, (b) 35 [divisions] with the line as at present south of Bonn but the Colmar pocket eliminated and, (c) 45 if the line is substantially at present.”<sup>62</sup>

Because the Germans defended from a position of strength along the Siegfried Line and still possessed a tenacious and sizable counterattack force, Eisenhower envisioned his armies conducting a broad front advance, along mutually supporting lines of operation, to overwhelm the German defense and close to the Rhine. This series of continuous operations would place the Germans under relentless amounts of pressure thereby preventing them from massing their forces to conduct a large-scale counterattack. Eisenhower anticipated that this plan would have two subsequent effects. First, it would prevent the unwanted creation of an Allied salient (like Market Garden) across the Rhine. Second, with the Rhineland clear, it would reduce the required number of reserve divisions tasked to secure Allied lines of communication west of the Rhine. This, in turn, would enable Eisenhower to add as many as twenty divisions to advance into central Germany, while negating the Allies deficiency in troop strength.<sup>63</sup>

On 20 January, as requested, Eisenhower submitted his “plan of operations for the winter and spring of 1945” to the Combined Chiefs. This plan outlined the broad actions the Allies would take to conclude the war. In the twenty-two paragraph document, Eisenhower described his “immediate aim” as the destruction of German forces west of the Rhine. Then, in defense of

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<sup>62</sup>Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 607; Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 4:2431–32.

<sup>63</sup>Smith, *Eisenhower’s Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945*, 122; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 370. Eisenhower wrote, “In the situation facing us in January, the German enjoyed the great advantage of the Siegfried defenses in the area northward from the Saar, inclusive. As long as we allowed him to remain in those elaborate fortifications his ability was enhanced to hold great portions of his line with relatively weak forces, while he concentrated for spoiling attacks at selected points.”; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 411; Bonin and Gerner, *Continuous Concentric Pressure*, 5; Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 4:2432.



this statement he wrote, “operations in phase 1 [The Rhineland Campaign] must thus, to some extent, be designed to facilitate subsequent operations in phases 2 [seizing bridgeheads over the Rhine and crossing into Germany] and 3 [destruction of German forces east of the Rhine].” Throughout the rest of the document, Eisenhower described his vision for the arrangement of tactical actions along the Western Front, describing his operational approach in detail by starting with a description of his desired Allied end state, and explaining how his forces would achieve it, starting with phase three and working back to phase one.<sup>64</sup>

On 30 January, the Combined Chiefs met in Malta to address Montgomery’s and the British Chiefs’ concerns regarding Eisenhower’s plan to finish the war. The British Chiefs voiced several objections to the plan, but their most resolute objection involved Eisenhower’s decision to modify the Rhineland Campaign’s end state. The British Chiefs echoed Montgomery’s disapproval of his decision to close to the Rhine along a broad front. The Chiefs feared Eisenhower’s modified end state would delay a Rhine crossing and prolong the war.

Smith, who represented Eisenhower at the conference, disagreed with the British Chiefs’ conclusions. First, Smith emphasized that the destruction of German forces west of the Rhine was necessary to increase the number of Allied divisions available for operations east of the Rhine. Next, he reminded the British Chiefs that the lines of communication through Twenty-first Army Group’s sector limited the size of Montgomery’s northern force to a maximum of thirty-five divisions, begging the question why the remaining divisions along the Allied line should remain static when supporting attacks would force the Germans to defend along the entire front, rather than massing counterattacking forces against another single, deep Allied thrust. Lastly, he

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<sup>64</sup>Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945*, 780. During a press conference held in Paris on 28 March 1945, Eisenhower clarified his definition of the word “destruction” by stating, “by ‘destruction’ I didn’t hope to kill or capture every German then in the armies west of the Rhine but I did expect to destroy his military organization and might west of the river and I did expect to knock off a very large proportion of his forces.”; Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 4:2450–54.

reinforced the idea that having multiple army groups advancing on different lines of operation created opportunities for the entire Allied force – not just for the Twenty-first Army Group.<sup>65</sup>

Smith's persuasive explanation enabled Eisenhower to reach a compromise with the British Chiefs. Eisenhower reinforced the Twenty-first Army Group with the Ninth U.S. Army for Montgomery's northern thrust. He also agreed to make Montgomery's attack the overall Allied main effort of the campaign, but – unlike Market Garden – Eisenhower refused to curtail operations in his two other army groups to give Montgomery a monopoly of available Allied resources.<sup>66</sup>

