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The strategy of innocence? The United States, 1920–1945

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INTRODUCTION

America's evolution into the first among the great powers culminated between 1920 and 1945.[1] Until then, American power had remained largely latent, although the Civil War had revealed the magnitude of U.S. potential strength. By the turn of the century, the United States had become a respected sea power, but the European powers doubted that it possessed the constancy of purpose and the political skill to play a major role in world politics. The abrupt withdrawal of the United States into isolation after World War I only confirmed that skepticism. By 1945, however, no one could doubt the reality of American power or the ability of American democracy to handle extraordinary tests.

American national security policy still bears the imprint of the 1920–45 period. The experience and memories of those years help account for the otherwise inexplicable willingness of the American people to tolerate during the Cold War what were, by historical standards, vast peacetime military establishments; the premium on readiness and avoidance of surprise attack; the willingness to conceive of national security in global rather than local terms; and the American military's persistent preference for excessively neat patterns of civilian-military relations.

The period under discussion poses particular historical problems. Many issues demand consideration in a single essay: isolation on the one hand, and involvement in literally every corner of the globe on the other; a peacetime

[1] For useful surveys of American strategy from 1920 to 1945, see Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States* (New York, 1984), pp. 361–470; Ronald Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the U.S. Armed Forces, 1919–1939," and Allan R. Millett, "The United States Armed Forces in the Second World War," in Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, eds., *Military Effectiveness*, (Boston, 1988), Vol. 2, pp. 70–97 and Vol. 3, pp. 45–89.

fessional army two-thirds the size of the marine corps of the early 1990s, a wartime conscript army more than three times the size of the U.S. ıed forces at the end of the Cold War. But although this periodization kes for difficulties, it has important benefits. First, it reveals underlying ıtinuities in a strategic culture that historians all too often treat as begin- g in 1941 or 1945. Second, it forces attention on the transition between ıce and war and leads to a better comprehension of wartime achievements. r instance, only an understanding of the painful evolution of military ɔduction from 1939 to 1942 can make plain the magnitude of the achieve- ɛnts of 1943–44. This essay will deal, however, more with American par- ipation in World War II than with American strategy in the interwar riod. Wars, particularly great wars, reveal national character as it is being rged, and there are few better ways of understanding the strengths and eaknesses of American strategic culture than by examining it through the ns of the greatest war in history.

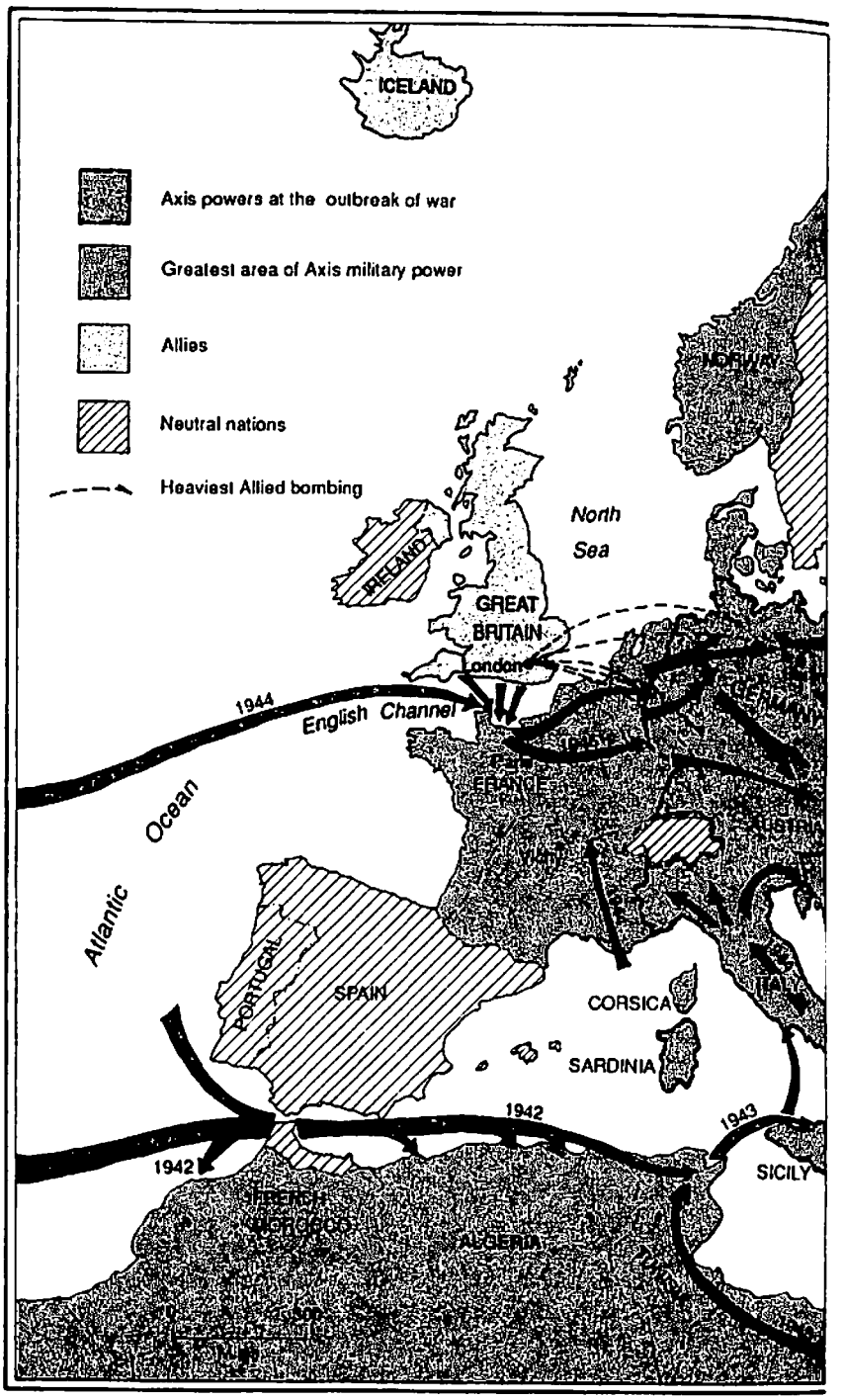
LEGACIES

ı the 1920s and 1930s, most Americans viewed World War I as a grievous xception to a long-standing policy of noninvolvement in European affairs. ;o most the war represented a terrible mistake. A happy reversion to an ante ɔellum strategic outlook seemed the logical outcome.

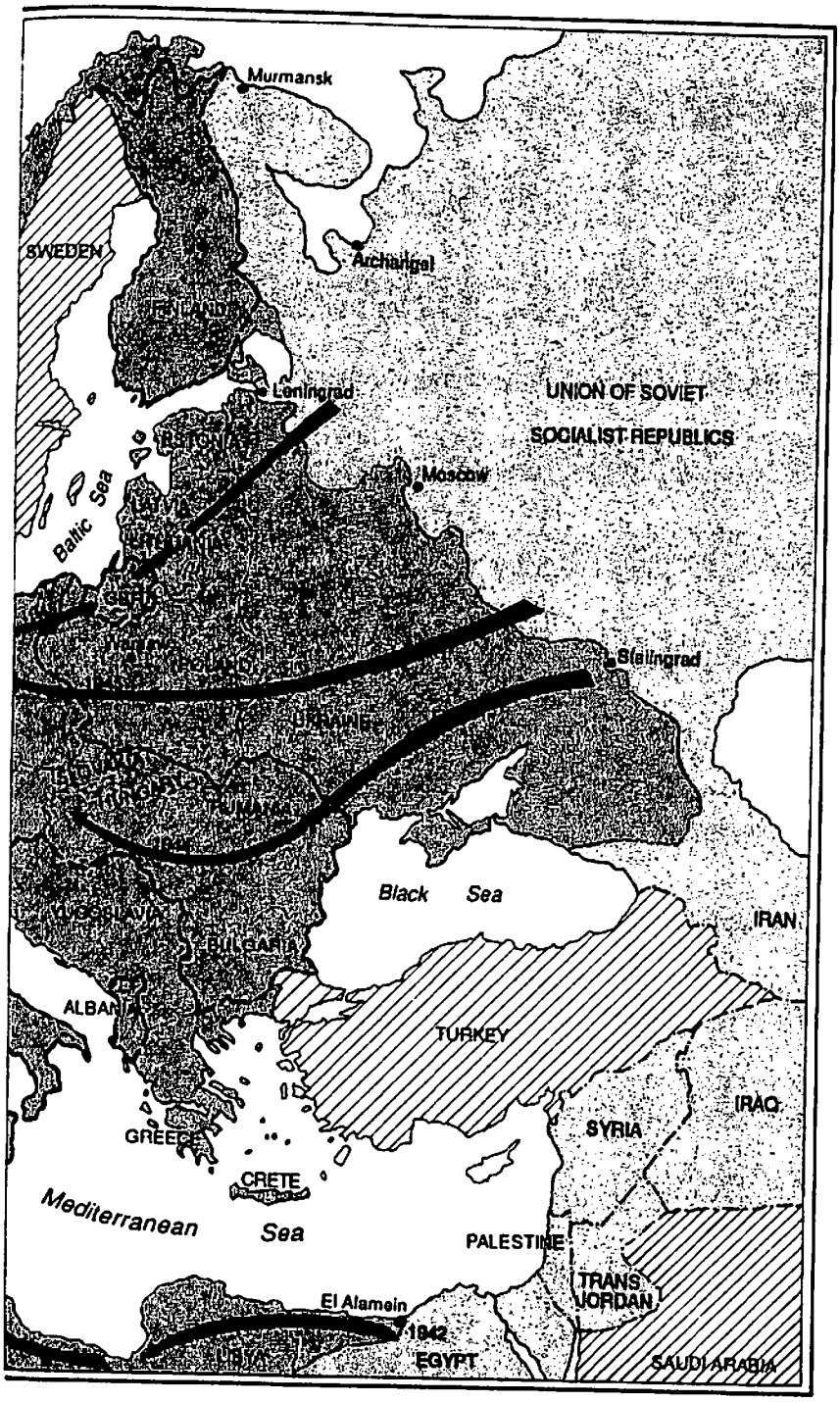
In some respects this reversal occurred, although the armed forces re- nained considerably larger by American standards than before the outbreak of war in 1914.[2] By 1920, the U.S. army had declined to 200,000 men from nearly two and a half million in 1918. Within a few years it reached a postwar nadir of 132,000. Yet even this was one-third larger than the prewar army of fewer than 100,000. The U.S. navy also failed to shrink to prewar levels; at its postwar nadir of 91,000 men in 1933 it was over two-thirds larger than the navy of 1914. Despite the Hoover administration's economy drive, the United States retained fifteen battleships, three aircraft carriers, eighteen cruisers, seventy-eight destroyers, and fifty-five submarines in 1931. This fleet was numerically superior to Japan's and was on a par with the Royal Navy. The marine corps, 10,000 strong in the prewar period, declined to an interwar low of 16,000 men in 1933; it too had emerged from World War I with permanent gains.

Strategy is not only a matter of choice about when and where to fight, but of the organizations and institutions that prepare for it. American involve- ment in World War I transformed the army and navy. The army reverted to its prewar constabulary duties, garrisoning the Philippines and protecting American interests in China. And some lessons of World War I were inappli- cable to the challenges of the next war – for example, the preference for a

2 Numbers: *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, p. 1141.



Map 14.1. World War II: Defeat of Germany, 1942–1945. *Source.* Adapted from Knox et al. *The Mainstream of Civilization Since 1500,* 5th Edition (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), 961.


