

Can We Afford Another Dieppe? A Historical Analysis to Advance Future Warfighting

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

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Abbreviations

ADP	Army Doctrine Publication
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
CMHQ	Canadian Military Headquarters
COHQ	Combined Operations Headquarters
COSSAC	Chief of Staff to Supreme Allied Commander
HMS	His (Her) Majesty's Ship (British Royal Navy)
JFE	Joint Forcible Entry
JP	Joint Publication
LSCO	Large-Scale Combat Operations
MDO	Multi-Domain Operations
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NMS	National Military Strategy
TP	US Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command Pamphlet
TRADOC	US Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command
RAF	Royal Air Force
UK	United Kingdom (Great Britain)
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Soviet Union)

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Introduction

Those gallant men who gave their lives at Dieppe, by their supreme sacrifice gave to the Allies the priceless secret of victory in the subsequent assaults.... I have no doubt that the Battle of Normandy was won on the beaches of Dieppe. For every one man who died at Dieppe in 1942, at least ten men or more must have been spared in Normandy in 1944.

—Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations, *Apprentice War Lord*

The US Army is at an inflection point, a time of profound change in doctrine and circumstance. General James C. McConville, the fortieth Chief of Staff of the Army, made this assertion during a 2019 speech at the Maneuver Warfighter Conference. In his address, he emphasized how a shift to multi-domain large-scale combat operations (LSCO) against a peer enemy will be necessary if the institution is to align with the demands of the 2018 National Defense Strategy (NDS).¹ This is not the first turning point for the Army, of course, and it won't be the last, which is why history can provide windows into what it looks like when a powerful military curves the arc of its direction toward new targets. For instance, the situation faced by allied forces in the European Theater after the United States entered World War II provides a significant and perhaps useful example of modern armies fighting from a position of disadvantage, contested in all domains, and moving at an accelerated tempo to fight and win against peer great powers.

The tragedy of Operation Jubilee, the raid on Dieppe of August 19, 1942, offers admonitory lessons about planning, preparing, and executing large-scale joint forcible entry (JFE) operations against a peer enemy.² While this research paper will neither solve the controversy

¹ Lori Egan, "CSA Forecasts Army's Future," *Benning News*, October 8, 2019, accessed October 2020, <https://www.army.mil/article/227175>.

² Joint doctrine defines a raid as "An operation to temporarily seize an area to secure information, confuse an enemy, capture personnel or equipment, or to destroy a capability culminating with a planned withdrawal." US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington DC: Government Publishing Office, 2017), GL 14-15; JFE operations seize and hold lodgments against armed opposition. A lodgment is defined as a designated area in a hostile or potentially

surrounding the 1942 Dieppe raid nor predict the future, it will examine how the study of a historical event influences planning and has relevance in the modern operational environment as a lens to examine theory and doctrine. This paper analyzes historical records, official documents, as well as current and historical military doctrine to support its findings.

The first section investigates Operation Jubilee and concludes with a reflection on the significance of the events that led to the military debacle. The second section examines Operation Overlord, revealing how military planners learned from the 1942 Dieppe failure to inform their planning of the successful 1944 Normandy invasion. A third section analyzes current theory and doctrine and their connection to the Normandy events of World War II. Finally, the conclusion summarizes the findings and recommended ways to employ historical analysis in the development of modern military theory and doctrine.

Strategic Environment of 1942

By the summer of 1942, a tense political climate demanded an increase in military action against the Germans in the European Theater. The German Army invaded the Soviet Union (USSR) on June 22, 1941 in an effort to defeat the Soviet Red Army, thereby enabling Adolf Hitler to force British (UK) Prime Minister Winston Churchill to negotiate with his Nazi regime from a position of weakness.³ Josef Stalin, the leader of the USSR, demanded that the Anglo-American Allies take immediate action to open a second front and thus relieve pressure on his forces.⁴ It was vital to Allied strategy that the USSR remain in the war. Thus, Churchill and US

hostile operational area that affords continuous landing of troops and materiel while providing maneuver space for subsequent operations. US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, JP 3-18, *Joint Forcible Entry Operations* (Washington DC: Government Publishing Office, 11 May 2017, Incorporating Change 1, 9 January 2018, Validated 27 June 2018), I-1, I-6.

³ Hitler told his generals: “With Russia smashed, Britain’s last hope would be shattered.” Andrew Roberts, *The Storm of War* (London: Penguin Group UK, 2009), 163.

⁴ On May 26, 1942, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs urged British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to launch a landing in Europe. Will Fowler, *The Commandos at Dieppe: Rehearsal for D-Day* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 21.

President Franklin Roosevelt, along with their civilian and military leadership, debated the best approach toward victory.