By early February 1945, in keeping with his broad front strategy, Eisenhower's Rhineland Campaign involved three synchronized phases (refer to Figure 2: Rhineland Campaign Plan). In the first phase, Montgomery's Twenty-first Army Group would conduct operations Veritable and Grenade to clear the west bank of the Rhine from Nijmegen to Dusseldorf. In the second phase, as Montgomery's forces closed on the Rhine, Bradley's Twelfth Army Group would conduct Operation Lumberjack – a series of attacks to clear the west bank of the Rhine between Cologne and Coblenz. In the final phase, codenamed Operation Undertone, Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers' Sixth Army Group would clear south of the Moselle River and secure the west side of the Rhine in the Saar region.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 413; Crosswell, *Beetle*, 856–859; Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*, 666.

<sup>66</sup>Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 414; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 375.

<sup>67</sup>Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 607; John S. D. Eisenhower, *The Bitter Woods*, 1st Da Capo Press ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 437; Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 612; Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*, 668; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 374; Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, 414; Ballard, *Rhineland*, 72:26.

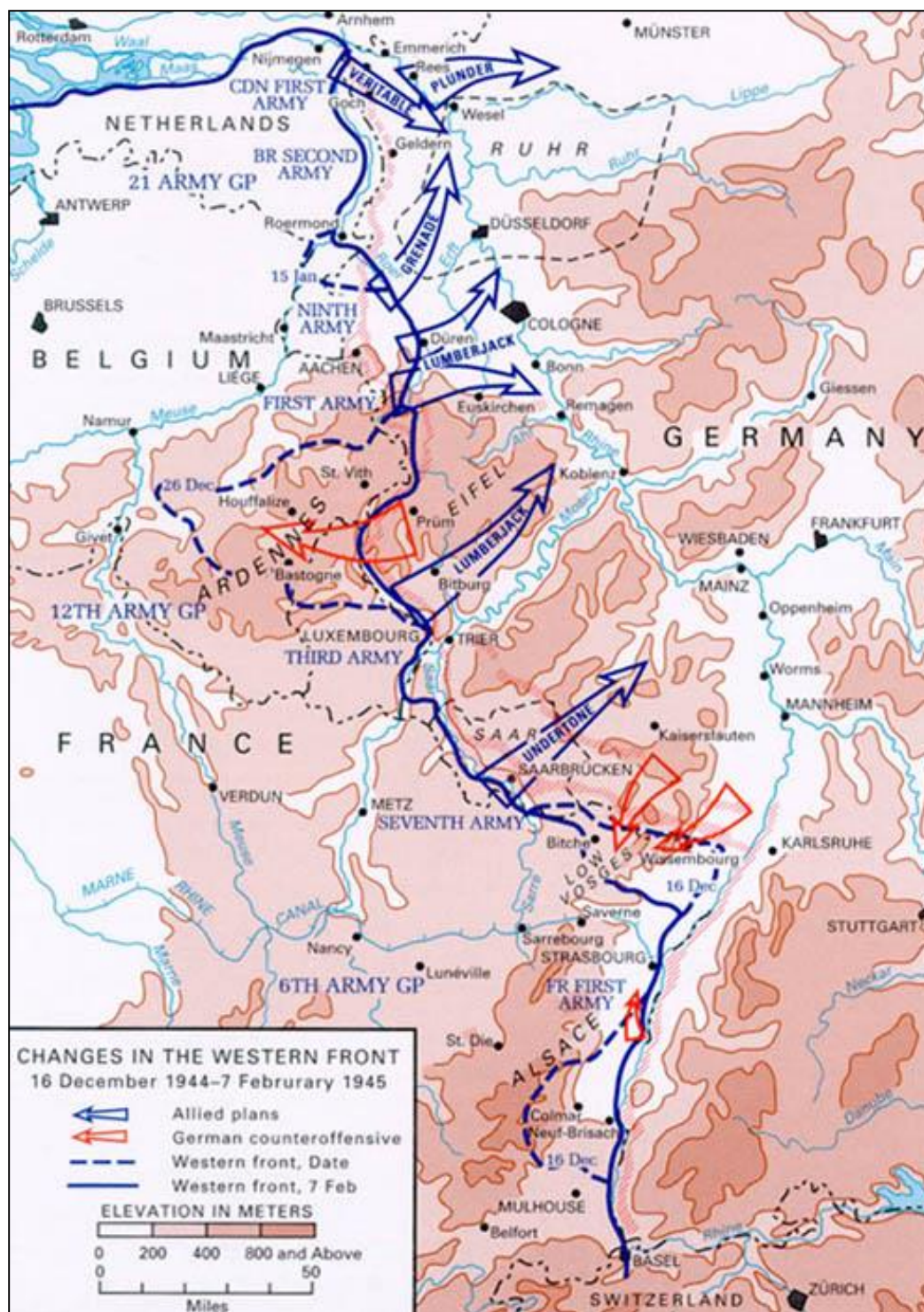


Figure 2: The Rhineland Campaign Plan

Source: Ted Ballard, *Rhineland*, vol. 72, 25 (Army Center of Military History, 1995), 27.

On 2 February, the Combined Chiefs approved Eisenhower's new end state and confirmed their support of his plan for the campaign. Eisenhower insisted that this arrangement of tactical actions across the Rhineland would give the Allies "the flexibility to switch the main effort if the northern attack encounters an impossible situation." He maintained that by attacking along multiple lines of operation, across the entirety of the Rhineland, other units would create opportunities to cross the Rhine, forcing the Germans to defend along the entire front, thereby preventing them from massing a powerful counterattack force in any location.<sup>68</sup>

### The Rhineland Campaign

#### Phase One: Montgomery's Twenty-first Army Group (Operations Veritable and Grenade)

On 8 February, First Canadian Army, led by Lieutenant General Henry D. G. Crerar, commenced Operation Veritable attacking southeast from Nijmegen around the Siegfried Line through the restricted terrain of the Reichswald forest. Two days later, Ninth U.S. Army, led by Lieutenant General William H. Simpson, attempted to initiate Grenade – but his army's advance subsequently stalled because of the flooding of the Roer River. Despite Simpson's delay and a significant level of German resistance in vicinity of the Reichswald, Crerar's forces continued their advance, reaching their main objective, the city of Goch, by 21 February.<sup>69</sup>