Murmansk
Archangel
SWEDEN
FINLAND
Leningrad
UNION OF SOVIET
SOCIALIST REPUBLICS
Moscow
Baltic Sea
LATVIA
Stalingrad
Black Sea
IRAN
ALBANIA
TURKEY
IRAQ
SYRIA
GREECE
CRETE
Mediterranean Sea
PALESTINE
TRANS JORDAN
El Alamein
1942
EGYPT
SAUDI ARABIA

strong field commander over a powerful chief of staff in Washington.[3] Nonetheless, for the first time since the Civil War the army had fought a first-rate foe; it had also experienced the frustrations of coalition warfare. It had recognized the need for industrial mobilization to support a mass army. It could not devise solutions to all these challenges in the interwar period, and some paper solutions (for industrial mobilization, for example) proved unworkable. But at least it recognized the problems.

World War I likewise profoundly affected the navy. The Naval Act of 1916 promised the creation of a "navy second to none," and although many of the resulting ships bore no relevance to the impending struggle against Germany, they did lay the basis for a permanent commitment to naval power. After World War I, the navy conceived itself as the equal of the Royal Navy, and secured the resources to achieve that equality.[4]

World War I, in which a large, albeit foreign-equipped air force had deployed in France, made the army receptive to the development of a semi-independent aviation arm, even if not swiftly enough for the impatient aviators of the army air corps. The establishment in 1934 of the GHQ Air Force – the immediate predecessor of the Army Air Forces – underlined the army's commitment to air power.[5]

The world war also invigorated the American system of high command. On 24 July 1919, by joint order, the Secretaries of War and Navy revived the Joint Board, an organization that had proved less than efficient in the preceding decade and a half and that had exercised little control over American forces during World War I.[6] The Joint Board consisted of the head of each service (the chief of staff of the army and chief of naval operations), the assistant chief of each service, and the directors of the war plans divisions. In July 1941 the deputy chiefs for aviation also joined. The Joint Board established a Joint Planning Committee (1919), a Joint Economic Board (1933), and a Joint Intelligence Committee (1941). In addition to its other functions, the Board formulated and debated joint war plans. The regular meetings of the Board and its subcommittees created a forum for comprehensive strategic reviews such as the January 1929 assessment of U.S. prospects in a war with Japan. The Board fell short of the integrated mechanisms of military plan-

[3] See Mark S. Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington, 1950), pp. 2–3.

[4] By 1918, the U.S. Navy still had only sixteen battleships to Britain's thirty-three and nine battle cruisers, but the U.S. had thirteen more battleships and six battle cruisers under construction compared with Britain's three battleships and one battle cruiser under construction. On the Navy's condition during this period, see Thomas C. Hone, "The Effectiveness of the 'Washington Treaty' Navy," *Naval War College Review* 32:6 (November-December 1979), pp. 35–59.

[5] See John F. Shiner, "Birth of GHQ Air Force," *Military Affairs* 42:3 (October 1978), pp. 113–20.

[6] The records of the Joint Board (henceforth cited as *JB*) cover this matter. (National Archives, Microfilm Publications, *Records of the Joint Board 1903–1947* [Washington, D.C., 1986], Microfilm Publication M-1421). On the history of the Joint Board see *JB* 301.

ning that the services required, but it represented a substantial advance over the pre-1914.

As for the home front, "World War II was largely fought . . . on the basis of the constitutional law of World War I."[7] World War I set the pattern for "the delegation of vast discretionary powers to the President to deal with a broadly defined subject-matter in furtherance of objectives equally broad."[8] A brilliantly conceived Selective Service System, for example, reconciled Americans to wide-ranging and nearly unlimited national conscription, a system equally effective in World War II.[9]

What about the impact of World War I on the American decision to participate in World War II? Some historians have argued that the world wars were a single great conflict, a war broken by a long armistice and turning on the German effort to grasp hegemony in Europe. Many lines of continuity exist between the First and Second World Wars in Europe. But these continuities appear less sharp in the case of the United States.

The United States had entered World War I at the end of the conflict. Its productive potential never exercised a decisive influence on the battlefield; only half of the aircraft flown by American pilots were American-made, and barely one in seven artillery pieces were of American manufacture.[10] American forces in the field, although large in number (2 million men left for France in eighteen months), arrived in strength late, and did not bear the brunt of even the offensives that crushed Wilhelmine Germany. Initially, America's wishes carried great weight at the prolonged negotiations concluding the war. But this influence reflected America's potential as much as its actual strength; it also reflected the financial and agricultural power of the New World. By the end of 1919, the United States clearly had the *potential* to be a superpower, but it had not yet achieved that status. Only the American navy was a mark of present as opposed to latent strength.

But America's participation in World War I was indispensable to Allied success. Without the promise of vast, fresh armies, the Allies could not have hung on in the desperate spring of 1918. The threat and subsequent reality of the American Expeditionary Force eventually convinced the Germans that resistance into the winter of 1918–19 would be hopeless. But although the American intervention was decisive in the last year of the war, it had not shaped the first three quarters of the conflict.

The U.S. experience in World War II was quite different. A much earlier mobilization, beginning in 1940, but with origins in 1938 and before, made the United States a major military power by the mid-point of the war. The

[7] Edward S. Corwin, *Total War and the Constitution* (New York, 1947), p. 173 and passim.
[8] Ibid., p. 39.
[9] See Eliot A. Cohen, *Citizens and Soldiers: The Dilemmas of Military Service* (Ithaca, NY, 1985), passim.
[10] Leonard P. Ayres, *The War With Germany: A Statistical Summary* (Washington, 1919), p. 81.

United States had matched and was surpassing British war production by 1942. This time, the United States supplied not only men but machines in vast quantities. At the strategic level, the American war effort was also quite different. In World War I, the United States had little opportunity to control the war's shape; the dominant theater remained the Western Front. In World War II, by contrast, the United States set the pace of the Pacific War from the beginning, and by 1943 had achieved at least equality in setting strategy in Europe. Finally, at the deepest psychological level, the American high command appears to have escaped the emotional scars that the World War I slaughter inflicted on Britain.

Yet this account fails to acknowledge the lines of continuity between the American experiences in the two world wars. The element of continuity in leadership is critical. Barely twenty-four years separated the end of one conflict and the beginning (from the American point of view) of the second; senior officials and commanders, including Roosevelt and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had participated in the last war, and it had shaped them. Equally important, the experiences of the first war left institutional legacies that persisted into the next conflict.

One legacy was a relentless drive for autonomy and independence. The suspicion, occasionally bordering on paranoia, that the American military harbored toward Churchill and the British Chiefs of Staff grew in part from the experiences of 1917–18, when the United States was clearly a junior partner at the tactical and operational level. Lieutenant General Stanley Embick, for example, the army's representative on the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, was attached to the American delegation at the Allied War Council during the first war. There he contracted an abiding mistrust of the British, reflected in his caustic comments on the merits of aid to Great Britain in 1940 and of operations in the Mediterranean in 1943.[11] The effort of the military intelligence services to deny the forerunner of the Office of Strategic Services access to any information from British intelligence – presumably slanted and hence dangerous – likewise suggests the strength of this feeling.[12]

World War I experiences also shaped individual conceptions of command. Admiral Ernest J. King acquired much of his willingness to delegate responsibility from his World War I service on the staff of Henry T. Mayo, commander of the Atlantic Fleet.[13] General George C. Marshall derived a number of lessons from his experience on Pershing's staff in France, although, interestingly, many of these lessons stemmed from his view that the experience of the American Expeditionary Force had been atypical. In the late

[11] See Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall*, Vol. 2, *Ordeal and Hope 1939–1942* (New York, 1965), pp. 132–33; Ronald Schaffer, "General Stanley D. Embick: Military Dissenter," *Military Affairs* 37 (October 1973), pp. 89–95.

[12] See "Report to the Joint Board on 'Memorandum of Establishment of Service of Information,'" JB 329, Serial 699.

[13] Ernest J. King and Walter Muir Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King: A Naval Record* (New York, 1952), pp. 144–45.

1920s he argued that World War I, with its methodical attacks supported by detailed intelligence, could mislead the army about future challenges.[14] Moreover, Marshall had a keen sense that training methods and operational principles of a small, professional peacetime army were radically unsuited to creation of a massive, draftee wartime force, a view that his subsequent work as a National Guard adviser reinforced.[15] To oversimplify, then, American military leaders approached World War II mindful of their 1917–18 experiences and with a desire to "this time, do it right." They intended to fight a mobile, aggressive war on fronts of their own choosing, to draw more thoroughly on the vast industrial productive capacities of the nation, and not to fall prey to the duplicity of wily European allies.

Finally, American policy remains incomprehensible without reference to Wilsonian ideals and to a mistrust of colonialism dating back considerably further than 1914. Otherwise, it is hard to understand such episodes as FDR's persistent, condescending, and – to Churchill – infuriating pressure for Indian independence in the midst of the war.[16]

THE AMERICAN REGIME, 1920–1945

The U.S. Constitution was a prime force in shaping American strategic culture between 1920 and 1945. Laid down in the last decades of the eighteenth century, it had shown remarkable resilience even in the face of extreme stress during the Civil War, chiefly, though not exclusively, through its delegation of vast powers to the president in wartime. "Energy in the executive is a leading character in the definition of government," Alexander Hamilton had written. "It is essential to the protection of the community against foreign attacks."[17] Abraham Lincoln found the vague and flexible "war power" in the Constitution, and his successors continued to exploit it, none more skillfully than Franklin D. Roosevelt. In time of war Roosevelt became a virtual though benign dictator. Unlike Churchill he was commander in chief as well as head of state and head of government, an enormous concentration of power. The judicial and legislative branches of government hardly suspended operation, but they did not intervene in the making of strategy. "The grand strategy of the war, to take one example, was almost totally executive in concept, and even the execution of the war strategy was not seriously attacked in Congress."[18] Roosevelt did not consult Congress about war aims, refused the legislators either a major presence or influence at the great war-

14 Lecture at Fort Benning, n.d. (1927–1933), in Larry I. Bland, Sharon R. Ritenour, and Clarence E. Wunderlin, Jr., eds. *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 1, *'The Soldierly Spirit' December 1880-June 1939* (Baltimore, 1981), pp. 334–338.

15 Ibid, p. 708.

16 For Roosevelt's desire to achieve Wilson's goals without making Wilson's mistakes, see James McGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* (New York, 1970), passim.

17 *The Federalist Papers*, No. 70.

18 Roland Young, *Congressional Politics in the Second World War* (New York, 1956), p. 5.

time conferences that forged strategy, and even failed to provide Congress with much more information than it could glean from newspapers. From time to time – as with Pearl Harbor, procurement scandals, or relations with Admiral Darlan in 1942 – Congress investigated aspects of the war effort, but it had little impact on the direction of the conflict.

Although by today's standards this state of affairs was extraordinary, it was fortunate for the conduct of strategy. Under the first War Power's Act, passed days after the attack on Pearl Harbor and subsequently renewed, Congress granted Roosevelt virtual carte blanche to reorganize the federal government as he saw fit. Given his mistrust of established bureaucracies, he exploited this power to its fullest, creating by executive order new agencies such as the War Production Board reporting directly to him rather than to established cabinet departments.