America officially entered the war in December 1941 after the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines. Facing the necessity of dividing its troops into two theaters, the United States developed a Europe-first strategy at the urging of Prime Minister Churchill. This decision was finalized within six weeks of the Pearl Harbor attack at the Arcadia Conference in Washington, DC. As US forces deployed forward, US Army operational planning, led by General George C. Marshall, aiming for swift and total victory, focused on an invasion of the European continent between autumn of 1942 and the end of 1943.⁵ While the British public applauded this sentiment, Churchill wanted a local victory to raise morale, leading his military planners to insist on a “peripheral” strategy via invasion of the Middle East and North Africa, where its forces faced the threat of defeat.⁶ The debate over where, when, and on what scale to project forces caused tensions that led Marshall to propose shelving the Europe-first strategy in favor of a “turn to the Pacific.” Marshall made his recommendation to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt in July 1942. Still, the president held firm to the Europe-first commitment, telling Marshall that while he would support a push for cross-Channel efforts, he would deliver no ultimatum to Britain. He also emphasized that a defeat of Germany would surely result in the defeat of Japan.⁷

⁵ Planning for the concentration of forces and equipment in preparation for an invasion was code-named Bolero. Cross-channel invasion planning was code-named Roundup for a spring 1943 landing and Sledgehammer for a smaller 1942 landing. David Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 573-4.

⁶ Britain’s “peripheral” strategy consisted of developing a defensive ring around the continent that would both contain Nazi-occupied Europe and serve as a launching area for future operations. *Ibid.*, 575.

⁷ Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years*, United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific, ed. Stetson Conn (1962; repr., Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 2000), 308, 310.

Prelude to the Dieppe Raid

Planning an invasion of France in 1942 began with the difficult and pressing question of how to acquire a major port—and how to do so quickly—to accommodate the landing of troops and materiel necessary to establish and expand subsequent operations.⁸ In the early days of World War II, most military theorists believed amphibious assaults could no longer succeed in LSCO. This belief stemmed from what was known as the Gallipoli syndrome, reflecting the bloody fiasco that occurred in World War I, during the Dardanelles campaign of 1915 on the west coast of the Ottoman Empire (modern-day Turkey).⁹

Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ), sought a clearer understanding of the problems involved in acquiring a port, particularly the military effort such an operation would demand. With this in mind, he gave orders to begin planning a cross-Channel attack on April 4, 1942. He directed Lieutenant General Bernard Montgomery, commander of South East Command, to provide troops for the assault. He in turn selected the Canadian 2nd Infantry Division, led by Major General John H. Roberts, to lead the operation and supply the preponderance of forces.¹⁰

Germany faced problems of its own. Difficult decisions over the allocation of increasingly scarce resources, complications of engaging in multiple theaters of operations simultaneously, a dip in morale, and an increasingly divided relationship between Hitler and his top military leaders all contributed to the very complex environment in which the German forces operated.¹¹ Ultimately, Germany's defensive posture on the western front would suffer as the

⁸ C. P. Stacey, "The Raid on Dieppe," *Military Review* XXIX, no. 2 (May, 1949): 7-8.

⁹ Russell F. Weigley, "Normandy to Falaise, A Critique of Allied Operational Planning in 1944," in *Historical Perspectives of the Operational Art*, ed. Michael D. Krause and R. Cody Phillips (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2005), 393, 396.

¹⁰ Ken Ford, *Dieppe 1942: Prelude to D-Day* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2003), 9-10, 17.

¹¹ David Ian Hall, "The German View of the Dieppe Raid August 1942," *Canadian Military History* 21, no. 4 (Waterloo, Ontario: Scholars Commons, 2015), 2.

Wehrmacht concentrated its best trained and best equipped combat forces on the eastern front, leaving mostly “second rate” units largely consisting of foreign conscripts, whose experience and training varied greatly.¹²

Operation Jubilee

On September 3, 1939—the same day that Britain and France declared war on Germany—German U-boats sank the passenger liner *Athena*, killing more than a hundred civilians, including a dozen Canadians. A week later, on September 10, 1939, Canada declared war on the German Reich, stating that Germany “threatened to destroy free government everywhere.”¹³ Canada, which sent 425,000 soldiers to fight during World War I, began mobilizing to deploy forward again to fight Germany. By November, the Canadian Military Headquarters in Great Britain began to operate inside London. The first Canadian division arrived before the end of the year, although it was only moderately trained and equipped and was not ready to fight for several months.¹⁴

Canadian military leaders became increasingly disappointed and frustrated with their British counterparts as they watched Germany expand its occupation of Europe in the first two years of the war. They saw the struggles of British authorities, who neither developed adequate plans nor fielded enough forces to initiate a campaign against Germany in Europe. Eager to contribute and looking to gain combat experience, the Canadian Army embraced the vital role of conducting the first major amphibious operation of the war in the European theater. COHQ would spend the next four months planning and preparing troops to execute this mission. While amphibious warfare techniques had been successfully tested in the past, Operation Jubilee

¹² Ford, 27-28.

