

Certainty is Illusion: The Myth of Strategic Guidance

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Certainty is Illusion: The Myth of Strategic Guidance, by Lt Col Matthew C. Gaetke, 61 pages.

It is axiomatic to military officers that civilian leaders will provide clearly defined, achievable, ends-oriented strategic guidance to inform military planning, springing from a completed strategy to achieve policy goals. This model of the strategic guidance process forms a strategic guidance mythos, reinforced by Samuel Huntington's model of objective civilian control of the military and the Weinberger-Powell doctrine for the use of force. It is further codified in joint doctrine. The mythos is normative, implying successful military operations depend on the clarity of strategic guidance. It includes World War II and the 1991 Gulf War as exemplars of such strategic clarity. Unfortunately, analysis of these two cases reveals something very different: the mythos is an ahistorical myth.

Instead of the clear guidance of the mythos, the guidance processes from World War II (from Pearl Harbor to Operation Torch, specifically) and the Gulf War demonstrate a very different relationship between strategic guidance and military planning. In reality, guidance was more like general principles governing operations than clear objectives. It impacted ways and means, instead of only providing ends. Rather than flowing from a completed strategy, it emerged through a continuous conversation, informed by military planning as much as it guided that planning. These characteristics describe guidance as fact, rather than guidance as an unrealistic ideal. Accepting this fact would support better methods of military planning and better patterns of strategic thought. Such strategic thinking must replace the military's dependence on an unrealistic myth of strategic guidance.

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Introduction

The language of judicial decision [and, one assumes, of strategy] is mainly the language of logic. And the logical method and form flatter that longing for certainty and for repose which is in every human mind. But certainty generally is illusion, and repose is not the destiny of man.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., “The Path of the Law”

War is politics. This descriptive—not normative—claim of Carl von Clausewitz’ means war is not a separate sphere, connected to the polity by objectives and end states.¹ Instead, like the world on its turtles, war is politics all the way down.² If democracies require civilian control of their militaries, this means the guidance of civilian leaders governs war all the way down. But what form does this guidance take? At lower echelons of military command, subordinates expect to receive clear direction from above. Planning at these levels is an exercise in rational decision-making, thinking backward from an assigned objective, selecting among ready-made solutions to accomplish it. Simple enough, but does that work at the highest military levels, those guided most directly by civilian leaders? Does strategic guidance from political leaders facilitate the same pattern of planning?

If so, the strategy process itself would have to operate very much like a higher headquarters’ military planning process, operating ahead of the subordinate government agencies’ planning and generating clear guidance for their supporting plans to wield the instruments of national power. Calls for strategic clarity in present crises and condemnation of unclear guidance

¹ “War is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument.” Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 87.

² The old lady tells the scientist that the world is a flat plate on the back of a tortoise. But “‘what is the tortoise standing on?’ ‘You’re very clever, young man . . . but it’s turtles all the way down!’” Stephen W. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 1.

in the wake of military operations gone awry are artifacts of this presupposition. No shortage exists. Eight days after the attacks on September 11, 2001, *The Guardian* cautioned that while considering options to respond in Afghanistan, US and allied leaders cannot “send our soldiers on missions that lack clear short and long-term objectives, achievable targets, and workable exit strategies.”³ Reacting to gains by the so-called Islamic State in 2014, Representative Brett Guthrie called on President Barack Obama for a “definitive and long-term strategy” toward “victory [and] a path toward lasting peace.”⁴ Both demands for strategic clarity typify larger choruses.

Similarly, analysis of past military efforts centers on the guiding objectives and end states. Ronald Spector wrote of strategic guidance “until the eve of the Second World War, the armed services of the United States lacked strong and consistent policy guidance from political leaders.”⁵ Frederick Kagan cautioned that the “first task [before a war] should be determining what the political end-state should look like in as much detail as possible.”⁶ Harry Summers’ critique of the Vietnam War concluded that “if we don’t have the firm objectives, if we don’t know where we are going, it is impossible to determine when we get there. That was one of the

³ “Leading Article: A Perilous Proposition: Military Action must have Clear Objectives,” *The Guardian*, September 19, 2001, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/245732222?accountid=28992>.

⁴ Congressman Brett Guthrie, “President Must Outline Clear Strategy for Victory,” September 10, 2014, accessed February 3, 2015, <http://guthrie.house.gov/latest-news/guthrie-president-must-outline-clear-strategy-for-victory/>.

⁵ Ronald Spector, “The Military Effectiveness of the US Armed Forces, 1919-39,” in *Military Effectiveness*, vol. 2, *The Interwar Period*, ed. Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 78.

⁶ Frederick W. Kagan, *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006), 369.

major problems.”⁷ In fact, he continued that “prior to any future commitment of US military forces, our military leaders must insist that the civilian leadership provide tangible, obtainable political goals.”⁸ H. R. McMaster wrote that the Johnson administration “deliberately avoided clarifying its policy objectives” in Vietnam and “became fixated on the means rather than on the ends,” losing the war “even before the first American units were deployed.”⁹ Hew Strachan—stretching the utility of strategic guidance—blamed the civil-military squabble resulting in the sacking of General Stanley McChrystal on “the lack of an effective and clear strategy for Afghanistan.”¹⁰ Critiques of ill-defined strategic objectives in past military operations are plentiful. Strategic clarity, it would seem, is uncommon but essential.

When found, clear strategic objectives set the stage for positive outcomes, commentators argue. Gideon Rose prescribed that “the political objective of any war should be framed clearly in practical terms directly relevant to the case at hand and defined in such a way as to fit comfortably within the country’s broader grand strategy.”¹¹ General Rupert Smith cautioned “for force to be effective the desired outcome of its use must be understood in such detail that the context is defined.”¹² Colin Gray argued, “a strategist can only orchestrate engagements

⁷ Colonel Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1982), 248.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁹ H. R. McMaster, *Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Lies That Led to Vietnam* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1998), 332-34.

¹⁰ Hew Strachan, “Strategy or Alibi? Obama, McChrystal, and the Operational Level of War,” *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 52, no. 5 (September 2010): 178.

¹¹ Gideon Rose, *How Wars End: Why We Always Fight the Last Battle; A History of American Intervention from World War I to Afghanistan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2011), 285.

¹² General Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 409.

purposefully for the political objective of the war if the war has a clear political objective.”¹³ Fred Ikle reported, “the first lesson of Vietnam is that American forces must not be committed to combat without a clear military strategy.”¹⁴ Such proponents of strategic clarity tend to hold up World War II and the Gulf War as counterexamples to the negative trend—successful wars fought under the epitome of clear strategic guidance. Dennis Drew and Donald Snow said, “American objectives in World War II provide an excellent example of well-defined, consistent, and widely supported objectives.”¹⁵ After condemning strategic objectives in Korea and Vietnam, they conclude the objectives for the Gulf War were “clear-cut and constant,” and caution “success without clear objectives amounts to little more than good fortune.”¹⁶ Dominic Caraccilo recounted how World War II “clearly had a direction for closure or an endstate [sic]” while the strategic guidance for the Gulf War “is an example of success in terms of an exit strategy and perhaps should be used as a model for others to follow.”¹⁷ George H. W. Bush wrote of public unhappiness with “the way the Vietnam War had been fought,” saying after the Gulf War, “now this had been put to rest and American credibility restored.”¹⁸ William Allison wrote that the Gulf War with “clear and just objectives . . . was more suited to American tastes” than other post-Cold

¹³ Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 44.

¹⁴ Fred Charles Ikle, *Every War Must End*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), x.

¹⁵ Dennis M. Drew and Donald M. Snow, *Making Twenty-First-Century Strategy: An Introduction to Modern National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, 2006), 14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-17.

¹⁷ Dominic J. Caraccilo, *Beyond Guns and Steel: A War Termination Strategy* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011), 7.

¹⁸ George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 486.

War conflicts.¹⁹ As a final example, US Air Force General (retired) Michael Loh wrote that the Gulf War was “the only major war since World War II that ended in victory . . . in sharp contrast to our two major wars waged since then . . . both marked by unclear military objectives.”²⁰ Beatification of these two examples reflects the received wisdom of military officers, who are taught early that the strategic clarity achieved in these cases led to their successful conclusion. In these conflicts, the legend goes, political leaders handed the military simple objectives and allowed them wide latitude to accomplish them. Once accomplished, these objectives brought about the goal of policy: the unconditional surrender of axis powers and the ejection of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. If future strategic guidance could be as clear, future operations would go just as well.

These perspectives represent the military’s strategic guidance mythos—a pattern of beliefs expressing the prevalent attitude of a certain group.²¹ According to its proponents, when the guidance meets this standard, operations go well. When it fails to meet the standard, operations go poorly. But the question remains, does the mythos reflect historical strategic guidance?

This study conducts a historical experiment to test the hypothesis that the mythos sets a realistic expectation for strategic guidance for military operations. It begins by determining the characteristics of guidance that would reflect the military’s mythos. It then tests the hypothesis

¹⁹ William Thomas Allison, *The Gulf War, 1990-91* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 155.

²⁰ General Michael Loh (Retired), “Commentary: Apply Desert Storm Lessons to Islamic State Campaign,” DefenseNews, March 9, 2015, accessed March 9, 2015, <http://www.defense news.com/story/defense/commentary/2015/03/09/commentary-apply-desert-storm-lessons-islamic-state-campaign/24641819/>.

²¹ Merriam-Webster, “Mythos,” Merriam-Webster Incorporated, accessed January 26, 2015, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mythos>.

against two strategic guidance processes: World War II (from Pearl Harbor to the Operation Torch landings on North Africa) and the Gulf War (Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm). Instead of assessing the guidance against the military's mythos, however, this study tests whether the mythos is historically realistic. Disproving the hypothesis requires demonstrating that guidance in either case fails to meet the standard of the mythos. This would mean the mythos is not historically grounded, and therefore unlikely to reflect future guidance. On the other hand, if both cases clearly meet the standard, this would support the hypothesis but not prove it. Doing so would require analysis across a complete set of cases. This study, rather than performing such a horizontal analysis, more deeply analyzes the two cases, illuminating more completely each strategic guidance process.

This evaluation reveals that the planning guidance in both cases fails to reflect the mythos. The guidance in both was less defined, less achievable, and less reflective of a completed strategy than the mythos would suggest. In both, guidance impinged on ways and means rather than merely providing ends and emerged gradually, rather than being presented up front. Since these two cases—again, according to legend—represent the epitome of strategic guidance to the military, the substantial difference between them and the mythos demands jettisoning the mythos. The guidance mythos is an ahistorical myth. If history provides any insight into future strategic guidance for operational planning, the military must come to grips with a different expectation of this guidance.

