

U.S. – Japan Relations and Military Alliance

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Murray and Ishizu, Chapter 2:

F.G. Hoffman: U.S. Strategic Planning, 1919 – 1939: From Innocence to Improvisation

Class Presentation

Strategic Planning in the time of Peace

According to Michael Howard, the longer the period of peace, the more states and their militaries have to extrapolate from their previous combat experiences and the longer the risk their readings of where they stand are wrong as they extrapolate, especially in periods of dramatic technological change.

The definition of “strategy” which fits such circumstances best is therefore is “a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty, and ambiguity dominate.”

The chapter focuses on the U.S. “grand strategy” in interwar period, grand strategy here defined by John Lewis Gaddis as “the process by which ends are related to means, intentions to capabilities, objectives to resources”, meaning policy aims, attempting to integrate all instruments of national power.

Perhaps due to the U.S.’ historical distrust of Old World entanglements and her isolationist “strategic culture”, the period was marked with the lack of bureaucratic mechanisms to integrate the necessary planning, intelligence and assessment processes, although some rudimentary architecture did exist: Joint Army-Navy Board (Joint Board) was reinvigorated after the WWI, as the principal planning mechanism during this era, although State Department refused to communicate with it until 1935, when state secretary assigned senior advisor to the Joint Planning Committee, Joint Board’s analytical component.

As the war approached, Roosevelt in July 1939 ordered the Joint Board to report directly to him, the precursor step toward establishing an effective Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Planning process and products

Before and after WWI, Joint Board produced and approved plans for potential contingencies against possible opponents, the color-coded plans, with special focus at iterations of War Plan Orange, efforts which kept Army and Navy minds cognizant of the difficulties of a trans-Pacific test of arms in case of a military confrontation with Orange, the empire of Japan. Planners anticipated Japan's initial strikes in a sudden war and its advances into Southeast Asia and against the Philippines.

In phase I, Navy would rush out to the Western Pacific to seize and defend island bases.

Phase II would involve offensive operations to achieve sea control in the region, and would culminate in battle where "the two battle fleets would meet in a cataclysmic gunnery engagement". (At the time, Navy was particularly infatuated with the modern battleships)

Phase III, the end state, was always economic warfare that would choke off Japan's imports and wreck its economy.

War Plan Orange evolved over time, due to changes in security environment or the ascendancy of various schools of thought in the U.S. military.

Planning of this era can be divided into two distinctive periods, the first one spanning between the years 1922-1935 and characterized by major power's efforts to curtail military spending. At the initiative of President Harding, Washington Conference on naval limitations and The Four Power Treaty convened in 1921 and 1922, and produced a number of treaties. In the Naval Arms Limitation Treaty, the major naval powers agreed to limit their combined battleship and battle cruiser fleets to a fixed ratio and to a 10-year moratorium on capital ship production, and a weight limit on the size of battleships. The Four Power Treaty locked in the status quo in the Pacific. Later, in 1930, The London Treaty established ceiling on major ship types and limits on both armament and tonnage on carriers and other capital ships. Constraints of this treaty dismayed UD Naval proponents, esp. because 1930s were a period of extensive technological innovation. But because of the fiscal pressures created by Depression, U.S. forces failed to achieve the ceiling anyway.

In these years master Orange Plan experienced many changes and as force ratios changed, and lack of secure forward bases in the Western Pacific became more obvious, Army officers began to question the strategic wisdom of risky trans-Pacific thrust. By the mid 1930s ferocious debates ensued generated by "thrusters", who wanted to charge across the Pacific, and "cautionaries" who recognized the risk of crossing the Pacific against the Japan's formidable fleet.

Then Army planners, led General Stanley Embick, representing a new Continental

school of thought began to engage the Joint Board in 1935. In place of early offensive they argued for a defensive stance along the “strategic triangle” running from Alaska through Hawaii down to the Panama Canal.

In 1938 the debate between the Army and Navy resulted in a new agreement on War Plan Orange in which Navy planners muted any references to early naval offensive operations to defeat Japanese forces in Western Pacific and Army removed their insistence on presidential approval of operations west of the “strategic triangle”, both tacitly accepting the loss of the Pacific outposts.

Note: After Japan’s China excursion, the sinking of the *Panay*, and Germany’s expansions into the Sudetland and Austria, U.S. planners turned away from the aggressive and offensive planning of War Plan Orange toward a decidedly more defensive orientation.

Immediately before Roosevelt pulled the Joint Board under his auspices in 1939, the Board developed a set of contingencies that would reflect the range of possible war scenarios confronting the United States, known as Rainbow Plans.

Rainbow Plan I was a defensive plan designed to protect the continental United States along with the defense of Hawaii and Midway.

Rainbow Plan II postulated a coalition of the United States, Britain, France and Holland against the Japanese and it presumed the later would seize the opportunity to acquire oil resources in the Dutch East Indies.

Rainbow Plan III dealt with U.S. fighting the Pacific war on her own, while her partners would concentrate to shielding her in Atlantic.

Rainbow IV presumed the defeat of both France and Britain and opening the Atlantic to further Axis exploitation at the same time as Japan would strike in the Western Pacific. It was a principal plan during the summer and fall of 1940.

Rainbow V (not completed until 1941) was based on a global war in which United States would participate as a major partner in an alliance. Its effort would initially focus against Axis powers in Europe or Africa.