On 23 February, Simpson's Ninth U.S. Army managed to cross the Roer, enabling the commencement of Operation Grenade by resuming Simpson's northeastern advance towards Crerar's forces. Because the Germans had already committed their reserves to repel Crerar's forces in the North, Simpson's army quickly overwhelmed the limited resistance it faced. By 3

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<sup>68</sup>Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945*, 127.

<sup>69</sup>Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 612; Russell F. Weigley, *Eisenhower's Lieutenants*, 605; MacDonald, *The Mighty Endeavor: The American War In Europe*, 416. The Germans had successfully sabotaged the discharge valves on the Roer River dam. As a result, the Roer River swelled and flooded the Roer Valley making it impossible to cross until 23 February 1945; Ellis and Warhurst, *Victory in the West :The Battle of Normandy*, 1:267.

March, Simpson's army joined the First Canadian Army at Geldren on its drive towards the Wesel bridgehead. On 8 March, Montgomery's forces had cleared the west bank of the Rhine from Nijmegen to Dusseldorf.<sup>70</sup>

#### Phase Two: Bradley's Twelfth Army Group (Operation Lumberjack)

On 3 March, as Simpson's forces continued their attack, Bradley's Twelfth Army Group commenced Operation Lumberjack. First U.S. Army, led by Lieutenant General Courtney H. Hodges (consisting of the U.S. III, V, and VII Corps) closed to the Rhine along three separate but mutually supporting lines of operation. In the north, VII Corps encountered very limited resistance as it attacked northwest towards Cologne, seizing the city on 7 March after only two days of fighting. Simultaneously, V Corps and III Corps attacked southeast towards Remagen and unsuspectingly secured an intact bridge (Ludendorff Railroad Bridge) across the Rhine on 7 March 1945. Because the Germans had destroyed the remaining bridges in the other Army Group sectors, securing this bridge and establishing a bridgehead on the east side of the Rhine was a significant accomplishment.<sup>71</sup>

South of Hodges' army, Patton's Third U.S. Army (consisting of the U.S. VIII, XII, and XX Corps) advanced through the Eifel region below the Ahr River. As XX Corps completed the seizure of Trier and established a bridgehead over the Saar River, VIII and XII Corps advanced to the Rhine along two separate but mutually supporting lines of operation. On 3 March, VIII and XII Corps crossed the Kyll River and immediately began driving eastwards. VIII Corps, meeting limited German resistance, reached the Rhine at Andernach by 9 March, where it linked up with

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<sup>70</sup>Eisenhower, *The Bitter Woods*, 438.