The Standard for Strategic Guidance: the Guidance Mythos

Analysis of the hypothesis that historical strategic guidance informs the military's guidance mythos requires more precisely defining that mythos. Three particular perspectives provide the best insights into the military's concept of strategic guidance: Samuel Huntington's model of objective civil-military relations, the Weinberger/Powell Doctrine, and current joint

doctrine. Each of these contributes to the military's vision of the ideal strategic guidance it expects to receive. Combining these perspectives reveals the guidance mythos: defined, achievable, and ends-oriented guidance, reflecting an antecedent, completed strategy.

The dominant theory of political-military relations, espoused by Samuel Huntington in *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, argues for separating military officers from politics and connecting the military sphere to the separate political world only through formal guidance. He calls his system "objective" civilian control of the military.²² The military should receive political guidance from "the statesman," and follow it even when it "runs violently counter to . . . military judgment."²³ Civilian policymakers, on the other hand, should confine themselves to the ends of national policy while the military should decide the ways.²⁴ The ability to provide these ends implies that statesmen would have previously crafted a completed strategy, from which the ends would flow. The appeal of this firm separation of military and political spheres—deferring to the military over how to accomplish assigned objectives—had particular sway after a military failure that was blamed largely on strategy.

In an effort to preclude American involvement in another Vietnam War, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger outlined a doctrine for the use of military force. Among other requirements, political leaders should only dispatch US forces with "clearly defined political and military obligations."²⁵ General Colin Powell, while Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

²² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), 83.

²³ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 262.

²⁵ Caspar W. Weinberger, Speech to the National Press Club, November 28, 1984, quoted in Walter LaFeber, "The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine," *Political Science Quarterly* 124, no. 1 (Spring 2009): 73.

reiterated many of Weinberger's principles. He wrote that the first question before employing force should be "is the political objective . . . important, clearly defined and understood?"²⁶ From that political objective, policymakers assign "clear and unambiguous objectives . . . to the armed forces" that mesh with diplomatic and economic policies.²⁷ He criticized sending Marines to Lebanon in 1983 "with an unclear mission they [could not] accomplish" and the bombing of Libya in 1986, where the objective was "something short of winning."²⁸ Powell and Weinberger envisioned strategists first completing their strategy to achieve a political aim, and then doling out objectives to the agencies responsible for its implementation. This model minimizes uncertainty for the military, serving its organizational interests by insulating it from accountability for strategic ends.

Receiving clear guidance up front and then achieving it certainly stands in the military's interest as an institution. Facing an uncertain enemy among an uncertain population in an uncertain environment, the military balks at an uncertain purpose. Paul Hammond described how all government agency administrators, including military planners and leaders, retain accountability to political leaders but confront this considerable uncertainty. They therefore have an incentive to reduce this uncertainty by seeking clear guidance. Hammond called this "putting first things first."²⁹ As an institution, the military benefits when it wins victories. Achieving a victory first requires clearly defining what victory means through guidance. Employed for

²⁶ Colin L. Powell, "US Forces: Challenges Ahead," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 5 (Winter 1992): 38.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 39-40.

²⁹ Paul Y. Hammond, "The Development of National Security Strategy in the Executive Branch: Overcoming Disincentives," in *Grand Strategy and the Decisionmaking Process*, ed. James C. Gaston (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1992), 3, 10.

vacillating purposes on the other hand, the military institution cannot claim victory and receive its rewards. Aligned with Huntington, Weinberger, Powell, and its institutional advantage, it is not surprising that military doctrine calls for clear guidance.

Joint planning doctrine outlines the military's expectations for strategic guidance, providing an officially sanctioned expression of the mythos. To set the stage, the "Strategic Direction" chapter of Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning*, begins with the statement: "joint planning is end state oriented."³⁰ Guidance "should define what constitutes 'victory' or success."³¹ Immediately these statements reduce uncertainty for military planners, comforting them that operational planning occurs only after policymakers have completed their strategy. *Joint Operation Planning* also describes the form military planners should expect strategic guidance to take: an expression of end states, objectives, and termination criteria. Strategic end states are a "set of required conditions that defines achievement of the commander's objectives."³² According to military doctrine, policymakers should formulate these strategic end states "with suitable and feasible national strategic objectives that reflect US national interests."³³ End states logically connect to the separate doctrinal idea of termination criteria, which "describe the standards that must be met before conclusion of a joint operation."³⁴ Doctrine tells planners that "knowing when to terminate military operations and how to preserve achieved advantages is

³⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Operation Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), II-1.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xx.

³² Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), GL-9.

³³ JP 5-0, II-19.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, III-19.

key to achieving the national strategic end state” as well as “[developing] the military end state and objectives.”³⁵ Both end state and termination criteria refer to objectives which provide a third pillar of strategic guidance. An objective is “the clearly defined, decisive, and attainable goal toward which every operation is directed.”³⁶ “Objectives describe what must be achieved to reach the end state” and should “establish a goal,” “link directly or indirectly to . . . the end state,” be “prescriptive, specific, and unambiguous,” and should “not infer ways and/or means.”³⁷ Obviously, these definitions rely on each other.

The concepts of end states, termination criteria, and objectives form a logical circle, but together they provide a perspective on the military’s guidance mythos. The mythos includes clearly defined and achievable guidance. It anticipates guidance prescient to the end of military operations, meaning the guidance must reflect a completed strategy. Furthermore, the mythos expects political leaders to have completed this strategy and be ready to issue the guidance it provides before military planning commences. The mythos expects that guidance not impinge on ways and means nor unnecessarily constrain the military. Instead, it expects guidance to orient on ends. As a War Department memorandum proposed to General George C. Marshall, US Army Chief of Staff, in 1940, “civilian authorities should determine the ‘what’ of national policy, and professional soldiers should control the ‘how,’ the planning and conduct of military operations.”³⁸

³⁵ JP 5-0, III-18–III-19.

³⁶ Ibid., III-20.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ War Plans Division, Memorandum for Chief of Staff, July 23, 1940, no subject, War Plans Division 635-50, quoted in Ray S. Cline, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, United States Army in World War II: The War Department, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1951), 44.

Doctrine also provides insight into the military's expectation of guidance formulation and clarifies the extent to which planning methods require guidance. It explains that "clear strategic guidance and frequent interaction among senior leaders and planners promote an early, shared understanding of the complex operational problem presented, strategic and military end states, objectives, mission, planning assumptions, considerations, risks, and other key guidance factors."³⁹ Recognizing the process as interactive permits the military to play a role in forming guidance. Still, doctrine puts the responsibility for developing end states on the president, secretary of defense, and chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, "with appropriate consultation with additional [National Security Council] members, other [US government] agencies, and multinational partners."⁴⁰ Nevertheless, while the military's Adaptive Planning and Execution System allows for a discussion and clarification of strategic objectives and end states with senior civilian leaders, it requires a decision on guidance before it can move forward.⁴¹ The military's planning methodology assumes clear guidance, depending as it does on the mythos.

Huntington, Weinberger, and Powell, and joint doctrine all provide insights into the military's guidance mythos. Though doctrine allows for a two-way conversation between senior military leaders and civilian officials, the joint planning model requires definitive strategic guidance as a process input. By the end of the conversation when planning truly begins, the military's guidance mythos expects defined, achievable, and ends-oriented guidance, reflecting an existing, completed strategy. On the other hand, while Hammond provided a theory for why the military seeks clear guidance, he also explained why civilian leaders might be reluctant to provide

³⁹ JP 5-0, II-1.

⁴⁰ Ibid., II-19.

⁴¹ Ibid., II-19–II-20.

it. Political leaders face political accountability and cannot distance themselves from responsibility, even in the face of uncertainty. The president may need to change goals quickly, alter commitments incrementally, and interpret purposes differently to different audiences.⁴² This study does not attempt to analyze why guidance may meet or fail to meet the standard of the mythos. Instead, it treats the president's decisions as a black box, only examining the guidance that emerged to determine whether it adheres to the mythos. Does the mythos represent history? Nevertheless, the tug of Hammond's disincentives to presidential clarity leaves an unmistakable fingerprint on the cases of World War II and the Gulf War.

Historical Experiments: Evaluating the Mythos

Even if the military's guidance mythos furthers its own interests and finds support in theory, it should still reflect historical experience. The mythos considers World War II and the Gulf War as exemplars in which civilians provided clear guidance to the military and took a hands-off approach during execution, leading to victory. If true, this supports the hypothesis. These two cases provide opportunities to test the mythos against the historical record. They allow an experiment to determine if the military's expectations of guidance—condensed from the mythos—has an historical grounding. To confirm the hypothesis, both of these cases should clearly reveal guidance conforming to the mythos. In actuality, neither does so. Each case exhibits the guidance process as a two-way conversation that produces direction but also departs from the mythos. Where guidance aligned with the mythos would minimize the military's uncertainty while also minimizing unnecessary constraints, both cases include planning in the face of considerable policy uncertainty and under questionable constraints. The guidance in both cases emerged only late in the planning process, flirted with achievability, constrained ways and

⁴² Hammond, 10-14.

means, and reflected a strategic process emerging throughout the planning, rather than an antecedent strategy.

Experiment #1: Operation Torch

While the United States did not anticipate the attack on Pearl Harbor, planners did not start from scratch on December 7, 1941. Strategic conferences with Great Britain in early 1941 and the subsequent Rainbow 5 plan outlined a basic strategy for fighting World War II: the allies would fight “Germany first” while maintaining a defensive against Japan in the Pacific.⁴³ Nevertheless, the attack on Pearl Harbor and rapid Japanese advances scuttled much of the deliberate plan. Both domestic and international political realities changed in the wake of the attack. Strong differences of opinion emerged between American and British military leaders despite continuous face-to-face conferences. Broad initial guidance allowed these differences to fester until they forced political leaders to issue additional guidance after months of delay. Between Pearl Harbor and the Operation Torch invasion of North Africa, strategic guidance failed to live up to the military’s mythos.

Immediately following Pearl Harbor, initial responses by the US military were reactive, governed by immediate, tactical considerations rather than strategic calculus. President Franklin D. Roosevelt offered something like policy guidance in his speech to Congress on December 8, 1941 calling for absolute victory over Japan.⁴⁴ Despite the pre-war “Germany first” strategy, the United States faced a weakened Pacific fleet, a Japanese invasion of the Philippines, and rumored

⁴³ Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans 1941-1945: The Test of Battle* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1997), 16-18.