¹³ Prime Minister Mackenzie King, letter to King George, Month Day, 1939, accessed September 17, 2020, <http://data2.collectionscanada.gc.ca/ap/c/c140955.jpg>.

¹⁴ C.P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939-1945, An Official Historical Summary* (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1948), 1, 4-5, 9.

provided planners an opportunity to gather intelligence and test the feasibility of contemporary theory and assumptions with modern doctrine, equipment, and organizational structure.¹⁵

The Dieppe Tragedy

On the night of August 18, 1942, slightly more than 6,000 troops, predominately Canadian, but also including some 1,000 British, 50 US, and a small contingent of Free French troops, embarked from five ports along England's southern coastline to conduct a raid on the French port of Dieppe, code-named Jubilee.¹⁶ The operation, approved by Prime Minister Churchill, marked the largest allied force to commit to combat in France since the evacuation of Dunkirk over two years prior. The operation began on H-Hour, 4:45 a.m., August 19, as British 3 Commando landed unopposed at Yellow Beach to destroy the battery on the eastern flank.¹⁷ Within nine hours, the raid on Dieppe had ended in a complete and tragic disaster. Allied soldiers killed, wounded, or missing totaled 3,637 while the enemy suffered a mere 608 casualties.¹⁸ It was a rout. It also became a tactical and operational failure from which the COHQ sought to learn while seeking a sound method to gain a foothold on the continent in a future invasion.¹⁹

The primary purpose of Jubilee was to determine the feasibility of a direct attack by a divisional force against a defended port. Planning for the raid, which began under the code-name Rutter, went through several evolutions. Leaders debated the nuances of a large-scale assault to ensure it was feasible, acceptable, and suitable. Initially planned as a flank attack, Montgomery altered the form of maneuver to a frontal attack conducted at dawn. He argued that the

¹⁵ Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939-44*, 8; Ford, 19-22.

¹⁶ Hall, 2.

¹⁷ *H-Hour* is the specific hour at which a particular operation commences. At Dieppe, this marked the time of the first landing craft was scheduled to land on the beach. US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, JP 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2017), GL-10.

¹⁸ Ford, 10-11, 43, 91.

¹⁹ All Canadian personnel returning from the operation were required to provide written statements of their experience. Canadian Military Headquarters, *Operation "JUBILEE": The Raid on Dieppe 19 Aug 42*, C. P. Stacey, Report No. 159 (London, 1946), 2.

operation's duration, which would span two tides, was too short for ground forces to cover the distance to Dieppe from landings on the city's flank.²⁰ The necessity for an undamaged major port at the outset of an invasion was also a consideration that led to the decision. Other significant alterations during planning included the cancellation of preparatory bombardment and airborne troops and a decision to land Churchill Mark IV tanks.

The plan directed the assault force to land near-simultaneously across eight beaches spanning a fourteen-mile front centering on Dieppe, located at the mouth of the D'Arques River. The terrain was challenging across the coastline. The beach itself was a composition of shingle that cut through attackers' flesh, slowed the assault force's momentum, and restricted the mobility of tanks. The main assault landed on the town itself. While Dieppe sits on an important break in high cliffs, urban terrain reinforced by a sea wall and tank ditches, Soldiers faced enfilade fire from guns difficult to identify, making the capture and retention of the beach nearly unattainable. On both flanks, landings were further challenged by towering chalk cliffs and steep gullies.²¹

The inherent risk of converging on the port town by frontal attack demanded the element of surprise and a close synchronization of sea, air, and land forces, and therefore senior Allied commanders made decisions jointly.²² General Roberts commanded the operation under the supervision of COHQ and Vice Admiral Mountbatten. The arrangement of land, air, and naval forces under one subordinate commander was an early example of the unity of command that would serve as a principal force multiplier for the Allies in Europe. Air Commodore Trafford

²⁰ Admiralty Department, *The Dieppe Raid: The Combined Operations Assault on Hitler's European Fortress August 1942* (South Yorkshire, UK: Pen & Sword Books Limited, 2019), 2, 4, 6-7.

²¹ *The Dieppe Raid*, 30-31, 47; Canadian Military Headquarters, *Operation "JUBILEE": The Raid on Dieppe 19 Aug 42*, C. P. Stacey, Report No. 108 (Ottawa, 1949), 1-3.

²² The naval commander for the raid, Captain John Hughes-Hallett, said, "All our major decisions were jointly made in complete agreement." John Hughes-Hallett, "The Dieppe Raid," supplement to *The London Gazette*, August 12, 1947, 3823.