In 1940 Admiral Harold “Betty” Stark, chief of naval operations, drafted a memorandum, built upon the conditions of the Rainbow Five War plan, in which he foresaw four fundamental choices for the United States in the approaching war: she could remain on the defensive in her own hemisphere, join alliance with the British and Dutch and undertake an offensive in the Pacific while maintaining defensive stance in the Atlantic, the third option would be to provide military assistance to the British in Europe and other allies in the pacific, and the fourth option, which became known as paragraph D or Plan Dog, was to orient U.S. efforts toward an eventual strong offensive in the Atlantic as an ally of the British, and a defensive in the Pacific. Informal planning efforts with the British soon followed, leading up to the ABC-1

Conference in Washington, which concluded in March 1941, and the British ratification of the new Rainbow V plan and its primacy on Europe and the defeat of Nazi Germany.

The U.S. Navy

Despite the lesson from the WWI, when instead of American battle fleet, the Allies desperately needed destroyers and escorts to fight the U-boat menace, the US Navy after the war immediately reverted to prewar planning for a battleship fleet.

In the 1920s Newport's games, testing Plan Orange's assumptions pointed to the growing importance of a power and the need for large carriers and naval fleet exercises in 1929 and 1930 indicated that command of the air was critical. The importance of generating massed sorties and combat power was realized which led to various operating techniques, which permitted us carriers to rapidly launch massed formations and recover them just expeditiously.

Although the battleship club could only envision airplanes as a means of spotting for naval gunfire, the debate on role and form of carrier aviation was settled by December 7th attack. At the start of the war, the Navy possessed eight carriers and just over 500 planes, four years later it had 28 large carriers, 70 escort flat tops, and a naval aviation arm of more than 40, 000 planes.

Among the shortfalls of US Navy planning efforts, the most important one was that it overlooked the lessons of the last war, particularly the submarine. Planners minimized the submarine potential threat in their belief that development of ASDIC, an early form of sonar, have solved the problem. Furthermore, submarine did not play a significant role in naval exercises or Newport games and the need to use submarines as a form of offensive striking power was broached by fleet commanders rather than planners.

After the Pearl Harbor, the United States initiated a war of attrition against Japan by ordering unrestricted submarine warfare against Japan's sea lines of communication, a mission for which it was unprepared. After rectifying the poor design of its torpedoes in late 1943, however, the results were immediately impressive.

Marine Corps: The New Amphibians

The ma grasped the inherent need for the seizure and defense of advanced naval bases that were explicit in War Plan Orange. However, the prevailing military wisdom of the day was that amphibious landings against prepared defenses was virtually impossible; marines thought otherwise and deconstructed many factors involved in the British debacle in Gallipoli, Dardanelles of 1915.

Over numerous exercises at Quantico and the Caribbean Islands, the marines

hammered out tactics, techniques and practices needed to make modern amphibious operations a reality. Exercises pointed out, that specialized landing crafts were desperately needed, which led to a development of landing vehicle tracked and Higgins boat. Ultimately, the marines and Navy drafted the *Tentative Landing Operations Manual*, the Bible for future amphibious landings.

The U.S. Army : Standing in Place

US Army received the least support and its effectiveness declined substantially throughout the period. Its principal planning efforts were placed on mobilization and the raising of a large citizen army, with same principals of strategy as those from the Civil War.

It did not keep up with technological developments or emerging innovative concepts and failed to identify the changing requirements for fast-paced combined arms warfare. Its culture remained intolerant of reform and reformers, frustrating young officers such as George Patton and Dwight Eisenhower, who attempted to advance armored concepts. In late 1930, resources were finally freed up and a task of simultaneous mobilization, modernization in arms and update in doctrine proved daunting.

Air Power: Independent and Decisive

The novelty of manned aviation enjoyed public support as well as support of the Congress, which recognized its commercial value.

Initial work on the role of aviation in terms of strategic planning efforts came in traditional lines – in direct support of ground forces.

Later, however US air power theorists, to support their desire to achieve institutional independence from the Army, began to highlight the cost of drawn-out war and the utility of strategic bombing. By the 1930s the Air Corps Tactical School had concluded that air power could become a decisive instrument of war, independent of ground forces. They recognized the limitations of the technology of the day and in 1933 the accurate bombsight was developed and in 1936 B-17 flying fortress was first fielded. These theorists failed to recognize the need for tactical aviation to support the coming invasions mandated by updated planes and asserted, that bombers could penetrate deeply into enemy territory and conduct their missions without fighter escorts. The pursuit of technological developments for long-range escort planes never received serious impetus.

Although aviation did play a decisive role in the next war, it did not play it in a way corps planners envisioned. The development of the Army air corps occurred in a strategic vacuum, isolated from strategic imperatives or operational realities.

Conclusion on U.S. interwar strategic planning

None of the armed forces were completely prepared to what was coming.

Navy was only ready for the Plan Orange and the Pacific, the Army air corps did not concern itself with *who* or *where* it would fight, and Army prepared to raise and train a might host of soldiers but only belatedly figure how it would fight.

The US military's educational institutions, on the other hand, served to expand intellectual comfort zones of their graduates and US military institutions appreciated the value of testing their assumptions via simulations, including war games, exercises, and experiments. Thereby the framework for a flexible and global strategy was set: a strategy of continual improvisation.