⁴⁴ James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 166.

Japanese attacks on the West Coast and the Panama Canal.⁴⁵ Under these conditions, focusing on Europe to the detriment of the Pacific was intolerable to US military and the domestic audiences. Roosevelt faced mounting political pressure to address Japan.⁴⁶ Recognizing the Pacific pull, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill headed to Washington to confer on strategy, hoping to ensure the United States would comply with “Germany first.”⁴⁷ The conference, known as Arcadia, lasted from December 24, 1941 until January 14, 1942.

On December 26, 1941, the third meeting of the Arcadia conference debated the potential of allied landings in Northwest Africa, codenamed Operation Gymnast. The objective was establishing a base at Casablanca in French Morocco, and then expanding into Spanish Morocco to block a German advance through Spain before extending allied control across North Africa.⁴⁸ During the final Arcadia meeting on January 14, 1942, the combined chiefs of staff, the top allied military leaders, accepted a staff study of the timing considerations for Gymnast.⁴⁹ The scheme was possible by May 25, assuming it received top priority for shipping.⁵⁰ US Army Chief of Staff

⁴⁵ Mark M. Lowenthal, *Leadership and Indecision: American War Planning and Policy Process; 1937-1942*, vol. 2 (New York: Garland, 1988), 720; Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare: 1941-1942*, United States Army in World War II: The War Department, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1951), 80.

⁴⁶ Burns, 171-175.

⁴⁷ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 3, *The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 641-643.

⁴⁸ US Serial ABC-4/2, Annex 2 to the minutes of Joint Combined Chiefs of Staff session (JCCSs)-3, December 26, 1941, in Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Proceedings of the American-British Joint Chiefs of Staff Conferences Held in Washington, DC on Twelve Occasions between December 24, 1941 and January 14, 1942*, in *World War II inter-allied conferences*, CD-ROM (Washington, DC: Joint History Office, 2003), 1. Hereafter referred to as *Arcadia Proceedings*.

⁴⁹ Minutes of JCCSs-12, January 14, 1942, in *Arcadia Proceedings*, 3.

⁵⁰ US ABC-4/2A, British WW-17, British WW (JPC) 2A, Annex 1 to the minutes of JCCSs-12, January 14, 1942, in *Arcadia Proceedings*, 1-4.

General George Marshall told Roosevelt that the timing also assumed an invitation from the French government in Morocco.⁵¹

Additionally, the combined chiefs approved a statement of American-British Grand Strategy on December 31, 1941.⁵² The strategy reemphasized the “Germany-first” approach despite Japan’s advance in the Pacific saying, “once Germany is defeated, the collapse of Italy and the defeat of Japan must follow.”⁵³ It provided for only “safeguarding . . . vital interests in other theaters” with “the minimum of force necessary.”⁵⁴ Vital interests in the Pacific were “the security of Australia, New Zealand, and India,” “the Chinese war effort,” and the security of bases for a future offensive against Japan.⁵⁵ Finally, while admitting that an allied land attack on Germany “does not seem likely” in 1942, the statement projected a 1943 attack either “across the Mediterranean, from Turkey into the Balkans, or by landings in Western Europe.”⁵⁶ The statement therefore anticipated but did not resolve the central strategic debates of the next six months.

The Arcadia conference was ostensibly a perfect opportunity for crafting strategic guidance. For three weeks, senior US and British military leaders met consistently in close proximity to the president and prime minister with strategy on top of everyone’s mind.

⁵¹ Marshall to Roosevelt, January 9, 1942, in Larry I. Bland, ed., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3, *The Right Man for the Job: December 7, 1941-May 31, 1943* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 51.

⁵² Minutes of JCCSs-7, December 31, 1941, in *Arcadia Proceedings*, 2-3.

⁵³ US ABC-4/CS 1, British WW-1 (final, approved document), Annex 1 to the minutes of JCCSs-7, December 31, 1941, in *Arcadia Proceedings*, 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

Nevertheless, the conference adjourned without addressing significant strategic questions. First, much of the agenda had focused on immediate measures dictated by the circumstances rather than global strategy. More importantly, the approved global strategy only expressed agreement that “the Atlantic and European area was considered to be the decisive theater.”⁵⁷ The conference did not decide how or where the allies would take the fight to Germany or how much effort to expend on safeguarding vital interests in the Pacific.

Unbound by clear guidance, American and British military leaders formed three divergent camps by March: the US Army favoring an attack from Britain into Western Europe (Operation Roundup), the British supporting a peripheral campaign to weaken Germany before a direct attack, and the US Navy favoring the Pacific. In fact, US Navy planners wanted to scrap the “Germany first” strategy entirely.⁵⁸ The British preferred collapsing German capability and will before striking across the Channel to the Ruhr in 1943.⁵⁹ US Army planners on the other hand “rejected not only operations in North Africa and Libya but even the idea that this area was part of the European theater.”⁶⁰ Despite ongoing efforts to shore up the Pacific, Marshall turned to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, then chief of the operations division, to begin investigating a more direct approach.

Eisenhower favored an attack toward Berlin through France to take pressure off the Soviets on the eastern front and win the war. The peripheral plan especially frustrated US Army

⁵⁷ US ABC-4/CS 1, British WW-1 (final, approved document), Annex 1 to the minutes of JCCSs-7, December 31, 1941, in *Arcadia Proceedings*, 1.

⁵⁸ Cline, 146-147.

⁵⁹ Ross, 28-29.

⁶⁰ Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 71.

planners. In a draft memorandum for Marshall, probably from late February, Eisenhower stated the first offensive against the axis must take place through Western Europe to Germany, or, failing that, “we must turn our *backs* upon the Eastern Atlantic and go, full out, as quickly as possible, against Japan!”⁶¹ The formal report, sent to Marshall on February 28, emphasized “early initiation of operations that will draw off . . . sizable portions of the German Army” from the Soviet front, calling for an attack by late summer.⁶² Despite the audacious goals, however, US Army planners realized how few troops the United States could assemble in Britain in 1942 and that any land offensive in Europe would be predominantly a British affair.⁶³ In any case, keeping the Soviets in the war was crucial, as Marshall emphasized to his American colleagues on March 7.⁶⁴

While subordinate planners could not agree, Marshall convinced the US Joint Chiefs and then the British to consider a cross-Channel invasion, although the agreement meant less than he hoped. Joint US planners reached an impasse by March 14, urging the joint chiefs to “at once decide on a clear course of action.”⁶⁵ Instead, the chiefs walked a careful line, agreeing it was “preferable” to meet existing commitments in the Pacific but simultaneously “to begin to build up in the United Kingdom forces intended for offense at the earliest practicable time.”⁶⁶ While the

⁶¹ Eisenhower to Marshall, February, 1942, in Alfred D. Chandler, ed., *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 145-148. Emphasis in original.

⁶² Ibid., 149-155.

⁶³ Cline, 150.

⁶⁴ Minutes of 4th meeting of Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), March 7, 1942, in Paul Kesaris, ed., *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Part I, 1942-1945*, Meetings, Microfilm Project (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America Inc., 1980), 3.

⁶⁵ Cline, 152; Matloff and Snell, 159-162.

⁶⁶ Minutes of 6th meeting of JCS, March 16, 1942, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 3.

argument had been predicated on an inability to do both, the agreement was essentially to do just that. Marshall's staff quickly completed a plan for a cross-Channel invasion of France by April 1, 1943, including an emergency option as early as September 1942 to prevent a Soviet collapse.⁶⁷ Roosevelt approved the concept on April 2 and dispatched Marshall to London to present it to Churchill.⁶⁸ Feeling he was within reach of strategic clarity, Marshall met with Churchill and the British Chiefs and by April 14, believed he had their agreement.⁶⁹ Eisenhower naively rejoiced, "at long last . . . we are all definitely committed to one concept of fighting."⁷⁰ Despite the agreement, however, strong strategic differences remained. Churchill later wrote that he was unwilling to wait until 1943, and while he "by no means rejected the idea" of an attack on France, his first choice—now that the Americans had once again reaffirmed "Germany first"—was still the invasion of North Africa.⁷¹ Churchill saw Marshall's proposal as one option needing further study, as was *Gymnast*. Strategic clarity still eluded the military.

While Churchill played both sides, the American coalition also fractured. Admiral Ernest King, US Chief of Naval Operations, quickly objected to sending American forces to Europe before further securing the Pacific, which he viewed as being more important and more urgent.⁷² In frustration, Marshall sent a memorandum to the president on May 6, asking whether Europe or

⁶⁷ Matloff and Snell, 185-187.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 183.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 187-188.

⁷⁰ Eisenhower notes for Operations Division History, April 20, 1942, in Chandler, 260.

⁷¹ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War*, vol. 4, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 323-324.

⁷² Stoler, 77.

the Pacific took priority and seeking a “formal directive for our future guidance.”⁷³ Roosevelt’s reply was vague enough not to end the Army-Navy division over Pacific strategy.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Roosevelt was getting impatient. On the same day, he sent another memorandum urging that it was “essential that active operations be conducted in 1942.”⁷⁵ Churchill recalled that “the president was determined that Americans should fight Germans on the largest possible scale *during* 1942.”⁷⁶ The combined chiefs—with Marshall in attendance—also noted Roosevelt’s interest in “sustained operations in Europe in 1942.”⁷⁷ On June 18, Churchill and his military chiefs arrived for the Second Washington Conference. Early in the conference, Marshall circled the wagons with his staff—including Eisenhower, already named American European Theater Commander and soon to depart for Britain. Marshall, ignoring the contradiction with Roosevelt’s intent, told his staff any operation before the spring of 1943 would be impossible, “since logistic factors preclude the mounting of any attack anywhere in the world prior to that time.”⁷⁸ On the 23rd, Marshall sent Roosevelt a memorandum, which concluded “operation Gymnast has been

⁷³ Marshall to Roosevelt, May 6, 1942, in Bland, 183-185.

⁷⁴ Matloff and Snell, 218-220. Roosevelt’s memorandum for Marshall appears on 220.

⁷⁵ Franklin D. Roosevelt, Memorandum for Secretary of War/Chief of Staff Arnold, Secretary of the Navy King, and Honorable Henry Hopkins, May 6, 1942, War Department Chief of Staff, US Army 31 (SS), 1, quoted in Matloff and Snell, 221.

⁷⁶ Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 356. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁷ Minutes of Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) 24th Meeting, June 10, 1942, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 4.