Leigh-Mallory was the Air Force Commander, and Captain John Hughes-Hallett was the Naval Commander.²³

The Royal Air Force (RAF) allocated sixty-seven squadrons for the Dieppe raid—a force more extensive than those committed at any preceding time in the war. Allied leaders, heeding Leigh-Mallory’s advice that bombings “probably inaccurately placed, would merely serve to place the enemy on the alert,” decided against a preparatory aerial or naval bombardment.²⁴ They also wanted to avoid congesting Dieppe’s streets with rubble, which would limit the Churchill Mark IV tank’s mobility and thereby reduce the tempo of the main assault. In addition to providing air cover for the assault and conducting attacks against defensive positions, Leigh-Mallory envisioned an additional goal for RAF operations. He believed the raid on the coast might provoke the Luftwaffe into a battle that would favor the RAF and allow the Allies to deplete German resources before more extensive combat operations began.²⁵ During the 16 hours of operations in support of Operation Jubilee, the RAF flew nearly 3,000 sorties while the German Luftwaffe flew 945, in what historian Norman Franks regards as the “greatest air battle of the war.”²⁶ The lessons the RAF realized through the major air confrontations at Dieppe proved invaluable in planning future invasions of North Africa (November 8, 1942), Sicily (July 10, 1943), Salerno (September 9, 1943), and Normandy (June 6, 1944).

From a purely naval perspective, the operation went according to plan. The maritime forces, consisting of 252 naval ships and landing craft, sustained no damage from mines and suffered only minimal damage from coastal artillery barrages. However, the desire to achieve surprise met misfortune when the amphibious element, Group 5, encountered an enemy convoy

²³ Canadian Military Headquarters, *Preliminary Report on Operation “JUBILEE”: The Raid on Dieppe 19 Aug 42*, C. P. Stacey, Report No. 83 (London, 1942), A-2.

²⁴ Ford, 36-37.

²⁵ Canadian Military Headquarters, Report No. 108, 14.

²⁶ Norman Franks, *The Greatest Air Battle: Dieppe, 19th August 1942* (London: Grub Street the Basement, 2010), 7, 13, 220-1.

about seven miles off the coast. While this chance meeting did not compromise the subsequent landings, it did alert the two coastal batteries on Dieppe's flanks to the Allied assault. The resulting calamity created enough chaos to disrupt the force's direction of travel and sequencing of landings.²⁷

In total, the operation spanned less than eight hours. At 12:40 p.m. General Roberts, aboard HMS *Calpe*, his headquarters ship, determined the operation was over after a final inspection of the main assault beaches.²⁸ The RAF provided freedom of movement for the maritime force to return home. While several enemy air attacks marked the return, all proved ineffective due to the umbrella of air cover provided by the RAF.