But this extraordinary concentration of power in the executive branch represented an artifact of war rather than a condition of peace. Throughout the interwar years, Congress had taken an active role in shaping American strategy by its control of the budget and by passing so-called neutrality legislation designed to keep the United States out of war.[19] Yet Congressional suspicion of foreign entanglements simply reflected a broad stream in American opinion. In September 1939, one poll asked Americans whether "there are any international questions affecting the United States so important to us in the long run that our government should take a stand on them now, even at the risk of our getting into war?" Almost 55 percent said no, barely 20 percent said yes, and the remainder either said they did not know or that it would depend on the circumstances.[20]

Yet even in peace a President had discretionary power to shape American strategy. FDR's use of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to break up pro-Nazi activities, and his cooperation with British secret service agencies, revealed a great deal of flexibility in the covert side of peacetime strategy-making. As early as 1940 the FBI, without the State Department's knowledge, had begun quietly cooperating with representatives of what became a large British intelligence establishment in the United States.[21] Roosevelt's use of the navy to prosecute an undeclared war in the North Atlantic in 1941 is even more suggestive.

Neither the pluralism of the American political system nor the system of checks and balances designed to prevent tyranny hampered the war effort. Like Churchill, Roosevelt had enormous powers at his disposal, although constraints of legislative and collegial opinion bound both to some extent. Yet in one key respect American politics did shape strategy: through the

[19] See Robert A. Divine, *The Illusion of Neutrality* (Chicago, 1962), and Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932–1945* (New York, 1979).

[20] Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, eds., *Public Opinion 1935–1946* (Princeton, 1951), p. 949.

[21] See H. Montgomery Hyde, *Room 3603* (New York, 1963).

system of regular elections for the Congress and Presidency. The negative aspect of this system was obvious – for example, in the election year of 1940 FDR hesitated to take open measures that might involve the United States in the war. But there was a positive side as well. Unlike Churchill, Roosevelt never feared a vote of no confidence. Electoral victory guaranteed presidential power for four years.

How did Americans approach the formulation of strategy? A long postwar tradition suggests that Americans approached such matters with a double-edged naiveté. Isolated by the oceans, cocooned in a political system devoted to preservation of liberty rather than exercise of state power, Americans were innocents in making strategy. "This unearned security during a long century had the effect upon our national habits of mind which the lazy enjoyment of unearned income so often has upon the descendants of a hard-working grandfather."[22] In peace they had failed to see the German and Japanese challenges to the balance of power or the need for engagement in European affairs. In the midst of war, which Americans invariably viewed as a crusade, they adopted an unreasonable doctrine of unconditional surrender. They failed to foresee the necessity of balancing Soviet encroachments in Europe until it was too late because they could only conceive of other nations as friends or foes. The complaint is similar to one made in an official history:

> In their preliminaries, developments, and immediate sequels World War I and World War II followed a cycle whose phases are well marked: (1) prior to the war, insufficient military expenditures, based on the public's prewar conviction that war could not come to America; (2) discovery that war could come after all; (3) a belated rush for arms, men, ships, and planes to overcome the nation's demonstrated military weakness; (4) advance of the producing and training program, attended by misunderstandings, delays, and costly outlay, but gradual creation of a large and powerful army; (5) mounting successes in the field, and eventual victory; (6) immediately thereafter, rapid demobilization and dissolution of the army as a powerful fighting force; (7) sharp reduction of appropriations sought by the military establishment, dictated by concern over its high cost and for a time by the revived hope that, again, war would not come to America.[23]

The gravamen of the charge, then, is that American democracy in the twentieth century has proven itself ill-suited to steady and sound strategy.

This indictment has some merit. America's unwillingness to participate in the League of Nations surely deprived that organization of what little vitality it might have developed. Without an American willingness to keep the balance in both Europe and Asia favorable to the Western democracies, the dictatorships could and did gamble on expansion. It was folly, but not groundless folly, for Hitler and the Japanese militarists to believe that the

22 Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston, 1943), p. 49. See also his *U.S. War Aims* (Boston, 1944).

23 Watson, *Chief of Staff*, p. 23.

United States would be unable and unwilling to throw its weight behind Britain.

But the critics of American strategy-making often overdraw the charge of strategic fecklessness.[24] For example, the funding of the navy during the interwar period was sufficient to maintain a formidable force. The navy may not have reached parity with the Royal Navy until the outbreak of war, but it did receive the resources to build a substantial fleet, and more importantly, to experiment with new forms of naval power such as the aircraft carrier.[25] American naval strength reached its low point in the late 1920s when the foreign threat was lowest. Beginning in 1933 with authorization for two aircraft carriers and several dozen smaller vessels, the navy grew steadily through additional appropriations in 1934, 1938, and 1940 that included 10,000 naval aircraft in the last year. Even at its weakest, the navy was the second largest in the world and one of the most efficient.

Few countries could lay claim to great statesmanship during the 1930s; yet here too the usual charges against the United States seem excessive. If the European powers, which had the military resources and interests refused to confront Hitler, why should the United States have done so? And in the Pacific, the United States attempted to walk a fine line between condoning Japanese behavior in China and provoking war. Yet, when the leaders of Japan decided to attack a country vastly superior in military potential and their near-equal in current strength, the groundwork already existed for victory. The Two Ocean Navy Act of 1940 had already authorized many of the aircraft carriers that swept Japan from the seas.

The modern presidency and modern American government in fact evolved during the 1920–45 period. The Reorganization Act of 1939 played an important role in consolidating presidential power by creating the Executive Office. Even more important were changes in the military command structure after the outbreak of war. At the top, the single most important step occurred with the creation in 1942 of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to replace the Joint Army and Navy Board. The Joint Board had been reasonably effective, but it dealt with the intersection of service interests rather than with strategic decisions.[26] Army chief of staff Douglas MacArthur summed up the prevailing view in his 1932 report to the Secretary of War:

> The ultimate mission of the two services is, in a very true sense, the only element in common between fighting on the land and on the sea. The line between the army and navy fields of activity, namely, the coastline, is an insur-

[24] For a particularly cogent argument, see John Braeman, "Power and Diplomacy: The 1920's Reappraised," *The Review of Politics* 44 (July 1982), pp. 342–69.

[25] See the discussion of early American carrier aviation in Norman Friedman, *U.S. Aircraft Carriers: An Illustrated Design History* (Annapolis, 1983), pp. 31–78.

[26] See the brief discussion in Watson, *Chief of Staff*, pp. 79–81.

> mountable geographical obstacle for each. . . . So the line of demarcation between the army and navy is clear-cut and permanent in character.[27]

Some modification of this attitude of course occurred. "Joint Action of the Army and the Navy," the official statement of doctrine for control of joint operations, included provisions for unified command under certain circumstances in its 1935 and later versions.[28] But until war broke out, agreements between army and navy for command of joint operations resembled carefully negotiated treaties rather than working organizational links.

The JCS soon became a far more effective body than the Joint Board. Created in January 1942, it included the chief of staff, the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), the commander in chief of the United States Fleet (COMINCH), and the commanding general of the Army Air Forces. By summer the organization had evolved further through the consolidation of the positions of CNO and COMINCH in the hands of Admiral Ernest J. King, and the addition of a new member, Admiral William D. Leahy, who became the President's chief of staff. Characteristically, FDR never described the functions and duties of the JCS.[29] He did, however, make clear to the chiefs that they worked for him as commander in chief. As the war continued, the service secretaries lost their influence over the formulation of strategy; instead, the JCS alone hammered out strategic decisions under the direction of a President who paid close attention to the day-to-day running of the war.

The war also enforced major reforms of the army and navy departments. In both cases, the positions of the chief of staff and CNO gained strength in ways not envisioned until the war. Before the war, for example, the CNO was to control overall war planning and training, while the commander-in-chief U.S. Fleet (COMINCH) was to run operations. This arrangement proved unworkable. With the consolidation of the two offices, King acquired unusual power over the usually independent bureaus of the navy, but the President blocked any formal reorganization of the department. In the army,

[27] Report of the Chief of Staff to the Secretary of the Army, in *Report of the Secretary of War to the President, 1932* (Washington, 1932), p. 95. Interestingly enough, MacArthur argued that "The national strategy of any war - that is, the selection of national objectives and the determination of the general means and methods to be applied in attaining them, as well as the development of the broad policies applicable to the prosecution of war - are decisions that must be made by the head of the State, acting in conformity with the expressed will of Congress. . . . The issues involved were so far reaching in their effects, and so vital to the life of the Nation, that this phase of coordinating Army and Navy effort could not be delegated by the Commander in Chief to any subordinate authority." Ibid., p. 97.

[28] *JB* 350, Serial 514.

[29] For a good brief overview of the JCS system, see the summary account in National Archives, *Federal Records of World War II*, Vol. 2, *Military Agencies* (Washington, 1951), pp. 6–13; also William D. Leahy, *I Was There* (New York, 1950), pp. 95–107, and more generally Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, His Lieutenants & Their War* (New York, 1987).

Marshall overhauled the high command structure when the war began, and assigned most of the general staff's administrative duties to three new commands: army ground forces, army service forces, and army air forces. He slashed the size of the general staff and at the same time created the operations division (OPD) to formulate strategy and control the war.[30]

THREATS AND CHALLENGES

By the 1920s new dimensions of national security not seen in earlier periods of U.S. history had emerged. Some Americans argued that the preservation of the European balance of power was now a national interest, and although this concern had not provided the decisive motivation for intervention in World War I, it did carry weight among a small but influential group.[31] A parallel school of thought perceived American colonies in the Pacific as an extension of national interests; naval planning, in particular, took into account the need to defend those colonies. Finally, the American consciousness had absorbed the notion that it might be necessary to fight for democracy as a principle. Whereas traditional American exceptionalism had suggested that the United States could flourish as the sole republican regime in a world of monarchies and tyrannies, Woodrow Wilson had implicitly argued that isolation was no longer possible.

When Wilson presented the Versailles Treaty to the Senate he made a different case, telling its members that "America may be said to have just reached her majority as a world power" and that "there can be no question of our ceasing to be a world power."[32] Less than six months later he told Congress that "a fundamental change has taken place with reference to the position of America. . . . No policy of isolation will satisfy the growing needs and opportunities of America."[33] Yet few people accepted that expansive definition of national security in the 1920s and 1930s. For most, the prospects of a serious war seemed remote; the purpose of the armed forces was to control colonies, to preserve military expertise, and to discourage potential aggressors. As the neutrality legislation of the 1930s revealed, many in Congress were willing to contract American rights overseas in order to avoid war.

As war clouds gathered in Europe and the Pacific, Americans began to recognize the threat of Nazi Germany and to accept some of the burdens

[30] For Marshall's reforms, see James E. Hewes, Jr., *From Root to McNamara: Organization and Administration 1900–1963* (Washington, 1975), pp. 57–103.

[31] See Robert Osgood, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations* (Chicago, 1953), pp. 307–428.

[32] Address to the Senate, 10 July 1919, in Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd, eds., *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson: War and Peace* (New York, 1922), Vol. 1, pp. 550–51.

[33] Ibid., Vol. 2, pp. 430–31.

required to stop Hitler. From summer 1940, for example, two-thirds of Americans supported a year's compulsory military service – although in August 1941, Congress came within a vote of denying the administration an extension of compulsory military service.[34]

How did army and navy planners view the long-term threats to national security?[35] Throughout the 1920s, they saw no immediate threat: the armed forces were rather a form of insurance.[36] Since "economic and racial struggle" caused wars and since such competition apparently continued, the armed forces must prepare against undefined future emergencies.[37] In the meantime, they garrisoned key defensive positions and prepared to aid imperiled American citizens and interests. In general, planners throughout the late 1920s maintained a sanguine view not only of America's economic strength but of its social cohesiveness and its political efficiency.