⁷⁸ Minutes of an Informal Meeting between General Marshall and Members of His Staff Representing the United States War Department and Sir John Dill, General Sir A. Brooke and Major General Sir H. Ismay, held in General Marshall’s Office at 2 pm, June 19, 1942, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 1-4; Chandler, 346-347.

studied and re-studied. It is a poor substitute for [the invasion of France and is] emasculating our main blow.”⁷⁹

Churchill, however, remained focused on his strategic vision. On July 8, he reported to Roosevelt “no responsible British General, Admiral or Air Marshal is prepared to recommend [an invasion of France] as a practicable operation in 1942.”⁸⁰ He continued, “Gymnast is by far the best chance . . . here is the true second front of 1942.”⁸¹ In the meantime, at a US Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting on July 10, Marshall took aim at the British option. He said Gymnast would be “expensive and ineffectual” and said that if the British remained committed to it, the United States should “turn to the Pacific for decisive action against Japan.”⁸² He was echoing Eisenhower’s language from March. The other joint chiefs of staff members agreed and said so in a memorandum to Roosevelt.⁸³ Separately, Marshall wrote that Roosevelt should “put the proposition to the British . . . and leave the decision to them.”⁸⁴ If they insisted on Gymnast, however, the United States would reject “Germany first” and focus on the Pacific.

Roosevelt was not happy with his military leaders threatening to dissolve the strategic alliance. His aide remembered him as “quite evidently much annoyed . . . shaking his head in disapproval as he read.”⁸⁵ Roosevelt replied quickly. His “first impression [of the Pacific proposal

⁷⁹ Marshall to Roosevelt, June 23, 1942, in Bland, 248.

⁸⁰ Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence*, vol. 1, *Alliance Emerging: October 1933-November 1942* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 520.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Minutes of 24th meeting of JCS, July 10, 1942, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 1.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Marshall to Roosevelt, July 10, 1942, in Bland, 271.

⁸⁵ Captain John L. McCrea’s recollection, quoted in Stoler, 85.

was] that it is exactly what Germany hoped the United States would do following Pearl Harbor.”⁸⁶ He continued that the Pacific plan would “not affect the world situation this year or next” and “therefore, it is disapproved as of the present,” uncharacteristically adding “Commander in Chief” to his signature for emphasis.⁸⁷ Separately, he directed Marshall, King, and Harry Hopkins to go to London to work out the issue, adding once more, “I want you to know now that I do not approve the Pacific proposal.”⁸⁸ Later, he scrawled, “not approved” across a War Department draft instruction for the trip, writing that if the British rejected landings in France, Marshall should “determine another place for US troops to fight in 1942.”⁸⁹ He closed the message by expressing, “the immediate objective [was] US ground forces fighting against Germans in 1942” before again signing “Commander in Chief.”⁹⁰ Trust was low between the president and his military leaders, but Roosevelt had given clear, if broad, guidance: fight in 1942.

Marshall, King, and Hopkins arrived in London on July 18 and faced an uphill battle with the British. Outlining the American position, Eisenhower wrote that Gymnast was “strategically unsound as an operation either to support [the 1943 invasion of France] or to render prompt

⁸⁶ Roosevelt to Marshall, undated (1), in Map Room Files, Box 2, Roosevelt to Churchill, May-July 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, accessed November 2, 2014, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/mr/mr0011.pdf#search=, 80.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Roosevelt to Marshall, undated (2 and 3), in Map Room Files, Box 2, 81-82.

⁸⁹ Memorandum for Honorable Harry L. Hopkins, General Marshall, Admiral King, July 16, 1942, President’s Secretary’s File, Safe File, Box 4, George C. Marshall, April 15, 1942-1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, accessed November 23, 2014, http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/_resources/images/psf/psfa0044.pdf, 80, 77-86.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

assistance to the Russians.”⁹¹ On the other side, Churchill recalled “complete agreement” among British leaders that the “only feasible proposition appeared to be Gymnast.”⁹² After three days of fruitless meetings of the combined chiefs, Churchill announced he was ready to reject the cross-Channel option.⁹³ Eisenhower took the news particularly hard, saying it could become “the blackest day in history.”⁹⁴ Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson wrote that the “somber” news reflected the “fatigued and defeatist mental outlook of the British government.”⁹⁵ Roosevelt, less hyperbolically replied that he was not surprised and that Marshall should agree to execute any one of five alternatives, in his preferred order: a combined operation against French North Africa, an American operation against Morocco, combined operations against Norway, reinforcement of Egypt, and reinforcement of Iran.⁹⁶

Marshall and King accepted the British—and Roosevelt’s—preference for North Africa, but Marshall had one more subterfuge to try. In a memorandum for the combined chiefs, Marshall kept the door open for a 1943 cross-Channel invasion, and only allowed that the 1942 option was “not to be undertaken as a scheduled operation.”⁹⁷ Furthermore, he proposed to delay the final

⁹¹ Eisenhower to Marshall, July 17, 1942, in Chandler, 389.

⁹² Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 444.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 447.

⁹⁴ Captain Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR; Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 29.

⁹⁵ Stimson to Roosevelt, July 23, 1942, President’s Secretary’s File, Safe File, Box 4, 62-65. Roosevelt wrote that the memorandum “was not worth replying to in detail.”

⁹⁶ Matloff and Snell, 278.

⁹⁷ Marshall to British Chief of Staff, July 24, 1942, in Bland, 278.

decision on North Africa until September 15, only undertaking it if the Soviets weakened.⁹⁸ He told the combined chiefs that only if the cross-Channel invasion “becomes impracticable of successful execution, [then] Gymnast . . . seems to be the best alternative.”⁹⁹ The British Chiefs considered Marshall’s memorandum a “most poisonous document,” although agreed not to quibble over wording when they had won the larger argument.¹⁰⁰ The British Chiefs accepted Marshall’s language and presented the document to the president and prime minister.¹⁰¹ They also noted the new codename for the operation, “suggested” as usual by Churchill: Operation Torch.¹⁰²

Marshall’s victory was short-lived. Harry Hopkins, unlike Marshall and King seemed to understand Roosevelt’s intent and sent a message to the president—through British channels so US military leaders would not see it—asking Roosevelt to set a date for Torch.¹⁰³ Roosevelt responded that he wanted Torch executed by October 30, ignoring the military chiefs’ agreement to delay the decision.¹⁰⁴ There is something conspiratorial in the message Roosevelt sent to Churchill on the 27th: “the three musketeers [Hopkins, Marshall, and King] arrived safely this afternoon . . . I am, of course, very happy in the result.”¹⁰⁵ Roosevelt let Marshall try to avoid

⁹⁸ Marshall to British Chief of Staff, July 24, 1942, in Bland, 279.

⁹⁹ Minutes of CCS 32nd Meeting, July 24, 1942, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁰ Stoler, 90.

¹⁰¹ Minutes of CCS 32nd Meeting, July 24, 1942, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 5.

¹⁰² Ibid., 4; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 447.

¹⁰³ Stoler, 90; Matloff and Snell, 282.

¹⁰⁴ Memorandum for Hopkins, Marshall, and King, n.d., President’s Secretary’s File, Safe File, Box 4, 70.

¹⁰⁵ Kimball, 543-544; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 449.

North Africa but had long ago decided to follow Churchill's lead. Two of the musketeers, though, were still dragging their feet. Back in Washington at the next meeting of the combined chiefs, disagreement arose whether the president had positively decided to execute Torch, with Marshall arguing he had not.¹⁰⁶ When Roosevelt heard of the disagreement, he again quickly trumped his chiefs, saying that executing Torch was the principal objective, as soon as possible.¹⁰⁷

Now with clear guidance on a target continent for their first combined offensive, American and British planners could still disagree on the timing, scope, and objectives of Torch. British planners wanted landings along a wide front within the Mediterranean as far east as Algiers by October 7 with a subsequent advance into Tunisia. US planners resisted locating the primary landings inside the Mediterranean, placing their supply lines at risk to attacks at Gibraltar. Instead, they wanted the main effort at Casablanca on the Atlantic coast and to delay until early November for a larger effort.¹⁰⁸ Eisenhower wrote to Marshall on August 1, complaining that "there has been no . . . general agreement as to the ultimate object of the operation."¹⁰⁹ His message concluded by urging "the most serious thought be given to the mission of the entire force as conceived by the two governments" since "all planning must be based upon the basic concept."¹¹⁰ In the margin of a draft directive for Torch, Eisenhower wrote, "mission or

¹⁰⁶ Minutes of CCS 34th Meeting, July 30, 1942, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁷ Matloff and Snell, 283.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 285-286.

¹⁰⁹ Eisenhower to Marshall, August 1, 1942, in Chandler, 433.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 435.

object?” the lack of which was his primary concern.¹¹¹ He was asking, in other words, to put first things first.

On August 3, Marshall provided the mission of Torch to Eisenhower, as he saw it:

US understanding of ultimate objective Torch operation is the complete military control of North Africa extending from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. Initial, intermediate, and ultimate objective to include: the establishment of firm and mutually supporting lodgments in the Oran-Algiers-Tunis area on the north coast and in the Casablanca area on the northwest coast, in order that appropriate bases for continued and intensified air, ground, and sea operations will be available; the rapid and complete military domination of French Morocco, Spanish Morocco (if developments require such action), Algeria, and Tunisia, in order to facilitate effective air and ground operations against the enemy and to create favorable conditions for extension of offensive operations to the east through Libya against Rommel's forces; complete annihilation of Axis forces now opposing Auchinleck and intensification of air and sea operations against Axis installations in the Mediterranean area with a view to improving communications thru the Mediterranean and to facilitating air and sea operations against the Axis on the European Continent.¹¹²

Marshall cautioned, “it would be extremely dangerous to assume a passive attitude or token resistance on the part of either Spain or Vichy France.”¹¹³ For now Marshall's version of the mission focused on beating the axis to Tunisia, but this would change.

Eisenhower's staff completed an initial outline plan on August 9, but Marshall continued to doubt the wisdom of the entire enterprise. Eisenhower's plan incorporated simultaneous landings on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts and the early November date.¹¹⁴ The British Chiefs immediately objected that the plan advanced too slowly on Tunisia due to its westward

¹¹¹ Ismay to Eisenhower, August 1, 1942, in Ismay, Hastings (5) (August 1942–November 1942), Dwight D. Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers, Principal File, Box 60, Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, KS.