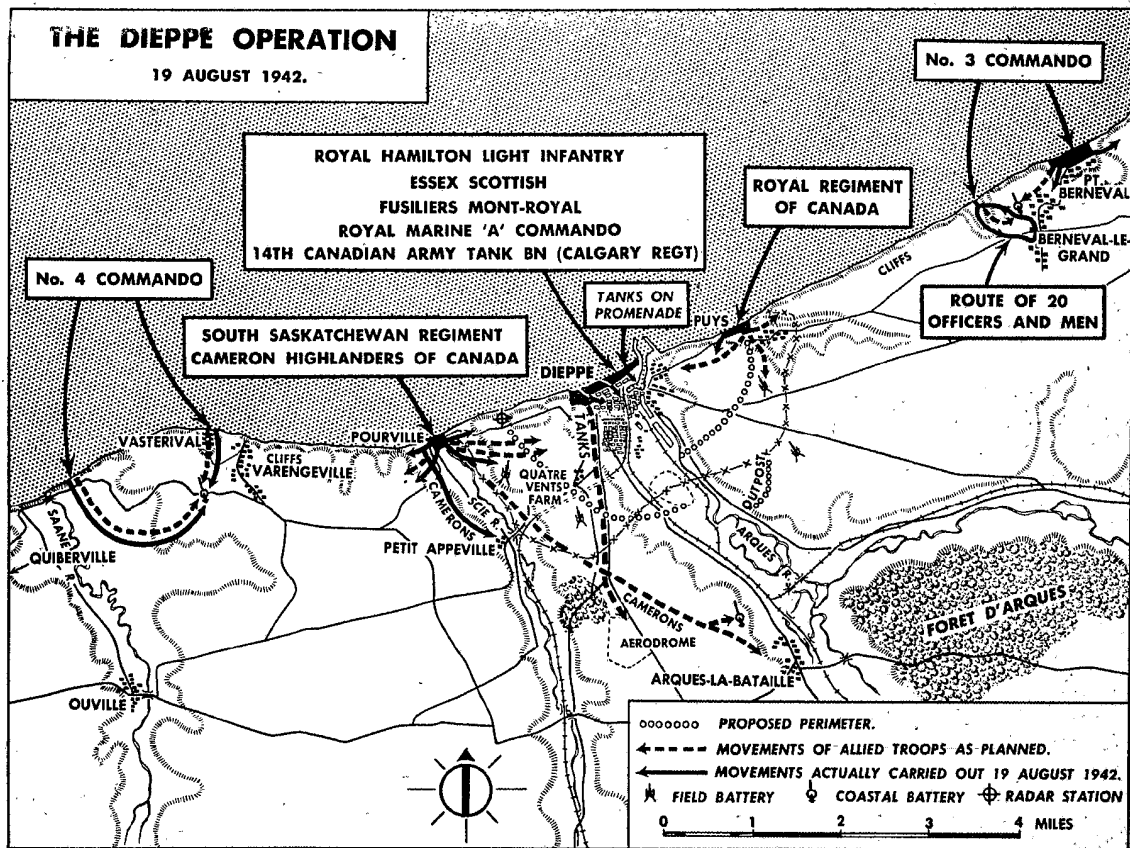


Figure 1. The Dieppe Operation. C. P. Stacey, "The Raid on Dieppe," *Military Review* 29 (June 1949): 29.

²⁷ Admiralty Department, 17, 21.

²⁸ Ford, 15; HMS stands for His (Her) Majesty's Ship (British Royal Navy).

The debacle at Dieppe diminished demand for an immediate assault upon the Germans across the English Channel. It also clarified the magnitude and difficulty of such an enterprise. Considerable planning to master the detailed preparation, careful training, and exacting discipline would be required. Reflections on the ill-fated raid enabled planners to better understand the operational environment and nature of an invasion. Operation Jubilee provided answers, albeit at a high cost, to the question the operation had sought to answer: whether a direct attack by a divisional force against a defended port was a feasible operation of war.²⁹

Reflections

Historians still debate why the allies took the risks associated with a raid on Dieppe in 1942, and what strategic implications emerged from Operation Jubilee's failure. What is not in dispute is what happened less than two years later when a much larger invasion force—more than fourteen times larger—successfully established a foothold along a fifty-mile stretch of Normandy's coastline. The Allies then advanced to Berlin and victory in 1945. Rather than looking at Dieppe simply as an abject failure, one can view it as a crucible in which the Allies blended painful lessons with analytical thinking to forge a strategy that led to victory. The complexities of the world unfold in unexpected ways. In disheartening times such as those experienced by the Allies in the aftermath of Operation Jubilee, planners cannot hope to find the right answers until they are confident that they are asking the right questions.³⁰

²⁹ Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939-44*, 85.

³⁰ Debates over the role of the Dieppe raid on the planning and execution of Overlord vary from one extreme to another. Mountbatten said that "The Battle of Normandy was won on the beaches of Dieppe." A historian later dismissed the claim that Dieppe had secured any "priceless secret" as "tripe, unless the lesson of not attacking a well-defended town without proper intelligence and a preliminary aerial and naval bombardment is a 'priceless secret,' rather than the kind of assumption that a lance-corporal might have made." Many historians make more assertive claims that point to a specific tie to the two events, such as C. P. Stacey, perhaps Dieppe's most influential historian, who asserts that Dieppe's costly lessons helped develop the techniques that led to the successful assault on the Normandy beaches. Adrian Smith, *Mountbatten: Apprentice War Lord* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010), 243; Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939-44*, 178-180; Mark Thompson, *Disputed Decisions of World War II: Decision Science and Game Theory Perspectives* (Jefferson, NC: MacFarland & Company Publishers, 2019), 20.

Examining the history of the Anglo-American approach to Europe's invasion sheds light on the agility and adaptability that the commanders and staffs employed in orchestrating actions toward achieving a strategic goal. With a prevailing thought that amphibious assaults could not succeed, Allied military planners weighed their options and assessed their resources and risks. Rather than being guided by instinct or emotion, they took a cognitive approach to operations and planning. A critical factor was experience, and Operation Jubilee became a sterling example of how experience helped the Allies learn and develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to achieve victory. By analyzing the Dieppe raid's failure, planners improved their understanding of the requirements to develop and achieve a successful large-scale entry into France. Lessons learned at Dieppe not only influenced the development of tactical and logistical details; they also contributed to Allied operational art by guiding their reframing of the environment and refinement of their overarching vision of the road to victory.³¹

In the planning phase for the assault on Dieppe, Prime Minister Winston Churchill asked his military leaders if they could guarantee the success of the operation. General Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, responded that if anyone "could guarantee success, there would indeed be no object in doing the operation. It is just because no one has the slightest idea what the outcome will be that the operation is necessary."³² The aphorism "I know who I am when I see what I do," coined by Herminia Ibarra, a professor of organizational behavior, illustrates Brooke's assertion and the Allies' practice of a "test-and-learn" model.³³

³¹ US military doctrine defines *operational art* as "The cognitive approach by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, experience, creativity, and judgment—to develop strategies, campaigns, and operations to organize and employ military forces by integrating ends, ways, and means." US Joint Staff, JP 3-0 (2017), II-3-4.