This confidence was evident in the "Blue-Orange Estimate of the Situation" completed in January 1929 and accepted by the Joint Board (although only the navy accepted the implied decisions). The Estimate provided a comprehensive net assessment of the balance between America and Japan, and noted that "The United States is now the richest nation in the world with practically no foreign debt and with almost unlimited credit."[38] Noting its near autarky in raw materials and industrial potential, planners calculated that a year after mobilization the United States could produce 1,500 aircraft a month – compared with a Japanese maximum of 700 a year. Confident of the quality of American equipment, the planners were also confident about the resilience of a country they viewed as "mainly Anglo-Saxon in race and institutions. Our government is democratic and the world war showed that a strong President can assume autocratic powers with the consent of the people." That background of confidence inspired war plans even against potential adversaries as powerful as an Anglo-Japanese combination.

By the mid-1930s American military planners correctly understood that Japan had embarked on a campaign of expansion in East Asia and that world politics had entered a period of turmoil.[39] By the late 1930s, the sense of threat was acute. In his annual report of 1938, the Secretary of War suggested that the danger of a second world war "made essential a reorientation of our military policy." Moreover, he argued, "in the military sense the Americas are no longer continents" and referred to "the simple unadulterated fact that the range and destructive potentialities of weapons of warfare, primarily those whose realm is the skies, have, in recent years, so shortened the elements of distance and time that any hostile air base established anywhere within

[34] See the polling data in Cantril and Strunk, eds., *Public Opinion*, p. 459.
[35] See Fred Greene, "The Military View of American National Policy, 1904–1940," *American Historical Review*, 66:2 (January 1961), pp. 354–77.
[36] See *Report of the Secretary of War to the President, 1923* (Washington, 1923), pp. 6–7.
[37] Ibid., p. 18.
[38] *JB* 325, Serial 280.
[39] See *Report of the Secretary of War to the President, 1937* (Washington, 1937), p. 1.

effective striking proximity of the Panama Canal would prove a vital threat to that waterway – and therefore, a threat to the very security of these United States."[40] The requirements of hemispheric defense suggested mobile and flexible forces.[41]

At the same time the navy moved toward a two-ocean standard of naval power. Where it had previously emphasized operations in the Pacific, by 1940 it aimed at having "forces sufficient to enable us to have complete freedom of action in either ocean while retaining forces in the other ocean for effective defense of our vital security."[42] The possibility of a Nazi occupation of Britain and of German control of the Royal Navy represented serious threats to the United States.

For the navy, particularly after the early 1930s, the likely enemy was Japan. Unlike their army counterparts, navy planners believed that in case of war the navy should mount a serious effort to rescue or recover the Philippines.[43] By 1941, the navy had assembled the building blocks for a successful operation against Japan: a long-range and balanced fleet increasingly centered on aircraft carriers; the concepts for seizing, building, and defending island bases; and long-range submarines to attack enemy lines of communications. The navy knew that the coming war would be long and hard and that victory would probably not come through a cataclysmic battle but through a prolonged series of campaigns.[44]

The army never managed to focus on a clearly defined enemy in the interwar period. Army planners did not know until the late 1930s that they would have to fight the Germans in Europe; therefore they targeted a generic enemy. The result was a preference for forces designed for the Western Hemisphere; when war came, the army adjusted its organization and equipment slowly. In 1940, for example, Marshall defended a program for modernizing the army's 75mm guns rather than investing more heavily in 105mm howitzers on the grounds that "concrete fortifications and masonry villages of European battlefields may dictate a need for a weapon firing a heavier projectile than . . .

[40] *Report of the Secretary of War to the President, 1939* (Washington, 1939), p. 2. See also the annual report of the Chief of Staff for that year, pp. 23ff.

[41] General Marshall's biennial report of 30 June 1941, in Walter Millis, ed., *The War Reports of General of the Army George C. Marshall, General of the Army H.H. Arnold, Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King*, (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 35.

[42] *Report of the Secretary of the Navy to the President, 1940* (Washington, 1940), p. 2.

[43] On interwar planning, see Russell Weigley, "The Role of the War Department and the Army," and Waldo H. Heinrichs, Jr., "The Role of the United States Navy," in Dorothy Borg and Shumpei Okamoto, eds., *Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese-American Relations 1931–1941* (New York, 1973), pp. 165–88, 197–224. On ORANGE, the plan for war with Japan, see Louis Morton, "War Plan ORANGE: Evolution of a Strategy," *World Politics*, 11 (January 1959), pp. 221–50.

[44] See Philip T. Rosen, "The Treaty Navy, 1919–1937," and John Major, "The Navy Plans for War, 1937–1941," in Kenneth J. Hagan, ed., *In Peace and War: Interpretations of American Naval History 1775–1978* (Westport, CT, 1978), pp. 221–62.

the 75-mm gun, but our forces would rarely be confronted with such targets in this hemisphere."[45]

As a result of this limited strategic vision and a predilection for mobility – misunderstood as a plenitude of motor transport and a dearth of cumbersome equipment (rather than ability to move on the battlefield) – the army created infantry divisions too light for Europe.[46] Even the revised tables of organization of 1942 and 1943 did not compare favorably with the firepower of comparable German units at full strength. In tank and anti-tank warfare, the stubborn adherence of the army ground forces to the mobile and reliable but undergunned and under-armored Sherman tank, and their insistence on independent battalions of largely useless tank destroyers, suggests the dominance of the prewar misunderstandings of what mobility required.[47]

The threats to American security changed as war approached. American decision-makers worried briefly but intensely about defending the Western Hemisphere against direct assault by Germany and by Nazi sympathizers. These fears had real consequences, for in 1939 and 1940 the army and navy prepared for intervention in Brazil to forestall the creation of a Nazi regime there.[48] Until summer 1942, the United States stood on the strategic defensive to protect itself against direct attacks, while shoring up the countries fighting Hitler. American strategic decision-makers faced two critical problems during this phase: how to build a domestic consensus to support intervention on the Allied side, and how to expand U.S. military forces while sustaining the Allies and keeping sufficient forces ready to deter enemy aggression.

The first problem was less serious than decision-makers thought at the time, although its severity is a matter of dispute. The second involved a series of painful tradeoffs. The barter of fifty American destroyers for British bases in the Western Hemisphere and the shipment of "surplus" army equipment in summer 1940 (including 500,000 rifles, 900 field guns, and 80,000 machine guns) bit deep into the growing armed forces, particularly the army.

[45] Quoted in Janice McKenney, "More Bang for the Buck in the Interwar Army: The 105-mm Howitzer," *Military Affairs*, 42 (April 1978), p. 84.

[46] Kent Roberts Greenfield, Robert R. Palmer, and Bell I. Wiley, *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, 1947), pp. 274–75; Robert M. Kennedy, *The German Campaign In Poland* (1939) (Washington, 1956), pp. 30–31; W.J.K. Davies, *German Army Handbook 1939–1945* (New York, 1974), pp. 37, 40–42. German light and heavy machine guns were basically the same weapon, the redoubtable MG 34: most of the American machine guns were the less effective but still adequate 30 caliber. German mortars were 50mm and 81mm, American mortars 60mm and 81mm; antitank guns the same; German heavy howitzers were 150mm vs. 155mm for the Americans.

[47] See Constance McLaughlin Green, Harry C. Thomson, and Peter C. Roots, *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War* (Washington, 1955), pp. 275–87; Christopher R. Gabel, *Seek, Strike, and Destroy: U.S. Army Tank Destroyer Doctrine in World War II*, Leavenworth Papers #12 (Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1985).

[48] Watson, *Chief of Staff*, pp. 94–95.

Appropriately, it required presidential decisions to force the services to surrender even obsolescent but nevertheless valuable weapons to countries that seemed on the verge of collapse.

After Midway, the United States embarked on a strategic offensive that continued until the end of the war. In this respect, the American strategic experience was unique; where other countries faced mortal perils during periods of strategic defense – the Battle of Britain and the invasion of the Soviet Union, for example – the United States was at no time vulnerable to direct enemy action. In order to avoid defeat, the United States had to sustain its allies on a vast scale; in order to win, it had to embark on the most extensive strategic offensives in history.

From mid-1942 the American armed forces confronted the challenge of storming two continent-sized citadels. It would not suffice to blockade the enemy and thus reduce him; both Nazi-occupied Europe and Japan's Asian empire were virtually autarkic. Nor could one hope to cause the enemy's collapse by protracted attrition. Rather, the United States had to pierce a thick crust of defenses and penetrate into the enemy heartlands. The United States had to project its power along extraordinarily long and vulnerable lines of communication – nearly a month's sailing time from San Francisco to Sydney, more than two weeks from New York to Liverpool, and over two months from New York to the Persian Gulf.[49] It then required completely new combinations of men and machines that included multidivision amphibious assaults to batter its way into Europe and up the Pacific island chains toward Japan.

RESOURCES

Peace and war posed radically differing challenges to American strategists. The problem in peace was to balance scanty resources between current requirements and the demands of long-term investment in bases and evolving technologies. In war the problem was vastly different: resources available swelled astonishingly. But it was also similar, for the armed forces likewise confronted difficult tradeoffs between near- and long-term requirements.

Throughout the interwar period, peacetime budgets for the services remained comparatively low as a percentage of Gross National Product (Table 14.1). The army reacted by adhering to its traditional preference for a cadre force, along the lines Emory Upton had advocated after the Civil War.[50] Rather than forming small full-strength units, it maintained the cadre for much larger forces that would fill out upon mobilization. On the whole, this effort was less than successful, particularly when compared with the immense expansion that turned the Weimar Republic's 100,000-man *Reichswehr* into

[49] From Marshall's second biennial report, 1941–1943, in Millis, ed., *War Reports*, p. 77.
[50] See Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York, 1967), pp. 400ff.

Table 14.1. *Interwar army and navy budgets*[51] *(excluding veterans compensation and pensions)*

	1920	1925	1930	1935	1940
Percent of GNP	2.8	.7	.9	1.2	1.8
Percent of federal outlays	37	24	25	14	20

Hitler's army. Still, the army succeeded in maintaining an elaborate school system that expanded extremely fast in 1940–42 to accommodate the influx of recruits. The navy was altogether luckier; it received authorization in 1933 and 1934 to build three aircraft carriers, seven battleships, eleven cruisers, over a hundred destroyers, and more than forty submarines. But the navy did not gain real superiority over Japan even after passage of a ten-year $1.1 billion expansion program in 1938. The Japanese had their own expansion program, and the navy lacked adequate overseas bases and manpower.

Despite the stringent budgets of the 1930s, all three services developed successful weapons systems at least in prototype form during this period. Perhaps the greatest successes came in the Army Air Forces, which "fought during World War II with aircraft which were all either in production or under development prior to December 7, 1941."[52] Similarly, in 1940 the navy ordered the first of its *Essex* class carriers, and had even earlier developed submarines suitable for long-range operations against Japanese lines of communication.[53] Even the army achieved notable successes with its M-1 rifle and 105mm howitzer. Scanty as the interwar budgets were, they did not preclude the services from performing two essential tasks: developing the weapons needed and preparing a mobilization base for larger wartime forces.

Peacetime thinking about mobilization, particularly in the army, nevertheless had several important flaws.[54] It envisioned an orderly process beginning from a definite M-Day.[55] Yet the thinking behind all plans before 1940 flowed from "the assumption that a nation passed from a peace status to a war status as quickly and as decisively as one passes from one room to another. No provision whatsoever had been made for the maze of corridors, blind alleys and series of antechambers – labeled 'Phoney War,' 'cash and

[51] Percentages derived from *Historical Statistics*, pp. 224, 1114.

[52] Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. 6, *Men and Planes* (Chicago, 1955), p. 193.

[53] See Ernest Andrade, Jr., "Submarine Policy in the United States Navy, 1919–1941," *Military Affairs*, 35:2 (April 1971), pp. 50–56.