¹¹² Marshall to Eisenhower, August 3, 1942, Reference Number 2913, in Cables, Official (GCM/DDE July 31–November 12, 1942) (5), Dwight D. Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers, Principal File Series, Box 131.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Matloff and Snell, 287.

bias. Eisenhower stressed the importance of Tunisia to Marshall and proposed dropping Casablanca while attacking as early as possible, targeting mid-October.¹¹⁵ Marshall, however, was still ambivalent about Torch. On August 11, he told the joint chiefs of staff that among “the big issues to be decided [is] whether the major US effort was to be made in the Pacific as against Europe and the Middle East.”¹¹⁶ Considering this “issue” undecided runs in the face of both allied agreements and direct guidance from Roosevelt. On August 14, Marshall told Eisenhower the “unanimity of opinion” of the War Department was that the chances of Torch’s success were “less than 50 [percent].”¹¹⁷ Eisenhower replied, “that the operation has more than fair chances of success,” although the likelihood of successfully occupying Tunisia before the axis was “considerably less than 50 percent.”¹¹⁸ How Eisenhower could call an operation a success if it failed to accomplish its mission of beating the axis to Tunisia went unsaid.

Nevertheless, Eisenhower’s staff completed an update by August 21. Nodding to the British, it called for landings at Oran, Algiers, and Bone in the Mediterranean by October 15, but added for security “a striking force which can insure control of the Straits of Gibraltar.”¹¹⁹ The day after submitting the plan, Eisenhower wrote to the combined chiefs saying he feared the plan “is not sufficiently powerful to accomplish . . . the purpose prescribed.”¹²⁰ He stressed the

¹¹⁵ Eisenhower to Handy for Marshall, August 13, 1942, in Chandler, 461-464.

¹¹⁶ Minutes of 28th meeting of JCS, August 11, 1942, *Records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff*, 3.

¹¹⁷ Marshall to Eisenhower, August 14, 1942, in Bland, 301.

¹¹⁸ Eisenhower to Marshall, August 15, 1942, in Chandler, 469-471.

¹¹⁹ Headquarters European Theater of Operations, United States Army, Norfolk Group, Outline Plan, Operation “Torch,” August 21, 1942, in Operations–Torch–1942 (2), Dwight D. Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers, Principal File Series, Box 152.

¹²⁰ Eisenhower to Combined Chiefs of Staff, August 23, 1942, in Chandler, 488-490.

uncertainty over French and Spanish reaction, the limited escorting naval assets, and the exposed flank through Gibraltar. He continued that a more realistic date would be November 7 and advocated re-adding a landing at Casablanca with scrounged additional assets.¹²¹ Eisenhower's self-contradiction is interesting: he submitted a plan to accomplish objectives he felt the plan could not accomplish, admitting to uncertainty in both political and military areas. Meanwhile, a War Department liaison to Eisenhower's staff concluded that the outline plan was too risky, and the allies should add resources, reduce the scope of the objectives, or scrap it entirely.¹²²

The War Department took the lead examining a reduced scope for Torch. In the staff's view, if resources were insufficient for assigned objectives, the objectives must change.¹²³ Marshall forwarded a proposed new directive to Eisenhower on the 24th. The landings would move west, only at Casablanca and Oran. The objective became "control of the area including French Morocco, Spanish Morocco (if the situation requires) and Western Algeria . . . with a view of insuring complete control . . . of the entire North African Area from Rio de Oro to Tunisia."¹²⁴ Gone were references to controlling all of North Africa and reaching Tunisia before the axis, traded for more secure Atlantic supply lines. Eisenhower would later say he always favored moving all the landings inside the Mediterranean and accepting the risk at Gibraltar.¹²⁵ At the time, he responded to Marshall's proposed directive by saying it represented the lowest risk but would likely have no strategic effect. He concluded, "if the primary purpose . . . is to engage US

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Matloff and Snell, 290.

¹²³ Ibid., 291.

¹²⁴ Marshall to Eisenhower, August 24, 1942, in Bland, 316-318.

¹²⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 79.

ground forces at an early date . . . while minimizing risk of disaster . . . your proposal should be adopted . . . On the other hand if the real purpose is to take a great tactical risk in the hope of gaining a worthwhile objective, we should attack somewhat as suggested in the outline plan.”¹²⁶ Marshall, not swayed, replied that he was pushing the new directive for approval.¹²⁷

Churchill was not about to let Marshall adjust what he saw as settled strategy and took his case directly to Roosevelt. Before learning of Marshall’s plan to reduce Torch’s scope, Churchill wrote Roosevelt to suggest that they set a firm date for Torch to end the “unending hemmings and hawings” and cautioning that “careful planning in every detail, safety first in every calculation, far seeing provisions . . . to meet every conceivable adverse contingency, however admirable in theory will ruin the enterprise in fact.”¹²⁸ Later learning of Marshall’s effort, Churchill wrote Roosevelt again. He said “we are all profoundly disconcerted” and stressed the importance of a rapid push to Tunisia, the problems of tides and surf at Casablanca, and the impact of a perceived reduction in scope on agreements with Stalin.¹²⁹ Considering his reply, Roosevelt met with his joint chiefs on August 28. Marshall reported to Eisenhower that Roosevelt had “decided that the initial operations must be a purely American one” except for some British support, playing off French animosity toward the British.¹³⁰ Churchill later acknowledged the benefits of an American face on the landings but thought the difference much less than Roosevelt and Marshall believed.¹³¹ Churchill cautioned against further delay, calling the American proposal an

¹²⁶ Eisenhower to Marshall, August 25, 1942, in Chandler, 493-494.

¹²⁷ Marshall to Eisenhower, August 25, 1942, in Bland, 318.

¹²⁸ Kimball, 575-576; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 527-529.

¹²⁹ Kimball, 577-579; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 530-531.

¹³⁰ Marshall to Eisenhower, August 28, 1942, in Bland, 325-327.

¹³¹ Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 533.

“abandonment” of previous agreements, and concluding that “if we both strip ourselves to the bone” sufficient force existed to capture Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers.¹³² Throughout this discussion, Eisenhower commented that his staff was forced to “prepare for a number of contingencies.”¹³³ He felt the president and prime minister had “apparently not [realized] that failure to reach firm decisions as between themselves and firm decisions as between the two groups of chiefs of staff, made it impossible to prepare definitely for any operation.”¹³⁴ The staff worked on several plans simultaneously.

Over the next two days, Roosevelt and Churchill reached an agreement. The compromise included drawing US forces from both Casablanca and Oran to create a landing force for Algiers.¹³⁵ Marshall sent a new draft directive to Eisenhower based on that message. In this version, the “initial, intermediate, and ultimate objectives” were:

(1) landings in the Casablanca area and in the Oran-[Algiers] area, to be simultaneous if practicable... (2) Seizure of ports for the follow-up forces. (3) Rapid exploitation in order to acquire complete control of the area including French Morocco, Spanish Morocco (if the situation requires) and Western Algeria to facilitate the extension of effective air and ground operations to the eastward. (4) Combined air, ground, and sea operations with a view of insuring complete control by the United Nations of the entire North Africa area from Rio Do Oro to Tunisia inclusive and to facilitate air operations against the enemy forces and installations in the Mediterranean area.¹³⁶

¹³² Kimball, 585-586; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 534-535.

¹³³ Eisenhower to Butcher for diary, September 2, 1942, in Chandler, 525.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Kimball, 590; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 541-542.

¹³⁶ Marshall to Eisenhower, September 5, 1942, in Cables Official (GCM/DDE July 31-November 12, 1942) (4), Dwight D. Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers, Principal File Series, Box 131.

Churchill agreed on September 5, and the details were largely set.¹³⁷ Eisenhower and his staff produced another outline plan based on the new guidance by September 20 and a completed plan by October 8. It called for simultaneous, predominantly American landings at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers. The updated object was “to occupy French Morocco and Algeria with a view to the earliest possible occupation of Tunisia, and the establishment . . . of a striking force which can insure control of the Straits of Gibraltar by moving, if necessary, into Spanish Morocco.”¹³⁸

The strategic guidance for Operation Torch certainly did not spring forth from a completed strategy to defeat the axis power. Even when American and British forces splashed ashore on November 8, military leaders could not have agreed on how the operation fit into the larger strategy to defeat Germany. Churchill thought the operation contributed to his peripheral strategy to weaken Germany on the edges before the thrust at Berlin. Marshall maintained his reservations until the end, accepting Torch but looking forward to whenever Roosevelt would allow him to undertake something more decisive. The mythos anticipates guidance that nests into a completed strategy to accomplish national objectives. Even nine months after Pearl Harbor, such clairvoyance simply did not exist. The guidance for Torch achieved clear definition but only through a process of continued conversation between civilian and military leaders over the military possibilities and the civilian intent. Roosevelt’s clearest guidance—do something in 1942—was defined, although not perhaps in the way the mythos anticipates.

At times, the emerging guidance was unachievable, although this evaluation largely requires hindsight. The guidance expected the allies to beat the axis to Tunisia, but the landings

¹³⁷ Kimball, 591; Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, 542-43.

¹³⁸ Allied Force Headquarters, Outline Plan Operation Torch, October 8, 1942, in Operations–Torch–1942 (2), Dwight D. Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers, Principal File Series, Box 152.

failed in that regard. Historian Arthur Funk dismissed all of the negotiations and acrimony over guidance, as distractions from the “true strategic objective, control of Tunisia,” not obtained by Torch.¹³⁹ This failure hardly belongs to the guidance, however. No matter how ill defined or unachievable the guidance, it was military factors—Marshall’s fear of a supply line through Gibraltar in particular—that pushed the landings west, extending the campaign into 1943. Additionally, the guidance impacted ways and means; civilian leaders were not content merely to enumerate objectives and then step back. Roosevelt pushed for an American face on the mission, and he and Churchill made the ultimate decision of where to conduct the Torch landings. Further examples of Churchill’s involvement in any detail he thought would affect the war effort are legion.¹⁴⁰ In short, the mythos is not representative of the guidance process for Operation Torch. Even participants detected the anomaly. Commenting on the strategic guidance process, General Mark W. Clark remembered that it “was more than obvious that . . . military plans were completely at the mercy of political decisions” and “political factors . . . in the African campaign, were often dominant.”¹⁴¹ Waiting for a decision on where to land, Eisenhower recorded in his diary: “we are simply sailing a dangerous political sea, and this particular sea is one in which military skill and ability can do little in charting a safe course.”¹⁴² Both recognized that politics governed the planning of Torch, all the way down.