³² Thompson, 20.

³³ David Epstein, *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World* (London: Penguin, 2019), 160-4.

The Dieppe raid illustrates a dichotomy in learning between theory and practice burdened by the costs associated with the endeavor to turn a concept into a reality. Operational leaders determined the endeavor to be essential before attempting the full-scale amphibious operations that would unfold later in World War II. Operation Jubilee was the first major assault landing since those at Gallipoli in 1915, which Churchill experienced firsthand. In a September 1942 report to the House of Commons, Churchill said that the Dieppe assault was “an indispensable preliminary to full-scale operations.”³⁴ Senior leaders at COHQ believed they must conduct a test since “the small raids so far made (such as St. Nazaire, the most ambitious operation prior to Dieppe) had thrown no light on the handling of a large naval fleet in action.”³⁵

Military leaders synchronize operations in time, space, and purpose. In his book, *Fighting by Minutes*, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Robert Leonhard called duration the most “strategic military problem.”³⁶ He defined the other temporal aspects of war as frequency, sequence, and opportunity. Time pervades all decision-making in war and serves as a framework. While the duration of World War II was not well defined, military planners understood that a campaign on the continent was necessary to defeat the Axis powers. Therefore, a major joint forcible entry was essential to ending the war. The sequence in war is fluid, and operational artists work to arrange operations logically to gain and maintain an advantage over the enemy. Throughout World War II, planners worked to find the ways and means needed to mount future large-scale amphibious assaults, like the invasion of continental Europe over the beaches of Normandy on June 6, 1944.³⁷

The operational planner should trust the adage that good plans are subject to destruction by friction. Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, who passionately wanted to

³⁴ Stacey, “The Raid on Dieppe,” 7.

³⁵ Stacey, *The Canadian Army, 1939-44*, 56.

³⁶ Robert Leonhard, *Fighting by Minutes: Time and the Art of War*, 2nd ed. (Columbia, SC: Robert R. Leonhard, 2017), 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, xxi, 4, 8, 15-17.

understand war in a systematic and objectifiable manner, regarded uncertainties as inevitable.³⁸ He asserted that “War is the realm of chance.”³⁹ At 3:43 a.m., roughly an hour before the initial troop landing, Major General Roberts and his forces realized this aspect of war’s nature as a flotilla of landing craft made incidental contact with a passing German naval convoy. As Moltke once remarked, “No plan of operations reaches with any certainty beyond the first encounter with the enemy.”⁴⁰ Tactical surprise was lost. Friction ensued.

The Dieppe raid also had an effect on US military thinking. Colonel Lucian Truscott, the most senior American to take part in the raid, traveled to Britain in May, 1942, where he served in the Allied Combined Staff under Mountbatten, leading the organization and training of a new commando-style organization, the US Army Rangers. Operation Jubilee was the US Army’s first tactical ground action against German forces. The 50 Rangers, 6 officers, and 44 enlisted men selected to participate in the raid gained valuable insight that US Army troops put to good use two months later, when they took part in the amphibious invasion of North Africa during Operation Torch.⁴¹ Truscott, who later commanded a division, a corps, and a field army during the war, saw Dieppe as a lesson in war that the Allies had to learn—in this case the hard way.⁴²

Tactical victory at Dieppe caused Wehrmacht senior leaders to blink, if not think about something outside of the fighting on the eastern front against Russia. It mostly reinforced their conviction that Germany could defeat any future invasion on the beaches. This in turn led to a reliance on a series of defensive works known as the “western wall,” and the development of

³⁸ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁴⁰ Helmuth Graf von Moltke, *Moltke: On the Art of War*, ed. Daniel Hughes, trans. Daniel Hughes and Harry Bell (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 45.

⁴¹ Patrick K. O’Donnell, *Beyond Valor: World War II’s Ranger and Airborne Veterans Reveal the Heart of Combat* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 2.