<sup>71</sup>Bradley, *Bradley: A Soldier's Story*, 506; MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 191; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 378; MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 219; Bradley, *Bradley: A Soldier's Story*, 510–11; Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 380. Sensing a unique opportunity to secure a foothold on the eastern bank of the Rhine, an excited Eisenhower told Bradley, "Go ahead and shove over at least five divisions instantly, and anything else that is necessary to make certain of our hold."

First U.S. Army. South of VII Corps, XII Corps advanced along the northern bank of the Moselle River to the outskirts of Coblenz. By 10 March, Bradley's Twelfth Army Group completed phase two of the Rhineland Campaign, having seized a bridgehead over the Rhine at Remagen and establishing a defensive line stretching from Cologne to Coblenz.<sup>72</sup>

#### Phase Three: Devers' Sixth Army Group and Patton's Third U.S. Army (Operation Undertone)

On 8 March, because of the ongoing success of Lumberjack, Eisenhower redirected Twelfth Army Group to "assist in the Saar attack by striking southeast across the Moselle." This decision reinforced Devers' Sixth Army Groups clearance of the Saar-Palatinate and was exactly the sort of opportunity Eisenhower anticipated by modifying the Rhineland Campaign's end state and strictly adhering to his broad front strategy. On 15 March, Seventh U.S. Army, led by Lieutenant General Alexander Patch, commenced Operation Undertone. While Patch's army, comprising of VI, XV and XXI Corps, attacked northeast along three converging lines of operation towards the Siegfried Line, Third U.S. Army, now positioned on the Rhine, conducted a supporting attack south across the Moselle, encircling the Germans who remained in their fortified positions along the Siegfried Line (refer to Figure 3). By 19 March, Seventh U.S. Army and Patton's XII Corps enveloped the Germans in the Saar-Palatinate region. By 21 March, phase three of the Rhineland Campaign concluded with the Allies established in a 450-mile defensive line along the Rhine, stretching from Nijmegen to Switzerland.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>Bradley, *Bradley: A Soldier's Story*, 509; Ken Ford, *The Rhineland 1945: The Final Push into Germany*, Praeger illustrated military history series (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2004), 79; Eisenhower, *The Bitter Woods*, 439; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force (6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945)*. (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1994), 92.

<sup>73</sup>MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 421; Eisenhower and United States, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower*, 4:2512; MacDonald, *The Last Offensive*, 253; Ford, *The Rhineland 1945*, 80; Edward N. Bedessem, *Central Europe: The United States Army Campaigns of World War 2*, vol. 72, 36 (Government Printing Office, 1996), 3, <http://www.history.army.mil/brochures/centeur/centeur.html> (accessed 19 January 2014); Eisenhower, *Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force (6 June 1944 to 8 May 1945)*, 93.





Figure 3: Operation Undertone

Source: "Operation Undertone" from **West Point's World War II European Theater Atlas, The Rhineland Campaign, Operations 11-21 March 1945**. <http://www.westpoint.edu/history/SiteAssets/SitePages/World%20War%20II%20Europe/WWIIEurope77Combined.gif>. Map courtesy of the Department of History, United States Military Academy.

## Analysis of the Rhineland Campaign

By 21 March 1945, the Allies had completed the first phase of Eisenhower's post-Normandy operational design – the destruction of the German Army west of the Rhine. During the campaign, the Allies took over 250,000 German prisoners and destroyed approximately twenty German divisions. Because Eisenhower made the decision to modify the Rhineland Campaign's end state and strictly adhered to his broad front strategy, the Allies ended this phase established in a defensive line along the Rhine from which they could conduct subsequent operations into Germany with the maximum amount of combat power, while ensuring that no gap or salient existed that presented an opportunity for a German counterattack.<sup>74</sup>

By phasing his forces' tactical actions, Eisenhower dictated the tempo and closely monitored the operational reach of each of his army groups. This enabled him to redirect combat power from one army group sector to another as needed, both to act on opportunities and to prevent the formation of an undefendable gap or salient. For example, the success of Bradley's Twelfth Army Group in Operation Lumberjack enabled Eisenhower to redirect Patton's Third U.S. Army south across the Moselle to envelope the German resistance (instead of attempting a Rhine crossing) in support of Devers' Sixth Army Groups' clearance of the Saar-Palatinate region.