[54] On interwar mobilization planning, see Marvin A. Kreidberg and Merton G. Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army 1775–1945* (Washington, 1955), pp. 377–540.

[55] See R. Elberton Smith, *The Army and Economic Mobilization* (Washington, 1959), pp. 73–86.

Table 14.2. *Resources and military power, 1940*[56]

	Population (millions)	Raw Steel (000s metric tons)	Electricity (gigawatt hours)
United States	132	60.7	178
Germany	70	21.5	63
Japan	73+	6.8	9
Britain	46+	13.1	28
Soviet Union	170	18.3	48

carry,' 'more than mere words,' 'Lend Lease,' etc. – which the United States was compelled . . . to traverse between September 1, 1939, and December 7, 1941."[57] Moreover, the army's high command was not ready to cope with rapidly changing demands for forces capable of intervening in Latin America, or for large air forces with which to impress the dictators.

Once war began the latent power of the United States came into its own. What were its resources? (Table 14.2.)[58] The United States was virtually self-sufficient in many important areas: it produced some 1.35 billion barrels of crude petroleum in 1940, for example, and met its needs without importing more than 3 percent of that amount.[59] Yet even in those areas where raw materials fell short (rubber was the critical example), conservation and new technologies remedied shortages. Synthetic rubber production, a negligible source in 1942, reached nearly 800,000 long tons by 1944, or only slightly less than all rubber production in 1940.[60]

More fortunate than either friends or foes, the United States was the only major participant in the war whose homeland did not become a battleground, and this security was a major help in maximizing production. The United States did not tower over its competitors with respect to population alone; its strength lay rather in the size, versatility, and productivity of its economy. The last point is particularly important; the latent power of the American war machine was vast not merely because of its size, but because of its ability to draw on extraordinary ingenuity and organizational skill. Table 14.3 on motor vehicle production suggests the relative potential of the American economy. The U.S. aircraft industry similarly dwarfed that of every

[56] Sources: *Historical Statistics of the United States;* United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *The Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japan's War Economy* (Washington, 1946); B. R. Mitchell, *European Historical Statistics,* 2nd rev. ed. (New York, 1980).

[57] Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York, 1948), p. 280.

[58] In what follows, I have relied heavily on U.S. Bureau of the Budget, *The United States at War* (Washington, 1946).

[59] *Historical Statistics,* p. 593.

[60] *The United States at War,* pp. 293–97.

Table 14.3. *Production of motor vehicles (000's)*[61]

	1929	1937
United States	5,358	4,810
Europe (without Soviet Union)	637	1,109
Germany	105	327
France	224	200
Britain	217	493
Soviet Union	1	200
Japan	0	10+

other country. In 1936, for example, the Americans possessed approximately five times as many civil aircraft as Germany, despite Lufthansa's phenomenal success as an airline; only a few years later American planes were flying almost eight times as many miles.[62] Figures such as these reinforced the underlying confidence of American planners as war approached in 1940 and 1941.

Wartime productivity of the American economy matched or surpassed that of peacetime. In 1944, it produced four times as much munitions as the British with fewer than twice the workers (13.4 million workers in the U.S. vs. 7.8 million in the U.K. in mid-1944).[63] When all is said and done, the effort remains a remarkable testimony to American business organization; the explosion of military production in 1942 and 1943 came as a surprise to Americans and foreigners alike.[64] In his pioneering study of the American corporation in its heyday, Peter Drucker has noted that

> The experience which directly shows the true nature of modern mass production was, of course, the American industrial conversion to war in 1942 and 1943. It has by now become clear that most of the experts in this country, including the majority of industrial engineers and managers, underestimated our productive capacity so completely in 1940 and 1941 precisely because practically all of us failed to understand the concept of human organization

[61] League of Nations, *Bulletin of Monthly Statistics*, 19:6 (June 1938), p. 268.

[62] Heinz J. Nowarra and Karlheinz Kens, *Die deutsche Flugzeuge 1933–1945*, 5th ed. (Munich, 1977), p. 9.

[63] W. K. Hancock and M. M. Gowing, *British War Economy* (London, 1949), pp. 367–68. One wartime economist has argued that "the munitions production of the major belligerents at full mobilization was roughly proportional to the size of their prewar industrial labor force combined with the prewar level of productivity in industry." Raymond W. Goldsmith, "The Power of Victory, Munitions Output in World War II," *Military Affairs*, 10 (Spring 1946), p. 79.

[64] For interesting comparisons with the British effort, see M. M. Postan, *British War Production* (London, 1952), pp. 243–48, and Correlli Barnett, *The Pride and the Fall: The Dream and Illusion of Britain as a Great Nation* (New York, 1986), passim.

> which underlies mass production. We argued in terms of *existing* raw material supplies and *existing* plant capacity and failed to realize that we are capable of producing new raw materials, of designing new machines for new purposes, and of building new plants in practically no time *provided the human organization is in existence.*[65]

Drucker drives home this point with the story of how, during the war, Cadillac mass-produced bombsights using a labor force of superannuated prostitutes from Detroit's slums – a workforce that intelligent management made effective.[66]

If bringing hitherto marginal workers into war production represented one kind of managerial success, the mobilization of the nation's scientific capacities was another.[67] Roosevelt created the National Defense Research Committee (NDRC) in summer 1940, and one year later the Office of Scientific Research and Development, of which NDRC became a part. Despite inevitable friction and difficulties, the services worked closely with thousands of civilian scientists. The results included not only such weapons as the atomic bomb, but a stream of innovations such as the DUKW (an amphibious truck), a wide range of tropical medicines and pesticides, and the stunningly lethal proximity fuze. The enemy outmatched the United States in selected weapons, in some cases throughout the war – German tanks were clearly superior, as was the German light machine gun. Yet American forces had an overall edge in the technology of war, an edge that a combination of quality *and* quantity created and that neither enemies nor allies could match. This advantage was particularly true in the mundane devices that made American forces mobile and sustainable. After the war General Dwight D. Eisenhower singled out five pieces of equipment as vital to success in Europe: the DUKW, bulldozer, jeep, 2½-ton truck, and C-47 transport aircraft. "Curiously enough," he noted, "none of these is designed for combat."[68]

Some industries grew virtually from scratch during the war; in 1941, for example, U.S. merchant ship construction was some 1.1 million deadweight tons. Shipyards produced over 8 million tons in 1942 and over 19 million tons in 1943; without this construction the U.S. could not have sustained the war in the Pacific or the Normandy invasion. To achieve this growth the U.S. Maritime Commission standardized a particular design – the so-called Liberty Ship – slow, obsolescent, and simple. In 1941 the ship took nearly a year to build; by the end of 1942 less than two months.[69] Part of the explanation for

[65] Peter F. Drucker, *The Concept of the Corporation* (1946; New York, 1983), p. 32. Emphasis in the original.

[66] Drucker, *Adventures of a Bystander* (New York, 1978), pp. 270–71. Postan, *British War Production*, pp. 394–95, notes the ways in which chronic shortages of skilled managers afflicted British war production.

[67] For a good short account, see James Phinney Baxter, *Scientists Against Time* (1946; Cambridge, MA, 1968).

[68] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade In Europe* (Garden City, NJ, 1948), pp. 163–64.

[69] *The U.S. at War*, pp. 135–43.

Table 14.4. *Relative magnitude of munitions production, 1944*

United States	100
Germany	40
USSR	35+
Britain	25
Japan	15
Canada	5–

Table 14.5. *Trend of combat munitions production of the major belligerents (1944 = 100)*

Country	1938	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
United States	2	2	5	11	47	91	100
Canada	0	2	6	27	73	102	100
Britain	4	10	34	59	83	100	100
USSR	12	20	30	53	71	87	100
Germany	16	20	35	35	51	80	100
Japan	8	10	16	32	49	72	100

these successes stems from increased worker productivity, which rose by 25 percent between 1939 and 1944.[70] Shortly after the war ended, one economist calculated the relative magnitude of the munitions production of the major belligerents in 1944 (Table 14.4).[71] If one factors in nonlethal but nonetheless critical goods (food, merchant ships, trucks, and so forth), the dominance of American war production becomes even more striking. The American productive surge was startling in both scale and rapidity, as Table 14.5 shows.[72]

The chief shortage throughout the war was manpower. Unlike any other power in the war, the United States committed itself to four efforts: a great army, navy, air force, and productive base. The manpower shortage hurt the army most of all, leading it to take what Maurice Matloff has called the "90 Division Gamble," in effect to settle for a relatively small army.[73] The crisis caused by the German offensive in the Ardennes in December 1944 stripped the United States of all strategic reserves. The result was a "photo finish" in

[70] Goldsmith, "The Power of Victory," p. 71.
[71] Ibid., p. 72.
[72] Civilian Production Administration, *Industrial Mobilization for War: History of the War Production Board and Predecessor Agencies 1940–1945*, Vol. 1, *Program and Administration* (Washington, 1947), pp. 964–66.
[73] Maurice Matloff, "The 90-Division Gamble," in Kent Roberts Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions* (Washington, 1960), pp. 365–81.

Table 14.6. *Mobilization of the labor force of the U.K. and the U.S. for war, June 1944*[74] *(percentages)*

	United Kingdom	United States
A. Armed forces	22	18.5
B. Civilian war employment	33	21.5
C. Total A + B	55	40
D. Other employment	45	58
E. Unemployed	—	2
F. Total labor force	100	100

which by V-E day every active U.S. division had been deployed overseas and all but two had been in battle. Moreover, the demands on high-quality manpower and the ability of potential soldiers to volunteer for the other services through 1942 degraded the quality of American infantrymen. One 1943 sample of infantrymen was over a half-inch shorter and six pounds lighter than the army average and had a smaller percentage of top-grade scorers on the intelligence tests.[75] Such deficiencies had a bearing on the general inferiority of American infantry units vis-à-vis their German counterparts.

Yet the American manpower pool was never as strained as that of the British (Table 14.6). The British war mobilization was not necessarily more efficient: "the British people were compelled to undergo, irrespective of the shipping shortage, a sharp decline in their domestic standard of living, their export trade, and their capital inheritance."[76] Unlike the reasonably well-fed and clothed American workers, whose productivity actually increased, that of British workers fell in a number of critical sectors.

Remarkably, the United States paid for the war with a low level of inflation – barely 30 percent between 1939 and 1945.[77] American leaders performed this feat with comprehensive price controls, a less successful effort to stabilize wages, and, with the exception of 1943, heavy taxation. In 1945, for example, roughly 45 percent of governmental funding came from taxes. But taxation covered only one quarter of overall war expenditures, as opposed to more than half in Britain and Canada.[78] Price, rent, and to a lesser extent wage controls provided economic stability, but the Chairman of the War Production Board, Donald Nelson, held "that the highest levels of industrial production come only from an economy that is well supplied with

[74] Hancock and Gowing, *British War Economy*, p. 370.
[75] Robert R. Palmer, "The Procurement of Enlisted Personnel: The Problem of Quality," in Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, 1949), p. 3.
[76] Ibid., p. 373.
[77] *The U.S. at War*, p. 236.
[78] Ibid., p. 259.

machinery, repair parts, power, and transport facilities, homes for workers, water, sewers, and utilities, and a generous standard of necessities."[79] As a result, although production of most consumer durables stopped, food, clothing, and repair items remained at prewar levels or slightly increased.