⁴² Lucian Truscott, *Command Missions: A Personal Story* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), 48-54.

tactics that led to the military disaster that overtook them after the 1944 Normandy landings.⁴³

The impact of success on the German psyche included the undesirable symptoms associated with what military analysts James Dunnigan and Raymond Macedonia coined “victory disease.” These symptoms, which included arrogance, a tendency to believe myths about the underlying reason for victory, and a firm conviction to uphold the status quo, impaired German readiness to defend its western flank should the Allies somehow mount a successful amphibious invasion.⁴⁴

Operation Overlord

Throughout the war, the invasion of France on a magnificent scale was always uppermost in the minds of Allied planners. Churchill recognized that a second front was not only possible; it was the only way the Allies could defeat Germany. When he summoned Mountbatten to lead the COHQ in late 1941, Churchill gave the instruction, “You are to prepare for the invasion of Europe, for unless we can go and land and fight Hitler and beat his forces on land, we shall never win this war.” France represented the shortest route to the “heart of Germany.” Years of planning contributed to Allied awareness of the risks and requirements of crossing the English Channel and the means necessary to seize and hold beachheads to land a major invasion force.⁴⁵

By November of 1943, Hitler realized that the threat of Anglo-American landings on Germany’s western front presented his greatest danger. He therefore assigned one of his most senior commanders, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, to help Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt solve the urgent problem of repelling an invasion.⁴⁶ Hitler’s first task for Rommel was to conduct a deliberate inspection of the Atlantic Wall. After two weeks, Rommel denounced the wall as a

⁴³ Admiralty Department, 51.

⁴⁴ James F. Dunnigan and Raymond M. Macedonia, *Getting it Right: American Military Reforms After Vietnam to the Persian Gulf and Beyond* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1993), 21.

⁴⁵ Carlo D'Este, *Decision in Normandy* (New York: Diversion Books, 1983), 22.

⁴⁶ Albert Norman, *Operation Overlord, Design and Reality: The Allied Invasion of Western Europe* (Harrisburg, PA: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1952), 56.

farce, deciding that Rundstedt's plan for the defense would not work. He believed the only hope of repelling an invasion along the channel coast lay in defending the beaches themselves so heavily that the Allies could not secure a beachhead. On January 15, 1944 Rommel took command of Army Group B with a key role in the German defense of western Europe. He immediately went to work on achieving what Hitler asked of him, "to ruthlessly extract every ounce of effort from Germany."⁴⁷

Hitler ordered the construction of the Atlantic Wall around an assumption that the Allies would enjoy air and naval supremacy. Rommel also worried about this threat, expecting that aerial bombings, naval bombardment, and airborne assaults would precede any amphibious landings. Foremost among the inherent challenges in defending such a vast perimeter was predicting precisely when and where the Allies would strike. Therefore, the German Army had to distribute the defense unevenly along the more than 3,728 miles of coastline Germany held during the war. Hitler well understood the maxim "He who defends everything, defends nothing." The Germans looked for likely landing sites and determined that Pas-de-Calais was the logical location for two primary geographic reasons: it is where the English Channel is narrowest, and it is positioned along an avenue of approach into the German capital of Berlin. The Allies used a misinformation campaign aimed at deceiving the Germans and willfully reinforced the idea that they would cross at Calais, roughly 200 miles from the Normandy beaches where the actual landing was to occur.⁴⁸

The operational environment had changed immensely since the Allies' botched raid in 1942. The Battle of the Atlantic turned the tide of war in 1943, giving momentum to Allied air and naval forces. The Allies wrested air superiority from the German Luftwaffe and destroyed

⁴⁷ Stephen Ambrose, *D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 63-64; Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 344-345.

⁴⁸ Ambrose, 30, 32-3, 37, 64; Kennedy, 691-4.

much of northern France's infrastructure through a series of bombing campaigns. Russia meanwhile contributed to heavy German losses on the Eastern front. Even as German forces withdrew from the east, Stalin continued to demand that the Anglo-American Allies open a second front in the west. Fearful that the public might believe that the Red Army defeated Nazi Germany single-handedly, or worse, that the Soviets might leave the war in 1944, British and American leaders sought an opportunity to launch a decisive operation across the English Channel. Ultimately, Churchill and Roosevelt satisfied Stalin's demands when the three leaders agreed in December 1943 at the Tehran Conference upon an invasion of Normandy, code-named Overlord, to take place in 1944.⁴⁹

Normandy Invasion

Operation Overlord, the invasion of German-occupied France, involved 175,000 Allied soldiers and their equipment, including a rolling stock of 50,000 vehicles. Churchill regarded it as "the most difficult and complicated operation ever to take place." In December 1943, President Roosevelt selected General Dwight D. Eisenhower to direct Overlord as the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Forces. The assignment gave him responsibility over a joint multinational team consisting of American, British, Canadian, Polish, and French forces.⁵⁰