¹³⁹ Arthur Layton Funk, *The Politics of Torch: The Allied Landings and the Algiers Putsch 1942* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1974), 99.

¹⁴⁰ Eliot A. Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 95-132.

¹⁴¹ Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), 51-52.

¹⁴² Wednesday, September 2, 1942, Eisenhower Diary in Diary–Butcher (July 8–September 15, 1942 (2), Dwight D. Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers, Principal File Series, Box 165.

Experiment #2: The Persian Gulf War

Given the history from World War II, one might expect parallel ambiguity, negotiation, and maneuvering in the guidance process for the Gulf War in 1990-1991. On the other hand, the received military wisdom cites the Gulf War as a particularly decisive application of military force for particularly clear objectives. Additionally, the post-Vietnam leaders, military and civilian, in the President George H. W. Bush administration were particularly anxious to score well in civil-military relations—on the Huntington model—and strategic clarity. Bush, seeking “not to repeat the problems of the Vietnam War,” sought to avoid “[meddling] with military operations” and “micromanaging the military.”¹⁴³ Underscoring how it guided his thoughts, Bush mentions Vietnam thirteen times in his recount of the Gulf War.¹⁴⁴ Powell fervently desired only to commit military force with clear objectives and then only as a last resort.¹⁴⁵ These actors seem handpicked to put first things first. Nevertheless, the structural disincentives remained and guidance for the Gulf War, like World War II, failed to live up to the strategic guidance mythos.

Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait during the early morning of August 2, 1990. The next day, Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney met with Powell to discuss a response. Cheney began by saying “we need an objective” and considered replacing Saddam Hussein in addition to restoring the Kuwaiti emir.¹⁴⁶ Powell expressed his belief that Americans would not support a war over

¹⁴³ Bush and Scowcroft, 354; after the war, Bush told American forces that “the specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the desert sands of the Arabian Peninsula,” George H. W. Bush, “Radio Address to United States Armed Forces Stationed in the Persian Gulf Region,” March 2, 1991, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, accessed February 24, 2015, <http://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/2758>.

¹⁴⁴ Bush and Scowcroft, 302-492.

¹⁴⁵ Powell, “Challenges Ahead,” 38; Allison, 61.

¹⁴⁶ Michael R. Gordon, and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals’ War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), 33.

Kuwait, even to secure the region's oil supply, and any effort must start with diplomacy. Furthermore, he was opposed to military action without popular support, recommending obtaining a sense of public opinion. Powell reiterated this opinion at the National Security Council meeting the same morning, saying the United States needed to focus on defending Saudi Arabia, not expelling Iraq from Kuwait.¹⁴⁷ He recalled asking for clearer guidance as the meeting was ending, and Bush agreed that defending Saudi Arabia was of vital interest to the United States.¹⁴⁸ The following day, the National Security Council met again. Powell recalled asking "if it was worth going to war to liberate Kuwait." He says he had been "appalled at the docility" of military leaders during Vietnam and wanted to press "the political leaders to lay out clear objectives" by asking, "to achieve what end?"¹⁴⁹ Despite Powell's intent to press for guidance, he records that the meeting ended without answers to his questions.¹⁵⁰ On the August 5, Bush publicly stated that the Iraqi actions "will not stand."¹⁵¹ Powell—watching on television—thought the president had given him a new mission.¹⁵²

The administration busily pursued international legitimacy for its goals for a response. On August 2, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 660, demanding that Iraq "withdraw immediately and unconditionally all its forces" from Kuwait. Passed on August 6,

¹⁴⁷ Gordon and Trainor, 33-36.

¹⁴⁸ Colin L. Powell and Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995), 463; Bush and Scowcroft, 317.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Powell, *My American Journey*, 464-465.

¹⁵¹ George H. W. Bush, "Remarks and an Exchange with Reporters on the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait," August 5, 1990, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/2138>; Bush and Scowcroft, 333.

¹⁵² Powell, *My American Journey*, 467.

Resolution 661 implemented economic sanctions on Iraq until it complied with Resolution 660. On August 9 the Security Council announced it was “determined to bring the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq to an end and to restore the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Kuwait.” The flurry of resolutions continued on August 18 with Resolution 664, calling for Iraq to allow all third-state nationals to leave Kuwait freely.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, Bush announced the initial deployment of American forces to the Gulf on August 8. In his speech, he said:

four simple principles guide our policy. First, we seek the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Second, Kuwait's legitimate government must be restored to replace the puppet regime. And third, my administration, as has been the case with every president from President Roosevelt to President Reagan, is committed to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf. And fourth, I am determined to protect the lives of American citizens abroad.¹⁵⁴

Surprisingly, this represented the high-water mark in strategic guidance for the war, and these four principles only restated the broad language of the Security Council Resolutions.

Meanwhile on August 8, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., Commander-in-Chief of US Central Command turned to the Air Force staff for help developing an offensive air plan, in case the president ordered that he force Iraq from Kuwait.¹⁵⁵ To start, the air staff culled political

¹⁵³ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 660 (1990), United Nations, August 2, 1990, accessed December 6, 2014, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/660\(1990\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/660(1990)); United Nations Security Council, Resolution 661 (1990), United Nations, August 6, 1990, accessed December 6, 2014, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/661\(1990\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/661(1990)); United Nations Security Council, Resolution 662 (1990), United Nations, August 9, 1990, accessed December 6, 2014, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/662\(1990\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/662(1990)); United Nations Security Council, Resolution 664 (1990), United Nations, August 18, 1990, accessed December 6, 2014; [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/664\(1990\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/664(1990)).

¹⁵⁴ George H. W. Bush, “Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia,” August 8, 1990, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/2147>; Bush and Scowcroft, 341.

¹⁵⁵ John Andreas Olsen, *John Warden and the Renaissance of American Air Power* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007), 146; Gordon and Trainor, 76; Colonel Richard T. Reynolds, *Heart of the Storm: The Genesis of the Air Campaign against Iraq*, vol. 1 (Maxwell

objectives from presidential speeches, press conferences, and newspaper articles rather than formal memoranda.¹⁵⁶ Neither Schwarzkopf nor Powell, when briefed on the plan, questioned or elaborated on the planners' understanding of the strategic objectives.¹⁵⁷ Powell, however, directed more focus on Iraqi fielded forces in Kuwait. His intent was to destroy more armored force so Iraq would have less capacity for aggression in the future.¹⁵⁸ Operating under vague guidance, Powell had translated "security and stability" into destruction of the Republican Guard, but he did not explain his analysis nor was it sanctioned from above. Nevertheless, Powell's guidance would continue to shape planning, although he himself did not defend it later as the war ended.

In mid-August, Bush informally reiterated his strategic guidance in a speech and formally in a directive. Speaking to Department of Defense employees, the president referred to the four principles of his August 8 speech now as "our objectives," but did so in almost identical language.¹⁵⁹ Publicly at least the objectives did not include Powell's planned destruction of Iraqi armored forces. On August 20, Bush signed National Security Directive 45. It identified four "principles" that would "guide US policy during this crisis" again using language identical to both speeches.¹⁶⁰ These four principles or objectives almost exactly paralleled the combined

AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1995), 23-25; Diane T. Putney, *Airpower Advantage: Planning the Gulf War Air Campaign 1989-1991* (Washington, DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2004), 32-34.

¹⁵⁶ Olsen, 146; Gordon and Trainor, 76; Reynolds, 29; Putney, 44, 51.

¹⁵⁷ Reynolds, 53-54, 71-74; Putney, 57-59, 61-63.

¹⁵⁸ Gordon and Trainor, 84; Olsen, 164; Reynolds, 72-73; Putney, 62.

¹⁵⁹ George H. W. Bush, "Remarks to Department of Defense Employees," August 15, 1990, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/2165>.

¹⁶⁰ George Bush, National Security Directive 45, Subject: U.S. Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwaiti, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, August 20, 1990, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/nsd/nsd45.pdf>.

language of Resolutions 660, 662, and 664. National Security Directive 45 specifically ordered the military “to deter and, if necessary, defend Saudi Arabia and other friendly states in the Gulf region from further Iraqi aggression, and to enforce the . . . sanctions [of United Nations Security Council] Resolutions 660 and 661.”¹⁶¹ It provided the most formal expression of guidance for Operation Desert Shield.

On September 18, Schwarzkopf assembled his ground planning team and considered his guidance. Schwarzkopf told his planners they should not allow political constraints to restrict their planning efforts.¹⁶² Clausewitz would have raised an eyebrow. Shortly thereafter, Schwarzkopf met with US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Chas Freeman and discussed his guidance. Schwarzkopf recalled replying that US Central Command was “working in the dark” and was assuming an offensive would aim to “free Kuwait and destroy Iraq’s ability to threaten the Gulf States.”¹⁶³ This was not inconsistent with informal guidance in Bush’s speeches. Schwarzkopf’s concern was how specifically the administration wanted to accomplish the latter aim. Despite his reservations, planning continued. By early October, although not particularly comfortable with the developing plan, Schwarzkopf agreed to send staff members to Washington to brief it.¹⁶⁴ Schwarzkopf himself added a slide, however, saying an offensive attack would require another heavy corps, without which US Central Command did “not have the capability to attack on the ground.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ Bush, National Security Directive 45, 3.

¹⁶² Gordon and Trainor, 126-127.

¹⁶³ General H. Norman Schwarzkopf and Peter Petre, *It Doesn’t Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), 354-355.

¹⁶⁴ Gordon and Trainor, 128-129; Schwarzkopf and Petre, 356-359.

¹⁶⁵ Schwarzkopf and Petre, 359-360.

When US Central Command planners briefed the president on October 11, no one outside the command supported the existing ground plan, resulting in a fragmentation of planning efforts.¹⁶⁶ National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft began a review of war aims, which concluded—late in the year—that destruction of the Republican Guard but not toppling Saddam would best accomplish the United Nations Security Council Resolution policy goals.¹⁶⁷ Cheney, meanwhile, organized his own planning team of civilians and retired officers, focusing on an advance into the western desert in Iraq, threatening Baghdad and ferreting out Scud missile launchers aimed at Israel. Powell floated the idea of adding a second corps and organized his own planners from the joint staff to investigate a western envelopment of the Republican Guard.¹⁶⁸ US Central Command’s planning also continued, still focused on destroying the Republican Guard, rather than merely expelling them from Kuwait, although its focus shifted west in anticipation of a second corps.¹⁶⁹ Resenting the other planning efforts, he wondered whether Cheney was “no longer satisfied with setting policy but [wanted] to outgeneral the generals.”¹⁷⁰ He later recorded feeling “decisions in Washington would be motivated more by politics than by military reality.”¹⁷¹ Exasperated, Schwarzkopf drafted a memorandum to Powell saying he was planning “in a total vacuum of guidance” and did not “recall a time in military history when a theater

¹⁶⁶ Bush and Scowcroft, 380-381; Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 204-205.