The chief instrument of mobilization was the War Production Board. Although the services controlled procurement, this agency was responsible for overall production. It allocated scarce raw materials through a variety of mechanisms and scheduled production of common items such as valves and engines. The WPB was initially responsible to the President, and it served a particularly important role in balancing the requirements of the services, Allies, and civilian economy – a function in which it met bitter opposition from the services. The WPB contributed substantially to the war effort through its insistence in 1942 on scaling down production goals that would have exceeded the economy's capacity by 20 percent and have led to even worse bottlenecks than actually occurred.[80] The WPB's action involved a struggle with the military, since the JCS declared early in the war that "production of war materials should be governed by military requirements and not on the productive capacity of the country."[81] But the WPB did not generally base its production decisions in the early part of the war on strategic considerations – of which the military generally failed to inform it.

The production effort sustained not only burgeoning American forces but those of the allies as well. Some $48 billion went to lend-lease, two-thirds to the British Empire, over one-fifth to the Soviet Union, and the rest to others.[82] Lend-lease to the Soviet Union included no fewer than 430,000 jeeps and trucks by 1944, a transport fleet indispensable to Soviet advances from 1943 on.[83] The British Empire and Commonwealth drew close to half of its tanks, nearly one-fifth of its combat aircraft, three-fifths of its transport aircraft, and nearly two-fifths of its landing craft and ships from American sources.[84]

What of Allied contributions to American resources? Throughout most of the 1920s and 1930s, American planners expected that the Allies would contribute little to an American war effort. This attitude changed in 1938 when American and British planners first discussed operations in the Pacific. But in practical terms, no real benefit from the Allies appeared until 1940, when Roosevelt authorized a clandestine but extensive liaison with the British. With some exceptions – the 1940 destroyers-for-bases deal – the United

79 Ibid., p. 128.
80 See Donald M. Nelson, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Story of American War Production* (New York, 1946), pp. 368–90; Civilian Production Administration, *Industrial Mobilization*, pp. 273–92.
81 Minutes, 9th Meeting of the JCS, 6 April 1942. In Paul Kesaris, ed., *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part I: 1942–1945* (Frederick, MD, 1980–1983), henceforth JCS.
82 James A. Huston, *Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775–1953* (Washington, 1966), p. 454.
83 See John Erickson, *The Road to Berlin* (Boulder, CO, 1983), p. 81.
84 Postan, *British War Production*, p. 247.

States gained little quantitative advantage from its allies, at least early in the war. British Empire wartime aid to the United States amounted to between 25 and 30 percent of American lend-lease, according to British sources, although less than 20 percent according to American sources.[85] Much of this aid came in the form of direct support to troops in Britain, Australia, and other staging areas. Yet a comparison of relative aid figures does not tell the full story of America's gain from its wartime alliances.

The United States could not have successfully fought the war without Britain and the Soviet Union. Soviet forces pinned down two-thirds and sometimes three-quarters of German ground forces on the Eastern Front after June 1941, while the British Empire provided the jumping-off points for successful attacks on the German and Japanese empires. Although the eventual American drive through the Central Pacific owed little to Australian and New Zealand support, that effort would have been far more difficult without the attritional battles of 1942 along the lines of communication to the Antipodes that had worn the Japanese down. The drive from the Southwest Pacific used Australia as its base and involved large Dominion forces. And without the time that British and Soviet resistance to Nazi Germany bought, the United States would not have had the breathing space to arm.

Less obvious, perhaps, is the extent to which the American war effort benefited from the pooling of Anglo-American resources. One of the greatest advantages of the Allies throughout the war lay in the area of intelligence, particularly signals intelligence. Even before the war, the Americans and British shared some decrypted messages, and once the United States entered the war, the most remarkable coordination of intelligence efforts in history began. The British code-breaking establishment at Bletchley Park absorbed new American recruits, while American signals intelligence dominated the Pacific. Although some overlap occurred, it was far less than if the two nations had not cooperated so closely.

In addition, the United States benefited from the use of British designs either adapted to American needs or simply mass-produced in this country. Britain shared its designs for landing craft, merchant ships, and such indispensable devices as the cavity magnetron that made microwave radar possible. The Merlin engine made the American P-51 the best piston engine fighter of the war, and the United States also gained from British experience in operating a wide range of antisubmarine equipment, including sonar. Perhaps most remarkable was the institutionalization of logistical cooperation between the United States and the Empire.[86] The first such organization, created in early

[85] Hancock and Gowing, *British War Economy*, p. 376; Huston, *Sinews*, p. 454.

[86] See Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy 1940–1943* (Washington, 1955), pp. 247–94. Although inevitably somewhat slanted, the British official histories are particularly good on this subject: H. Duncan Hall, *North American Supply* (London, 1955); Hall and C. C. Wrigley, with J. D. Scott, *Studies of Overseas Supply* (London, 1956); Postan, *British War Production*.

1942, was the Munitions Assignment Board, served to render the munitions industries of both countries a "common pool." The two allies made the same arrangement for raw materials and shipping. Although the combined boards never achieved the grip over production for which the British had hoped – the Americans, as chief producers, were too canny for that – they symbolized the cooperation of two great states. When Britain faced a critical shortage of shipping for imports in Spring 1943, the President allocated increased shipping at the expense of U.S. services and over the vociferous objections of his military advisers.[87] Both in emergencies and over the long haul the United States sustained its principal ally throughout the war.

STRATEGIC DECISION-MAKING

The goals of American national security policy throughout the 1920s and 1930s were quite simple: to ensure the physical security of the continental United States. Outlying possessions such as the Philippines also came under the American security umbrella, although this situation changed in 1934 after the United States officially declared its intention to grant Philippine independence within twelve years. More important was the Panama Canal, to which American planners devoted increasing attention in the late 1930s. In the 1920s, the elaborate coastal fortifications at each terminus of the Canal seemed adequate for its defense; by the end of the 1930s, however, the spread of airfields in Latin America suggested a new threat that the army, in particular, prepared to meet.[88] Growing concern in the late 1930s over the Panama Canal reflected a similar extension of the basic concepts of continental defense.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the United States had resolutely opposed extension of European influence in the Western Hemisphere. But World War II, particularly after summer 1940, was qualitatively different. For a brief time, four factors came together to make the military threat to the Western Hemisphere appear direct and serious. These factors were the appeal of Fascism and Nazism in Latin America; the prospect of a Vichy French-Nazi alliance that could give the Germans bases in Dakar, only a short distance from Brazil; the advent of new military technologies, particularly long-range aviation; and the possible collapse of Britain. In addition, American decision-makers used force throughout the interwar period to protect their citizens and possessions abroad, and although the deployments required were not large by today's standards they were substantial given the forces maintained at the time. The United States was a small power in terms of military force, but it was not purely isolationist. It pos-

87 This episode is well described in Richard M. Leighton, "U.S. Merchant Shipping and the British Import Crisis," in Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions*, pp. 119–224.

88 See Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engelman, and Byron Fairchild, *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts* (Washington, 1964), pp. 300–27.

sessed a considerable navy, and its forces operated overseas with some regularity; nearly one-third of the United States army, for example, was in service outside the continental United States throughout the 1930s.

American decision-makers came to see in the experience of the depression and the spread of militaristic and totalitarian regimes a confirmation of Wilson's basic view that a liberal world order was the only guarantee of American safety. For that reason, their long-term objective became the removal of the causes of war by creating such an order. American strategy in World War II is understandable only within the context of such a vision. The United States sought not merely to defeat particular enemies, but to reconstruct enemy polities and the larger world order.

American strategy focused on containing Japanese expansion in East Asia and thwarting German hegemony in Europe. In Roosevelt's casual words at Casablanca, once war had begun, America's objective became the "unconditional surrender" of the Axis Powers. Yet it soon became apparent that – with occasional exceptions – the United States sought not the obliteration of its opponents but their reconstruction in its own image. MacArthur's startling words at the Japanese surrender, "it is for us, both victors and vanquished, to rise to that higher dignity which alone befits the sacred purposes we are about to serve," pointed directly toward the reconstruction and rehabilitation that followed.[89]

In addition, the United States developed objectives that concerned its own allies. The Americans, and in particular the President, wished to see the British Empire abandon imperial preference and begin to decolonize. Roosevelt's badgering of Churchill over the Indian revolt of 1942 is a particularly telling example of this interest.[90] While American decision-makers hoped that other colonial empires would follow suit, most, like Wilson, preferred gradual rather than radical emancipation. As for the minor allies, of which Free France was the most important, FDR's antipathy to De Gaulle represented not only personal dislike, but a larger fear of postwar military dictatorship in France. Although American leaders did not see democracy as immediately and universally suited for implantation abroad, they intended to foster it where they thought it had a chance.

Throughout much of the war the United States viewed its two other great allies, the Soviet Union and China, with particular anxiety. Both bore the brunt of the Axis onslaught, both were in danger of collapse or, worse, of concluding separate and unfavorable peace agreements with the enemy, and both had been outsiders in the prewar international system. Without the vigorous participation of both, American planners feared, the war could not

[89] Quoted in D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, Vol. 2, *1941–1945* (Boston, 1975), p. 709.

[90] See in particular, Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan 1941–1945* (New York, 1978) and William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire 1941–1945* (New York, 1978).

be won; China and the Soviet Union were clearly combating the overwhelming bulk of Japanese and German ground forces. Planners considered the Soviet attrition of German forces essential to victory in Europe, and Chinese air bases and, eventually, ports vital to success in the Pacific. American strategy therefore aimed at keeping these two staggering allies in the war. In addition, the American vision of a liberal world order required that both states play a part as guarantors of stability in their war-shattered regions.

American objectives were thus not simply "unconditional surrender." In fact, American strategic objectives were extremely complex and involved numerous tradeoffs between short- and long-term goals. Consider only American relations with Britain. In 1940 and 1941 the tradeoff was between support for a Britain in desperate straits or the conservation of resources for defense of the Western Hemisphere. Later, American leaders sought to support and work in close harmony with the British while ensuring that the Empire would not block the creation of the new world order. The fact that public sympathies and antipathies were not infinitely malleable complicated the formulation of long-term objectives ever more. Popular attachments, dislikes, and suspicions, along with anxiety about casualties and the progress of the war, all exercised an influence on the translation of objectives into action.

Peacetime strategic decision-making in the United States looked very different from the making of strategy in war. Most notable was the role of Congress, which through a variety of actions – for example, the Neutrality Acts that restricted overseas arms sales, or a refusal to authorize funds to fortify Guam – exercised a substantial restraint on the wielding of military power. In peacetime the individual services rather than a joint organization dominated military planning.

Wartime decision-making was quite different. The President and the Joint Chiefs of Staff dominated the process. The service secretaries, despite one or two early attempts to participate in the formulation of strategy, soon found themselves excluded, an evolution that had parallels in the British War Cabinet as well. Congress virtually dropped out of sight from the point of view of strategic decision-making. The JCS normally met without the President although under the chairmanship of his personal chief of staff, Admiral Leahy. In this arrangement, the American system differed greatly from the British, in which the Prime Minister presided over many of the meetings of the Chiefs of Staff. Marshall indeed sometimes went weeks at a time without meeting the President. After the war, he confided that he had never visited Roosevelt at Hyde Park or Warm Springs and that he had rejected Hopkins's advice to strike up a personal relationship with the President. Rather, "he persisted in the belief that it was the best policy to keep away from the President as much as possible."[91] His chief colleague, Admiral King, tended

[91] Robert Emmett Sherwood Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Folder 1899, "Interview with George Catlett Marshall, 23 July 1947."

to agree, and saw in the "decentralized" American system far less civilian control than in Britain – and a good thing too.