Moreover, Eisenhower's operational approach ensured that the Allies maintained the initiative by putting pressure on the Germans continuously and along multiple axes of advance, inducing in the enemy a state of operational paralysis. His insistence on advancing his forces in an orderly fashion, with army groups maintaining contact with their adjacent units while fighting along multiple lines of operation provided his armies with an increased number of both tactical and operational opportunities while minimizing risk. Both by design and by chance, this forced

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<sup>74</sup>Ambrose, *Supreme Commander: The War Years of General Dwight D. Eisenhower*, 615.



the Germans to resist in piecemeal, continually redirecting their efforts in multiple directions as successive Allied operations commenced. This paid dividends in significant Allied successes, such as the seizure of the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen and the rapid (two-day) clearance of Cologne. Despite the level of German resistance along the Siegfried Line, the near simultaneity of the Allied attacks simply overwhelmed the Germans.<sup>75</sup>

Unlike some of his subordinates and superiors that advocated for a concentrated deep thrust across the Rhine and into Germany, Eisenhower demonstrated how the destruction of German forces west of the Rhine impacted the Allies ability to achieve their strategic and military end state. Although Eisenhower had always maintained his operational approach was appropriate, it was not until after the campaign's completion that he possessed the necessary evidence to convince his critics he was correct. Even Field Marshal Lord Alan Brooke, one of Eisenhower's greatest detractors, complemented the campaign's design by telling Eisenhower, "Thank God, Ike, you stuck to your plan. You were completely right and I am sorry if my fear of dispersed effort added to your burdens." The deliberate clearance of the Rhineland along a broad front had finally revealed the effectiveness of Eisenhower's operational approach as he envisioned it. By the end of March 1945, Eisenhower had ninety Allied divisions postured along the Rhine, prepared for a final attack into central Europe.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup>Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945*, 784. During a press conference held in Paris on March 28, 1945, Eisenhower elaborated on the effectiveness of the broad front strategy during the Rhineland Campaign by stating, "One of the advantages of cleaning out the German all the way west of the Rhine was that it exposed him everywhere. He couldn't tell where we were going to attack."; Eisenhower, *The Bitter Woods*, 440. According to John Eisenhower, Hitler refused to "evacuate the Rhineland" which aided in the destruction of the German army west of the Rhine.

<sup>76</sup>Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 372. The full quote reads, "Thank God, Ike, you stuck to your plan. You were completely right and I am sorry if my fear of dispersed effort added to your burdens. The German is now licked. It is merely a question of when he chooses to quit. Thank God you stuck to your guns"; Ballard, *Rhineland*, 72:33.

## CONCLUSION

### Conclusion

Since the end of WWII, historians like Ralph Ingersoll, Chester Wilmot, B. H. Liddell Hart, and D. J. Hancock wrote numerous critiques of Eisenhower's leadership; such works continue to fill the bookshelves of armchair generals. Even noted historians adopted the widespread and compelling narrative of Eisenhower's relative operational incompetence, contrasted with his excellence as a strategic leader of coalition forces. However, a critical review of Eisenhower's actions during these campaigns reveals a more compelling story. One can see that Eisenhower's adherence to his broad front strategy and operational approach, particularly after he took direct command of ground forces on 1 September 1944, exemplifies the manner in which operational leaders employ operational art to achieve a desired end state.<sup>77</sup>

From Eisenhower's initial design for post-Normandy operations in May 1944 to the Rhineland Campaign, his understanding of history, theory, and doctrine enabled him to create an operational approach that ensured the Allies achieved their desired military and strategic end state – the destruction of the German Army, and the German government's unconditional surrender. In fact, in Walter Bedell Smith's *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions* he wrote, "I doubt there has ever been a campaign in history where the actual operations fitted so closely to the initial plan of a commander." The three case studies in this monograph demonstrate how Eisenhower successfully employed Allied forces using operational art in a manner most effective and most appropriate to the situation the Allies faced on the Western Front.<sup>78</sup>

Operations Goodwood and Cobra illustrate the divergent operational approaches preferred by Montgomery and Eisenhower in the first months after the Normandy invasion.

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<sup>77</sup>Ingersoll, *Top Secret*, 216; Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe*, 460; Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War*, 556; Haycock, *Eisenhower and the Art of Warfare*, 116.