¹⁶⁷ Bush and Scowcroft, 383-384, 432-433.

¹⁶⁸ Gordon and Trainor, 141-147; Freedman and Karsh, 205.

¹⁶⁹ Gordon and Trainor, 142-149; Schwarzkopf and Petre, 362.

¹⁷⁰ Schwarzkopf and Petre, 368.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 370.

commander has been asked to put together offensive plans . . . in a matter of a few days with no strategic guidance.”¹⁷²

On October 30, Bush met with his advisors to consider offensive options. Since late August, he had become increasingly convinced that sanctions alone would not convince Iraq to leave Kuwait.¹⁷³ Powell presented a list of additional forces required, almost doubling what was already in the Gulf, and exceeding US Central Command’s actual request. Given his sensitivity to perceived meddling in the military sphere, Bush promptly approved the request. Robert Gates, then Deputy National Security Advisor, thought Powell might have tried to bluff the president away from offensive action. Scowcroft, agreeing, judged the plans had “not seemed designed by anyone eager to undertake the task,” although Powell would deny this intent.¹⁷⁴ Separately the skepticism over sanctions prompted diplomatic efforts culminating in United Nations Security Council Resolution 678, issued November 29, authorizing “all necessary means” to implement Resolution 660 if Iraq did not comply by January 15, 1991.¹⁷⁵ With the rhetoric tipping toward war, and now with a blank check for forces, US Central Command continued to plan.

On January 10, a discussion between Secretary of State James Baker, Freeman, and Schwarzkopf demonstrated the lack of strategic clarity only five days before the deadline. Freeman remembered Baker asking what the war aims ought to be, remarking hyperbolically that

¹⁷² Schwarzkopf and Petre, 370.

¹⁷³ Bush and Scowcroft, 353.

¹⁷⁴ Gordon and Trainor, 153-155; Powell, *My American Journey*, 487-489; Bush and Scowcroft, 393-395, 431; Gates does not mention the incident in his memoir of the period, Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider’s Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 497-500.

¹⁷⁵ United Nations Security Council, Resolution 678 (1990), United Nations, November 29, 1990, accessed December 6, 2014, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/678\(1990\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/678(1990)).

Baker's not knowing showed "that there had really been no thought at all . . . to what specific results we wished to achieve from the war."¹⁷⁶ He hypothesized that the only set of objectives all the Washington policy coalitions could agree on was "the lowest common denominator of objectives set by the United Nations . . . [and] the only objective that the United Nations had really proclaimed was the liberation of Kuwait."¹⁷⁷ He felt any other objectives "would have been second-guessed in Congress, and the coalition between the Executive Branch and Congress [as well as the international coalition] . . . might have collapsed."¹⁷⁸ Freeman's insight shows Hammond's disincentives at work.

The final guidance issued by the National Security Council, National Security Directive 54, came on January 15, calling "access to Persian Gulf oil and the security of key friendly states . . . vital to US national security."¹⁷⁹ It laid out objectives parallel with National Security Directive 45 and Resolutions 660 and 662: "to effect the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait; to restore Kuwait's legitimate government; to protect the lives of Americans citizens abroad; and to promote the security and the stability of the Persian Gulf."¹⁸⁰ It further listed tasks for US and coalition forces, including to "defend Saudi Arabia"

¹⁷⁶ Ambassador Chas W. Freeman, Jr., interview with Charles Stuart Kennedy, Jr., The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project, Library of Congress, April 14, 1995, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/service/mss/mfdip/2004/2004fre01/2004fre01.pdf>, 322; James A. Baker, III, and Thomas M. DeFrank, *Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War, and Peace 1989-1992* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1995), 373, Baker mentions the conversation with Freeman but not these details of it.

¹⁷⁷ Freeman, 323.

¹⁷⁸ Freeman, 323.

¹⁷⁹ George Bush, National Security Directive 54, Subject: Responding to Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf. George Bush Presidential Library and Museum, January 15, 1991, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://bush41library.tamu.edu/files/nsd/nsd54.pdf>, 1.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

and other Gulf states; “preclude Iraqi launch of ballistic missiles;” “destroy Iraqi chemical, biological, and nuclear capabilities;” “eliminate the Republican Guards as an effective fighting force;” “break the will of Iraqi forces;” and “minimize US and coalition casualties.”¹⁸¹ Bush signed this directive on January 15, less than forty-eight hours before bombs began falling on Iraq. Earlier in the day, he had confided to his diary that he still “[had] trouble with how this ends.”¹⁸²

National Security Directive 54 did not end the political guidance, however, and questions continued to swirl. Early on January 18, Iraq launched the first of a series of salvos of surface-to-surface Scud missiles at Israel.¹⁸³ Facing strong pressure from an Israel intent on retaliation, Cheney intervened with a reluctant Schwarzkopf to make sure targeting the Scuds was a priority, trying to keep Israel out of the war and feeling the military was ignoring his guidance.¹⁸⁴ Even if initially committed to a policy of objective control, the administration readily intervened within Huntington’s military sphere as events unfolded. For his part, Schwarzkopf bristled at the “interference” from Washington.¹⁸⁵ On February 8, twenty-three days into the air war, Cheney and Powell traveled to Riyadh for a final review of the ground war plan. During the briefing Lieutenant General Frederick M. Franks, commander of VII Corps, remembers Cheney musing, “how will it all end?”¹⁸⁶ Franks recalls pausing “for a second or two, because [he] thought it was

¹⁸¹ Bush, National Security Directive 54, 2-3.

¹⁸² Bush and Scowcroft, 448.

¹⁸³ Freedman and Karsh, 332; Allison, 116.

¹⁸⁴ Gordon and Trainor, 233-235; Powell, *My American Journey*, 511-512; Freedman and Karsh, 307-309, 335-338; Allison, 116-118.

¹⁸⁵ Gordon and Trainor, 237-238; Allison, 117-118, 120.

¹⁸⁶ General Frederick M. Franks, interview with Stephen A. Bourque, “How Will It All End?: Campaign Termination and the American Experience in Iraq,” October 2014.

the theater commander's question to answer."¹⁸⁷ Operating under the mythos, Franks might more reasonably have expected the secretary to answer his own question and to have done so long before. A week later, Powell asked if Schwarzkopf could move the ground offensive earlier to preclude a Soviet peace initiative. Schwarzkopf, refusing to budge, later said, "the increasing pressure to launch the ground war early was making me crazy" and recalled accusing Powell of "pressuring me to put aside my military judgment for political expediency."¹⁸⁸ In the interim, after an incident of collateral damage, Cheney ordered Powell to personally approve targets before air attacks. Schwarzkopf again complained but acquiesced to Powell. After the incident, like in Vietnam, Washington approved targets, not commanders in the field.¹⁸⁹ Despite a last-minute attempt by Moscow to broker a deal, the ground offensive began on February 24.¹⁹⁰

Like the first experiment, the mythos fails the historical test of the Gulf War. Measuring the Gulf War guidance as a whole, the most important objective was promoting security and stability in the region, and this objective was defined—in the sense of translating it into something the military might accomplish—only very late. Equating it to destruction of the Republican Guard became official only on January 15, 1991. Without this clearer definition, the objective would have been unachievable, at least not with the quick campaign anticipated. Nevertheless, during the military planning this objective received little attention. Powell initially proposed that destroying the Republican Guard would promote stability in August. Faced with television images of the "highway of death" and asked by the president to assess progress on

¹⁸⁷ Franks.

¹⁸⁸ Schwarzkopf and Petre, 441-444; Powell, *My American Journey*, 513-516.

¹⁸⁹ Gordon and Trainor, 324-327; Powell, *My American Journey*, 513; Freedman and Karsh, 326-28.

¹⁹⁰ Bush and Scowcroft, 454-479; Allison, 123-124.

February 27, however, he did not respond that the most important objective was unmet. Instead, he proposed ending the war, thinking, “we had achieved” the “specific objective,” meaning only the proximate objective of removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait.¹⁹¹ By February, either he no longer felt destroying the Republican Guard was required for regional stability, or he ignored that most important objective.

Of the other objectives, restoring the Kuwaiti government and protecting American lives seem more like guiding principles than objectives, and little military planning effort aimed at either. Leaders from the president down fixated throughout on removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Meanwhile, civilian guidance impinged on ways and means. Cheney’s western excursion, reallocating effort toward the Scud hunt under pressure from Israel, and Pentagon approval of air targets all exhibit political penetration of the military sphere. Finally, the guidance did not emanate from a completed strategy prior to military planning. The four strategic principles did not change throughout, but in August when initial forces deployed, the strategy to realize them was far from complete. Like in World War II, it emerged through a conversation, informed in part by military planning efforts. Only after planning was complete for the air campaign and nearly so for the ground attack, did the guidance approximate the mythos. However, when pressed, it left achieving a more stable and secure region largely up to chance.

Experimental Results

The mythos failed to predict the actual strategic guidance in either World War II or the Gulf War; the hypothesis fails both historical experiments. The military’s expectation of guidance—the guidance mythos—demands defined, achievable, and ends-oriented guidance, reflecting an existing, completed strategy. While in both case studies, strategic guidance at times

¹⁹¹ Powell, *My American Journey*, 519-521.

exhibited one or more of these qualities; it never reflected the mythos intact, at least not in time to guide planning. Since these cases are the “good” cases according to legend, their failing to meet the standard set by the mythos puts the mythos on notice. Instead of demanding the strategic guidance it might want, the military should prepare for the guidance history should lead it to expect, exemplified in these two cases.