King's picture was both inaccurate and a testimony to Roosevelt's skill as a manipulator. Before the war FDR had taken a close albeit erratic interest in military and naval affairs. In spring 1937, for example, he gave detailed orders for a joint exercise designed to test the services' ability to detect and destroy a fleet attacking either the east or west coasts.[92] During the war Roosevelt overruled the JCS far more frequently than Churchill ever did his Chiefs of Staff. The President had no compunction about ordering his military commanders to divest themselves of sorely needed weapons to bolster the British in 1940. In 1942 he instructed them to undertake the invasion of North Africa, of which they heartily disapproved. At Cairo in 1943, he ignored their advice and canceled operations in support of Chiang Kai-shek (the Andaman Islands invasion). In 1944 he conferred at Pearl Harbor with the Pacific theater commanders, MacArthur and Nimitz, in the absence of the JCS, whom he had pointedly not invited to the meeting on the invasion of the Philippines. These examples are only a few of the more notable times that FDR asserted his position as commander in chief, a title he regarded not as an honorific but as a job description.[93]

Roosevelt's wartime Chief of Staff concluded that FDR and Churchill "really ran the war . . . we were just artisans building definite patterns of strategy from the rough blueprints handed to us by our respective Commanders in Chief."[94] The difference in their control over the military was less of degree than of style. If Roosevelt did not keep the JCS by his side day in and day out, neither did Churchill use someone like Harry Hopkins as his surrogate. Hopkins, a man without formal position in the government or experience in military affairs, possessed unswerving loyalty to FDR and penetrating common sense. He accompanied the JCS on many of their travels and eased many of their dealings with the President. As Harold Smith, Director of the Bureau of the Budget put it, "Hopkins' sole job was to see everything from the President's point of view. He was bound by no preconceived notions, no legal inhibitions and he certainly had absolutely no respect for tradition."[95] Roosevelt's preference for indirection and informality led him to manipulate the military leadership, rather than, as in Churchill's case, to confront, cajole, or bully it. He maximized his own leverage, for example, by denying King's request to reorganize the Navy Department. The result was an unswerving civilian control that frequently extended downward to the details of policy.

[92] *JB* 350, Serial 608.
[93] Kent Roberts Greenfield, *American Strategy in World War II: A Reconsideration* (Baltimore, 1963), pp. 49–84; see also Larrabee, *Commander in Chief.*
[94] Leahy, *I Was There*, p. 106.
[95] Quoted in Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, p. 159.

The JCS organization itself grew enormously throughout the war, and JCS responsibilities consumed most of the senior leaders' time. After the war King estimated that he spent fully two-thirds of his time on JCS or Combined Chiefs of Staff business rather than purely Navy affairs.[96] As befited a body without formal charter, the JCS grew and changed as the war progressed. In late 1942 the Joint Deputy Chiefs of Staff emerged to relieve the Chiefs of some of their crushing administrative burden. The creation of a Joint Strategic Survey Committee in November 1942 provided advice on long-range strategic planning from a group of military "elder statesmen." In 1943 a Joint Logistics Committee began to handle logistical problems not tied to immediate war planning. Interestingly, the impetus for the creation of the JLC came from the President who, even while rejecting a JCS proposal to grant a written charter, informed them that "joint logistics planning should parallel joint strategic planning." Despite the protests of the Joint Staff Planners, that parallel planning began.[97]

As for the JCS itself, its members met regularly on Wednesdays over lunch, and almost invariably alone.[98] According to its chairman, it processed an average of 130 papers a month, an enormous burden. Compounding these burdens was a frustrating isolation from the rest of government. Coordination with the civilian agencies that controlled war production was frequently poor; even liaison with the President was sometimes unsatisfactory. The official historian notes that "the War Department was frequently indebted to the British Joint Staff Mission for copies of correspondence between the President and the Prime Minister dealing with future military operations or related matters."[99] In the end, informal arrangements of this kind or new organizations overcame these gaps. Marshall best expressed his colleagues' views in a memorandum written in summer 1943:

> The U.S. Chiefs of Staff have been aware for a long time of a serious disadvantage under which they labor in their dealings with the British Chiefs of Staff. Superficially, at least, the great advantage on the British side has been the fact that they are connected up with other branches of their Government through an elaborate but most closely knit Secretariat. On our side there is no such animal and we suffer accordingly . . .

In the end, Marshall proposed the creation of "some form of a Secretariat for keeping all these groups in Washington in an automatic relationship one with the other."[100]

[96] King and Whitehill, *Fleet Admiral King*, p. 368.
[97] See the discussion in Robert W. Coakley and Richard M. Leighton, *Global Logistics and Strategy 1943–1945* (Washington, 1968), pp. 91–100.
[98] Leahy, *I Was There*, p. 104.
[99] Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division* (Washington, 1951), p. 314.
[100] Memo, General Marshall for James F. Byrnes, 10 July 1943, quoted in Cline, *Washington Command Post*, p. 106.

Marshall's comments raise the broader issue of civil-military relations. The claim that the American political leaders left military alone to fight the war falls apart on close inspection. Roosevelt controlled high-level military decision-making in a variety of ways while giving the appearance of allowing the military a loose rein. British observers noted that American planners labored under greater political responsibilities than their British counterparts, and this perception was in some measure accurate. The absence of true Cabinet government and Roosevelt's tendency to bypass the State Department forced upon American generals and admirals a variety of essential political issues by default, for lack of integrated policymaking machinery along British lines. Not until the end of 1944 did a major advance occur with the creation of a State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC).[101]

At the heart of modern civil-military relations in war lies a paradox of military professionalism. On the one hand, military organizations have become extraordinarily complex and require the leadership of individuals with extensive experience and training in the art of war. On the other hand, this professional expertise supports an activity that is permeated by politics. The senior military leaders of World War II entered the war with a belief that "civilian authorities determine the 'what' of national policy and the military confine themselves to the 'how.'"[102] They accepted civilian supremacy as axiomatic; none succumbed to the pre-1918 German conception of war as the exclusive province of generals and admirals. Eisenhower's cable of 7 April 1945 to General Marshall explaining his reluctance to think of Berlin as a major military objective concludes with the revealing sentence, "I am the first to admit that a war is waged in pursuance of political aims, and if the Combined Chiefs of Staff should decide that the Allied effort to take Berlin outweighs purely military considerations in the theater, I would cheerfully readjust my plans and my thinking so as to carry out such an operation."[103] The views of the American military lay somewhere between those of Moltke and Bismarck. They believed strategy to be an autonomous art; political considerations might legitimately override purely military strategy, but purely military strategy did exist.

That view was questionable, for in the end few major American wartime decisions were purely military. That circumstance created friction but did not cripple the war effort or even embitter civil-military relations, although it later obscured a full understanding of how America had in fact waged war. In many cases Roosevelt's decisions did not involve a "political" over a "military" choice, so much as choosing the least unpleasant among several politico-military options. After the war Marshall said of Roosevelt's decision

101 Ibid., pp. 312–32; Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943–1944* (Washington, 1959), pp. 106–111.

102 Matloff, *Strategic Planning 1943–1944*, p. 110.

103 Eisenhower to Marshall, 7 April 1945, in Alfred D. Chandler, ed., *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years* (Baltimore, 1970), Vol. 4, p. 2592.

to invade North Africa in 1942: "We failed to see that the leader in a democracy has to keep the people entertained. That may sound like the wrong wording but it conveys the thought."[104] To the end, American military leaders found it hard to reconcile themselves to the fact that they could not divorce war from politics.

The American strategic decision-making apparatus was directly linked to that of the alliance with Britain, perhaps the most remarkable coalition in history. It was the American military that succeeded in establishing the Combined Chiefs of Staff organization and rooting it in Washington during the ARCADIA conference of 1941–42. The CCS soon spawned a web of Anglo-American committees to control and direct the war. Anglo-American strategic coordination developed chiefly, however, through the extraordinary connection between Roosevelt and Churchill. The President initiated the contacts upon Churchill's return to the Admiralty in 1939, and their correspondence amounted to no fewer than 950 messages from the Prime Minister and some 750 from the President – an exchange, on average, every three days. The correspondence covered a wide variety of subjects and, to the end, showed a camaraderie that was both useful and genuinely felt. Still, in Robert Sherwood's words:

> neither of them forgot for one instant what he was and represented or what the other was and represented. Actually, their relationship was maintained to the end on the highest professional level. They were two men in the same line of business – politico-military leadership on a global scale – and theirs was a very limited field and the few who achieve it seldom have opportunities for getting together with fellow craftsmen in the same trade to compare notes and talk shop. They appraised each other through the practiced eyes of professionals and from this appraisal resulted a degree of admiration and sympathetic understanding of each other's professional problems that lesser craftsmen could not have achieved.[105]

In addition to smaller visits back and forth across the Atlantic, the great wartime conferences supplied overall direction to the war. The Anglo-Americans conferred most frequently in 1943, and the four conferences that year were the longest of the war, ten days or more, remarkably protracted periods of strategic deliberation. Although the conferences varied in format and in the issues considered, several points are notable. First, throughout the war, the Combined Chiefs of Staff alternated between their own meetings and meetings in the presence of Churchill and Roosevelt, who also conducted their own private discussions. Discussions ranged over a variety of issues; a representative example is the meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 23

104 Quoted in Larrabee, *Commander in Chief*, p. 9.

105 Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, pp. 363–64. For the correspondence, see Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, 3 vols. (Princeton, 1984).

January 1943 in Casablanca.[106] At this session the assembled leaders, including Roosevelt and Churchill, discussed aid to the Soviet Union, the invasion of Sicily and Mediterranean strategy, the buildup of American forces in Britain, and the prospects of operations in Burma. The two political leaders quizzed their military advisers on production rates for various kinds of military equipment, merchant ship tonnage remaining to the Japanese, and the time required to train amphibious forces for operations against Italy. In other words, the President and Prime Minister did not confine themselves to issuing sweeping policy guidelines. Rather they were civilian leaders who believed that victory was possible only by weaving strategic decisions, thread by thread, into a cloth of their own unique design.

Once top civilian and military leaders had made strategic decisions, the services implemented them as executive agent for the JCS or the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Although the Army Air Forces were virtually an independent service in many respects, in this area they were wholly subordinate to the army. The staffs of King and Marshall were the "Washington command posts" from which theater commanders received direction. King served, as discussed previously both as commander in chief, U.S. Fleet (COMINCH), and as Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). He controlled current operations and plans primarily in the former capacity, with the office of the CNO serving to manage the raising of the naval forces.[107] The COMINCH staff was organized as a fleet headquarters and divided into intelligence, plans, operations, and readiness (or training) sections, plus a special antisubmarine unit. King kept the COMINCH office small, an establishment of barely 600 (half enlisted) throughout the entire war. In addition, with only two exceptions he rotated senior officers through the COMINCH organization, and often sent them back to the fleet after little more than twelve months in Washington. The result was a compact and efficient staff generally familiar with wartime conditions in the fleet. In addition to his other responsibilities, King conferred regularly, usually twice a month, with the Navy's principal theater commander, Admiral Chester Nimitz, and made many key personnel decisions in the Pacific.

Marshall's command post was OPD, the Operations Division of the General Staff. It too was a relatively small organization of some 200 officers divided into four main groups: strategy and policy, theater, logistics, and

106 What follows is based on JCS files, reprinted in Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington, 1941–1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington, 1968), pp. 707–19.

107 What follows is based largely on Julius August Furer, *Administration of the Navy Department In World War II* (Washington, 1959), pp. 102–70, and Robert William Love, Jr., "Ernest Joseph King," in Robert William Love, Jr., ed., *The Chiefs of Naval Operations* (Annapolis, 1980), pp. 137–80.

current.[108] Marshall rotated his officers less frequently than King. Like King, Marshall periodically conferred directly with theater commanders; but he administered guidance for the war effort chiefly through voluminous correspondence, particularly with Eisenhower. It was no coincidence that Eisenhower had served, however briefly, as the head of OPD.