<sup>78</sup>Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945*, 157.

Before Goodwood, Eisenhower reinforced his desire for a more direct operational approach, but Montgomery failed to meet his expectations. On the other hand, during Operation Cobra, Bradley learned and adjusted his operational approach to meet Eisenhower's intent, thereby achieving overwhelming success. In spite of Montgomery's intransigence and condescending demeanor, Eisenhower chose not to replace him because of the damage such a decision could cause to Allied cohesion.

Operation Market Garden illustrated the fundamental differences between Eisenhower's and Montgomery's ideas concerning operational art, which resurfaced just as Eisenhower assumed direct command of the Allied ground forces on 1 September 1944. Ten days later, Eisenhower and Montgomery once again disagreed on the operational design for the Allied invasion of Germany – a clash of wills that led to a well-documented argument between the two men in Brussels. Despite Eisenhower's initial doubts about Montgomery's concept of a concentrated thrust to Berlin, he eventually agreed to allow Montgomery to proceed with Market Garden – largely because of mounting political pressures stemming from the support Montgomery still received from senior British leaders. This decision led to yet another Allied operation that seemed to offer great promise but instead resulted in an embarrassing defeat. The campaign's outcome, however, provided Eisenhower with the leverage he needed to assume full operational control of Allied forces. After Market Garden he adopted and strictly adhered to the broad front approach that he had envisioned ever since D-Day, but could not force on the Allies because he lacked the necessary political power to do so without risking coalition unity of effort.

The Rhineland Campaign, during which Eisenhower exercised overall command both in name and in reality, revealed Eisenhower's mastery of operational art. Because Eisenhower had a limited number of divisions, he reframed his understanding of the operational environment and decided to adjust the Rhineland Campaign's end state to match the conditions the Allied forces faced. This decision demonstrated Eisenhower's ability to think two or three moves ahead of his

subordinates and peers alike. Deflecting the objections of Montgomery and the British Chief of Staff, Eisenhower managed to execute the plan of campaign as he envisioned it, convincing his critics of the effectiveness of his operational approach by demonstrating the effective synchronization of tactical actions in time and space to achieve the Allied military end state.<sup>79</sup>

By modifying the Rhineland Campaign's end state and strictly adhering to his broad front strategy, Eisenhower managed the tempo and operational reach of the Allied advance, which enabled his forces to overwhelm the German resistance along the Siegfried Line rapidly and decisively. This created unexpected opportunities, such as the seizure of the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen. As Bradley described in his book *A Soldier's Story*, "Because the [Rhineland Campaign] was executed with drill-hall precision and split second timing, this campaign west of the Rhine became a model text book maneuver." It also ensured the destruction the German forces west of the Rhine – setting the conditions for the Allies to achieve their ultimate objective – the unconditional surrender of the German government.<sup>80</sup>

### Implications

The analysis of General Eisenhower's leadership and employment of operational art on the Western Front serves to illustrate two key points. First, throughout Eisenhower's career he consistently sought opportunities to invest in his professional development. From studying under Brigadier General Fox Conner in Panama to attending Army schools like the Command and General Staff School and the Army War College, Eisenhower consistently sought to challenge himself intellectually. Because of the importance Eisenhower placed on education, his understanding of history, theory, and doctrine made him a more capable operational artist. For example, during SHEAF's initial operational design of the Allied advance into Germany,

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<sup>79</sup>Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945*, 123.

<sup>80</sup>Bradley, *Bradley: A Soldier's Story*, 512, 506.

Eisenhower drew inspiration from historical campaigns like Hannibal's double envelopment of the Romans at Cannae and military theories of great generals like Count von Schlieffen.<sup>81</sup>

Additionally, modern historians or students of operational art can, through both the critical analysis of secondary sources and the study of primary sources like *The Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower*, offer an alternative to the views of historians who have argued that Eisenhower demonstrated a lack of decisiveness and operational boldness in WWII. As historian Christopher Bassford explained in his book, *Clausewitz in English*, "It is now clear Ike had a far stronger personality and intellect...than outsiders had realized." Only by studying primary sources, and reading secondary sources critically, can one see how Eisenhower's employment of operational art on the Western Front illustrates the actions not merely of a skilled political general, but the realization of operational art employed masterfully to achieve a desired end state.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945*, 156; Perret, *Eisenhower*, 311; Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 182.

<sup>82</sup>Bassford, *Clausewitz in English*, 160.

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