Strategic Principles not Strategic Objectives

First, strategic guidance seems more a guide for action than a clearly defined expression of an obviously achievable objective. During World War II, Marshall and Eisenhower operated for more than half of 1942 with incomplete strategic guidance. The “Germany first” guidance was insufficiently specific to adjudicate force levels in the Pacific in the face of continued Japanese pressure. The clearest expression of Roosevelt’s intent was his admonition to do “something” in 1942, and that came only in mid-July. His intent was clear, although this guidance hardly matches the mythos’s anticipation of clearly defined strategic objectives. The Gulf War objectives also mixed clarity with opacity. The objective of immediate withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait received the highest billing, but the need to promote security and stability had hardly the same definition. The latter was more important, but its poor definition allowed only the most cursory analysis during planning. Gideon Rose, noting the need to balance Iraq’s capability so it was not a regional threat but also did not collapse, said “there simply was no ideal level of Iraqi strength,” and equated achieving such a balance with hitting a near-impossible golf shot.¹⁹²

Even where clear, guidance in both cases was not always achievable. Eisenhower considered his own plan of August 21, 1942 unachievable. Marshall thought locating all the landings inside the Mediterranean was unachievable due to vulnerable supply lines through

¹⁹² Rose, 221.

Gibraltar. Since shifting west to Casablanca meant abandoning the supposed intent of beating the axis to Tunisia—or controlling Western North Africa—doing so admitted that winning this race was itself unachievable. In the Gulf War, the political situation dictated that the military preclude the launch of ballistic missiles and destroy chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons in Iraq. While clear, these objectives were unachievable without massively greater means. Achieving security and stability also clearly exceeded the means committed. Treating these expectations as guiding principles, rather than objectives, puts them in a different light. In that case, the military should take actions to promote security and stability but should not expect to achieve this condition during the operation. While at times broader than the mythos expects, guidance can also be more specific than it anticipates.

Strategy as Discourse

Second, the guidance in both cases dipped into ways and means and demonstrated an emerging strategy through continuing conversation rather than one formulated prior to military planning. Roosevelt directed ways and means, telling military leaders where and when to attack, ordering a US force on the landings, and overruling the military in shifting forces among theaters. Similarly, pressure from Washington forced Schwarzkopf to reorient his attack, changing his means of fighting. He reallocated forces to combat the Scud missile threat in western Iraq under political pressure. Even where the guidance touched on ends, it did not reflect an existing completed strategy. No one thought that Operation Torch would defeat Nazi Germany. It was only a first step, and planners certainly knew this at the time. What was not clear, however, was exactly how Torch would fit into that eventual defeat. Marshall's most optimistic assessment would have called it an opportunity to gain operational experience in a peripheral theater, although simultaneously a diversion of attention from more important matters. Churchill saw it as an effort to weaken Germany on the periphery before taking it on in Europe. Roosevelt was even

cagier with his intent. The guidance that eventually emerged did so after a continuing conversation, only reaching the specificity to support an operations plan for Torch on September 5, 1942, nine months after Pearl Harbor.

Five decades later and shortly after the Gulf War, Powell wrote, “we fought an overwhelmingly decisive war . . . Saddam Hussein threatens no one outside his own borders.”¹⁹³ Nevertheless, the specific guidance he felt the military had achieved was codified only immediately prior to the air campaign and continued to evolve up to the start of the ground war. By the time Powell wrote those lines, Hussein had brutally put down an internal rebellion while coalition aircraft continued to enforce no-fly zones over Iraq. The strategy would continue to emerge through limited operations in the late 1990s, another ground campaign in 2003, a decade-long occupation, and presently consideration of further intervention. Predicting this sequence of events would have been difficult in 1990, though some elements were apparent.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless, this very opacity meant the strategy would have to emerge, rather than springing forth complete before military planning for the Gulf War began, as expected by the mythos. The guidance in both cases emerged because of a continuing conversation rather than as the product of an antecedent strategy process.

A further indication that guidance in these cases failed to reflect the mythos comes from the participating generals themselves. Marshall battled Roosevelt repeatedly over guidance. In May 1942, he sent a memorandum to the president asking for a “formal directive for our future guidance.”¹⁹⁵ Clark snapped to Churchill “the greatest need . . . is for someone with the necessary

¹⁹³ Powell, “Challenges Ahead,” 42.

¹⁹⁴ Janine Davidson, *Lifting the Fog of Peace: How Americans Learned to Fight Modern War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 162.

¹⁹⁵ Marshall to Roosevelt, May 6, 1942, in Bland, 183-185.

power to make some decisions.”¹⁹⁶ Eisenhower resented what he saw as political interference, lamenting how the initial responses to Pearl Harbor were “directed by politicians,” not guided by military considerations.¹⁹⁷ Schwarzkopf said after the war “Washington pressure led us to look farther to the west than we were looking.”¹⁹⁸ He complained repeatedly to Freeman and Powell about the lack of clear guidance. Powell recalled that as chairman, he “could live with a certain degree of fuzzy policy. But [Schwarzkopf] . . . wanted clear-cut instructions.”¹⁹⁹

In light of these historical examples, the military’s guidance mythos is not grounded in history. The actual guidance in both cases had a different character. Civilian leaders may provide defined short-term objectives, but attempts at long-term goals can only guide evolving operations rather than rigidly defining them. Uncertainty lurks in both civilian and military expectations of the possible, meaning assessments of the achievability of guidance will often be in error. Additionally, politics will govern ways and means as well as ends. Finally, guidance emerges at the end of a conversation, informed by planning efforts, rather than reflecting a completed strategy at the beginning. The guidance mythos is a myth.

Implications

Eliot Cohen calls civil-military relations “an unequal dialogue,” a view evident in these cases.²⁰⁰ That “dialogue” is strategic guidance, and it continues throughout the planning effort, throughout the conflict, and throughout the peace that follows. In fact, Hammond’s putting first things first may even be a misleading notion. Instead of bemoaning unclear political end states or

¹⁹⁶ Clark, 48.

¹⁹⁷ Eisenhower pad, January 4, 1942, in Chandler, 39.

¹⁹⁸ Gordon and Trainor, 142.

¹⁹⁹ Powell, *My American Journey*, 469.

²⁰⁰ Cohen, 209.

trying to change the nature of strategic guidance, the military could instead align its interests with its civilian leaders'. In other words, the military should put the president's interest first; maintaining options instead of demanding the president select one early in the process. Doing so, however, requires a reexamination of the military's institutional motivations.

Fact not Blunder

Apart from recognizing the historical inaccuracy of its guidance mythos, the military must recalibrate its understanding of the institutional incentives currently leading it to expect and demand such guidance. Janine Davidson describes how civilian leaders' "diverse political responsibilities" drive a need to assess the costs of various feasible objectives first, before assigning an objective and allowing the military to plan toward it.²⁰¹ This parallels Hammond's presidential incentive to keep options open.²⁰² Civilian leaders negotiate a different political battlefield from the military's. Ambiguity, delay, and keeping options open serve the needs of this sphere. The military's desire for clear strategic direction up front reflects a differing preference.

Peter Feaver's framework for civil-military relations recognizes this potential for the military agent's preferences to diverge from its civilian principal's. The principal-agent model anticipates some freedom for the agent to deviate from its principal's preferences in favor of its own. In the model, action the agent takes aligned with the principal's desires is "working," while action contrary to the principal's desires is "shirking."²⁰³ In the civil-military context, the military

²⁰¹ Janine Davidson, "The Contemporary Presidency: Civil-Military Friction and Presidential Decision Making: Explaining the Broken Dialogue," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (March 2013): 131.

²⁰² Hammond, 14.

²⁰³ Peter D. Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight, and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 54-55.

shirks when it “does not work as civilians direct.”²⁰⁴ In Feaver’s framework, therefore, the military’s demanding clear guidance for planning, or blaming military misfortunes on poor guidance, is shirking. Feaver’s model anticipates punishment when the military shirks. At a minimum, the punishment takes the form of more intrusive monitoring, punishment in its own right based on the military’s desire for autonomy and disdain for civilian meddling.²⁰⁵ Thus shirking in the form of demanding clear guidance invites civilian punishment—at least increased civilian engagement—an institutional disincentive. Feaver cites as an example of this punishment Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s efforts to enforce strong civilian oversight after perceived tolerance of shirking by the previous administration.²⁰⁶ This disincentive favors rejecting the mythos. The military should stop shirking. Rather than considering the strategic guidance typified by World War II and the Gulf War—and many others—as somehow “bad,” instead the military should consider it “fact.”

Strategic Thinking Instead of Strategic Guidance

What do these aspects of guidance in fact mean for military planning? Current planning doctrine emphasizes the difficulty in acquiring the necessary guidance, encouraging planners to comb press releases and public statements in search of it.²⁰⁷ The Adaptive Planning and Execution System encourages a two-way discussion of this guidance, with military planners presenting their understanding of guidance for approval by civilian leaders. While acknowledging the inevitable strategic ambiguity, none of these steps addresses the fundamental problem, shown so clearly in the response to Pearl Harbor: no leader, military or civilian, can foresee the future to

²⁰⁴ Feaver, 59.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 87-91.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 288-289.

²⁰⁷ JP 5-0, III-7.

the extent required to issue the guidance current planning military methodology demands. In addition to a change in mindset, the military must change its methodology.

Here again, history provides an alternative planning method. For North Africa and the Gulf War, when planners did not receive the specific guidance they expected, they instead either planned aspects common to a range of eventual objectives or looked separately at the range of options. This does not mean examining courses of action, or multiple ways of accomplishing the same objective. Instead, planners looked at the set of possible objectives civilians leaders might assign. While lamenting the lack of clarity in objectives for Torch, Eisenhower's staff nevertheless analyzed detailed information that would be necessary for any plan regardless of its object, allowing him to quote detailed weather, hydrographic, and shipping impacts as early as August 1.²⁰⁸ Eisenhower commented on the "vast amount of statistics and factual data [that had] come to light and much of this [would] be valuable no matter what the final decision."²⁰⁹ Rather than looking harder for specific guidance, perhaps a better option is changing the model. Instead of focusing on one set of objectives from strategic guidance—diving these objectives when not forthcoming—an alternative is analyzing the maximum range of possible objectives to inform the strategic guidance conversation, only narrowing these options as the situation develops. Instead of quickly turning to courses of action (various ways of reaching a given end), analysis could first describe the range of possible ends achievable with the full panoply of ways and means. This method requires more work, since inherently much of it would be later discarded, but perhaps repose is not the destiny of man.

Instead of complaining that the president should pursue the military's interests by providing clearer guidance, the military needs a new perspective on guidance that pursues the

²⁰⁸ Eisenhower to Marshall, August 1, 1942, in Chandler, 433-436.

²⁰⁹ Eisenhower to Butcher for diary, September 2, 1942, in Chandler, 526.

president's. Treating ambiguous guidance as fact rather than as a problem needing improvement would lead to better processes, better military advice, and better civil-military relations. To tie war more closely to policy all the way down, strategic thinking must replace the mythos of clear guidance.

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