Just as Roosevelt and Churchill concerned themselves with many of the details of future military operations, so did the service command posts. The operational staffs in Washington had to deal not only with high-level planning but with a constant stream of decisions concerning deployments and allocation of resources. When, for example, an OPD officer, sent to the South Pacific in 1942, reported back on the problems of army troops in New Caledonia, "a series of about a dozen interrelated staff actions resulted, dealing with everything from the activation of a new combat division to the dispatch of a mobile laundry unit."[109] On supreme occasions the Combined Chiefs of Staff did the same. The Joint Chiefs of Staff flew to London immediately after D-Day so that the CCS could be together "for major decisions on the spot in the event that Allied forces suffered serious reverses."[110]

Owing in large part to Marshall's insistence at the first Washington conference, the JCS created theater commands on the basis of unity of command. Rather than adopting the British committee system of theater control under which commanders of the different services cooperated with one another, the Americans established the principle of a single commander for each theater. This principle was amended in practice, for the navy was often unwilling to permit large naval forces to operate under army control. And in the Pacific, interservice disputes did prevent creation of a single theater command, or even two pure theater commands – Admiral Nimitz served as Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet (and hence King's direct subordinate) as well as Commander in Chief Pacific Ocean Areas.[111]

RESULTS

War was the test of America's strategy from 1920 to 1945. American strategists did not flatter themselves with the belief that they could, by their own exertions, prevent war from starting. They hoped rather to prepare forces that would enable them to bring a war to a successful conclusion. To assay their efforts, one needs to consider three different kinds of strategy in this period: *prewar strategy* – plans prepared in peacetime; *improvised strategy* –

[108] Cline, *Washington Command Post*, p. 193. There was also an executive (administrative) group and a Pan-American group, as well as several smaller committees.

[109] Ibid., p. 142.

[110] Sherwood Papers, Folder 1894, "Interview with Admiral Ernest J. King, 24–25 August 1946."

[111] The tangled question of command in the Pacific is discussed in Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years* (Washington, 1962), pp. 225–33, 240–63, 294–300, 352–63, 472–501.

campaigns devised on short notice in the war; and *planned strategy* – campaigns planned under the pressures of war but with time to mature before implementation.

The ORANGE Plan for war with Japan best exemplifies *prewar strategy*. Planners drew up ORANGE in the 1920s, modified it repeatedly through the 1930s, and ultimately replaced it with the RAINBOW Plans, first conceived in 1939.[112] The ORANGE Plan envisioned a prolonged, step-by-step return to the Philippines, the path subsequently taken by Nimitz's Central Pacific offensive in late 1943: attacks first on the Gilberts, then the Marshalls, and finally the Marianas. ORANGE did not guide American planning in 1942 and 1943 in any direct sense; new plans written in Washington determined those operations. But ORANGE served two vital purposes. First, it familiarized a generation of naval officers with the basic problems involved in prosecuting a war against Japan. Although Nimitz's subsequent claim that officers forecast all the problems involved in a war against Japan on the gaming tables at the Naval War College is overstated, there is some truth in it. Second, the requirements of ORANGE forced the navy and marine corps to confront fundamental and highly complex technical and organizational problems. During the interwar period, the marine corps began working out essential techniques for conducting amphibious landings on opposed beaches and the navy had begun to grapple with the logistical problems of a fleet operating far from its home bases.[113] In both cases, the navy and marine corps failed to find detailed solutions in the interwar period, design or procure the proper equipment, or adequately train large forces. But they had raised the problems and prepared the minds of future leaders for the broad strategic issues that they would confront.

The RAINBOW Plans, far less detailed than the ORANGE Plan, served a different purpose: the establishment of basic strategic principles, of which the most important was the identification of Germany as the main enemy.[114] It was characteristic of the strength of purpose of the President and his chief planners that they attempted to adhere to this principle even after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In practice, however, "Germany First" in the beginning proved both untenable and, in some respects, unnecessary. By the end of 1942, for example, the army had deployed roughly the same number of troops in the Pacific as in the European and Mediterranean theaters.[115]

112 On ORANGE and its importance for World War II strategy see Morton, "War Plan ORANGE," Morton, *Strategy and Command*, pp. 21–44, 434–53, Grace P. Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War Against Japan* (Annapolis, 1982), pp. 4–25.

113 See Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War: Its Theory and Its Practice in the Pacific* (Princeton, 1951), pp. 3–71, and Duncan S. Ballantine, *U.S. Naval Logistics in the Second World War* (Princeton, 1947), pp. 25–37.

114 Louis Morton, "Germany First: The Basic Concept of Allied Strategy in World War II," in Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions*, pp. 11–47.

115 See Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943–1944*, p. 555.

The flood of American war production enabled the United States to undertake simultaneous full-scale offensives in 1944 in both theaters. In 1942, the navy commissioned four new battleships and one large and eleven escort carriers; in 1943 it commissioned two more battleships and no fewer than six large, nine light, and twenty-four escort carriers.[116] As a result, sufficient forces existed to launch no fewer than four major offensives in 1944: the Central and Southwest Pacific offensives against Japan, the bomber offensive against Germany, and the invasion of Normandy, as well as lesser operations in Italy, southern France, and China.

Much of American strategy was *improvised strategy,* and here the U.S. high command performed well although it preferred, on the whole, *planned strategy* of the kind described later. The military leadership reluctantly adopted unforeseen or opportunistic operations such as the Solomon campaign of 1942, the assault on North Africa in the same year, the invasion of Italy in 1943, and the submarine campaign against the Japanese merchant marine. In August 1942, with barely a month's preparation, the marines attacked Guadalcanal and inaugurated the prolonged and brutal struggle for the Solomons. This series of battles, lasting more than six months, broke the back of Japanese air power and wrested the initiative from the enemy. It ran counter to the letter of Germany First, and although not foreseen before the war, proved a tremendous success.

In other areas the United States was less willing to seize strategic opportunities. American planners stubbornly opposed the British desire to exploit Allied success in North Africa and instead argued forcefully for an invasion of France in 1943. Similarly, the navy took nearly two years to fully discover that its submarines were more usefully employed against Japanese merchant ships than fleet units.[117] The case of the submarine offensive suggests that broad directives for a change in strategy are not enough. Within hours of Pearl Harbor the order went out to execute unrestricted submarine warfare against Japanese merchantmen. But to do so, submariners had to accept a new doctrine, overcome technical problems, and devise new tactics that included wolfpack and surface attacks.

Throughout the war *planned strategy* was supposed to be the American forte. "The overall strategic concept," a phrase beloved of American planners, won some favor with Churchill, although the British Chiefs of Staff regarded it as fatuous. Of all long-range strategy conceived during the war, the most important were the plans to invade France, defeat Japan, and bomb Germany. But all three concepts required important modifications. Much against their will, the Joint Chiefs deferred an invasion of France from 1943 to 1944. Through early 1944 long-range plans for the defeat of Japan envisioned occupation of the South China coast to secure harbors, airfields, and

[116] Millis, ed., *War Reports,* pp. 738–41.
[117] For a brief discussion, see Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun,* pp. 478–87.

access to Chinese manpower for the climactic battles on the Home Islands. The daylight bomber offensive against Germany was initially successful because it forced the Luftwaffe to come up and die, not because it destroyed German fighter production.

Yet the stubbornness with which American planners fought for their strategic conceptions had a payoff. Ultimately, Allied forces implemented these strategies even if later or in rather different form than initially envisioned – and they worked. Had American planners *not* been so rigid in their insistence on basic concepts, and had they simply acceded to the British wishes, the war might well have lasted considerably longer. In the event, the strategic biases of the two Allies complemented one other. Although compromise is rarely thought of as a sound basis for strategy, World War II casts some doubt on that aspect of conventional wisdom.

How well did American strategists assess threats to their strategy? On the whole, American planners gauged the likely reactions of their enemies reasonably well. They enjoyed the aid of superb intelligence-gathering and analytical organizations that were in high gear by 1943. But even more, they understood, as did Churchill, that the chief threat lay not in any particular Axis counterblow but in the possibility of stalemate or a prolongation of the war. After the war, Marshall recalled that the Joint Chiefs had been particularly "conscious of the morale of our forces in the Pacific – that they could not go on indefinitely in the Pacific taking heavy casualties and enduring great hardships. . . ."[118]

World War II both shaped and revealed American strategic culture as no other war with the exception of the Civil War. Two dominant characteristics stand out: the preference for massing a vast array of men and machines and the predilection for direct and violent assault. The war was, at many levels, a war of mass production fought by the country that had used that concept to forge the world's largest and most productive economy. It was neither elegant nor subtle, but it worked. A British officer who fought alongside the Americans wrote:

> The Americans were analytic. They approached warfare as they approached any other large enterprise; breaking it down to its essentials, cutting out what was superfluous, defining tasks and roles and training each man as if he was about to take an individual part in some complicated industrial process. Indeed, the American system for basic training resembled a conveyor belt, with soldiers instead of motor-cars coming off the end.[119]

He termed the result "soulless" but effective. Erwin Rommel arrived at a similar judgment on the American war effort:

> What was astonishing was the speed with which the Americans adapted themselves to modern warfare. In this they were assisted by their extraordinary sense

[118] Sherwood Papers, Folder 1899, "Interview with George Catlett Marshall, 23 July 1947."
[119] Shelford Bidwell, *The Chindit War* (New York, 1979), p. 45.

> for the practical and material and by their complete lack of regard for tradition and worthless theories. . . . European generals could certainly have executed the invasion [of Normandy] with the forces available, but they could never have prepared it – neither technically, organizationally, nor in the field of training.[120]

The most successful American commanders believed that an intimate link existed between the nature of American society as manifested in the economy and America's preferred way of war: "The Americans, as a race, are the foremost mechanics in the world. America, as a nation, has the greatest ability for mass production of machines. It therefore behooves us to devise methods of war which exploit our inherent superiority."[121] At a time when critics belabor American military leaders for being "managers" rather than "warriors," it is wise to remember that a certain kind of managerial skill produced victory in 1945. Churchill's physician, Lord Moran, observed in Marshall "that remarkable gift for organization which is everywhere behind American production. But I would not call it a work of genius."[122] He was wrong in that last remark; what Marshall had and typified was a certain, no doubt limited, kind of genius, but genius nonetheless.

On the whole, American strategy was a resounding success. Decision-makers, especially Roosevelt, achieved their objectives, although the full fruits of their accomplishment became visible only in succeeding decades. The end of the war and the years to follow brought the defeat of the Axis Powers and their rehabilitation, the establishment of an open world order outside the Communist bloc, and the restoration of free institutions to some countries and their introduction to others. In winning the war, America suffered nowhere near as heavily, in lives, material, or psychological trauma as any of the other participants; indeed, victory in 1945 transformed the United States within less than five years into the unquestioned leader of the noncommunist world. Although better outcomes are conceivable, it is difficult to see how different American strategic choices could have brought the war to an end more than a few months earlier or prevented the communization of Eastern Europe and China. Americans – and many other peoples – are the beneficiaries today of the strategies constructed and implemented with such success nearly half a century ago. If innocence gave birth to those strategies, it was a peculiarly providential brand of innocence.

[120] B. H. Liddell Hart, ed., *The Rommel Papers*, Paul Findlay trans. (New York, 1953), pp. 521–23.
[121] George S. Patton, *War As I Knew It* (Boston, 1947), p. 366.
[122] Moran, *Churchill: The Struggle for Survival 1940–1965* (Boston, 1966), p. 120.