"We cannot afford to fail" was Eisenhower's message to his Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) in January 1944. The team drew upon experienced leaders who had assisted in the preparation of earlier amphibious operations aimed at the continent, including Jubilee. The overall commander for air forces, Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory, had held the same role in the 1942 raid. General Montgomery, who played a role in providing troops for the mission at Dieppe, was selected as the overall commander of ground forces. The team clearly understood how high the stakes were for the Anglo-American alliance. The force fielded for the Normandy invasion

⁴⁹ Ambrose, 65.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 24-5, 65-6, 107.

was of such a grand magnitude that it could be gathered only once during the course of the war. Even the US, with its well-designed replacement system, could not easily send reinforcements. The US had only fourteen uncommitted divisions at the time of the invasion. Eisenhower and his CCS would have months to plan and prepare for Overlord, including the detailed calculations of tactically important minutiae necessary to enable the success of its amphibious assault phase, code-named Neptune.⁵¹

The Allies exploited the cognitive domain through a full-spectrum disinformation operation to achieve more favorable conditions concerning the composition and disposition of the defenders it would face. Lieutenant General Frederick Morgan, who prepared the preliminary plans for Overlord while serving the role as the Chief of Staff to Supreme Allied Commander, conceived of the operation's concept. Code-named Fortitude and agreed upon during the Tehran Conference, the operation was an elaborate deception with the "object of inducing the enemy to make faulty strategic dispositions."⁵² It served as a "bodyguard of lies" to provide a false narrative of a force twice the size of reality. It also was designed to reinforce the bluff that the invasion would occur where it would not, in part by convincing the Germans that the actual assault launched toward the beaches in the Caen area of Normandy was merely a feint. The Allies could not afford to allow tactical surprise to derail the entire operation, as it had at Dieppe. The genius of the plan was exerting enough reflexive control to provide the Wehrmacht with evidence to allow them to create the illusion of certainty. Critical to this scheme was placing the well-regarded Lieutenant General George Patton Jr. as group commander of a false headquarters. The deception also relied on an extremely bloody and concentrated bombing campaign, as well as the

⁵¹ Kennedy, 696-7; Maurice Matloff, "The 90-Division Gamble," in *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944*, The United States Army in World War II (Washington DC: Department of the Army, 1959), 410-2.

⁵² Stephen A. Bourque, *Beyond the Beach: The Allied War Against France* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2018), 134.

use of counterintelligence, radio traffic, decoy aircraft, tanks, artillery in fake motor pools and landing craft.⁵³ Fortitude misled German decision-making on D-Day and beyond. The German High Command retained twelve divisions in Norway through the end of the war, diverting a force of roughly 400,000 from any significant contribution.⁵⁴

At Normandy, Allied airpower essentially isolated the objective areas and interdicted reinforcements and resupply to German defenders. The postponement of a ground invasion until 1944 had a beneficial consequence of seeing greater emphasis placed on airpower. This may have been the most notable change between what failed at Dieppe and what succeeded in Normandy. General Henry “Hap” Arnold, the only US officer to ever hold multiple five-star positions (as General of the Army and General of the Air Force), stated that “the air forces available in 1942 were insufficient to maintain the necessary air supremacy required for the establishment of a bridgehead.”⁵⁵ By D-Day, the situation was much improved with air superiority favoring the Allies. The Combined bomber offensives conducted by the RAF and US Eighth Air Force targeted the Luftwaffe and its production facilities, wreaking havoc on German airpower. Eisenhower’s main dilemma in the air domain leading up to the execution of Overlord was ensuring that he had the authority to control its forces. In-fighting over control of the Anglo-American air arms and divergent thinking towards employment of airpower eventually led Eisenhower to threaten to “pack and go home” before being granted full authority on April 14. On D-Day a suppressed Luftwaffe managed to fly only 319 sorties against more than 15,000 by the Allies.⁵⁶

⁵³ The Fortitude air plan, named Quicksilver IV, directed “every pound of bombs you drop in the actual landing area, make sure you drop two in the north (around Calais).” Ibid., 134-7.

⁵⁴ Scott Farquhar, “Deceive, Divert, and Delay: Operation Fortitude in support of D-Day,” in *Weaving the Tangled Web: Military Deception in Large-Scale Combat Operations*, ed. Christopher Rein (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Army University Press, 2018), 137-44.

⁵⁵ Henry H. Arnold, *Global Mission* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), 304.

⁵⁶ Kennedy, 702-7, 721.

The 1944 assault, like the 1942 raid, depended on a specific range of tidal and weather conditions. With airborne troops scheduled to jump into France before dawn, it also depended on the moon to illuminate drop zones. Prior to the landings at five beaches (code-named Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword) by the First US Army under General Omar Bradley and the British Second Army under Lieutenant General Miles Dempsey, the British 6th and US 82nd and 101st Airborne divisions dropped in to support the amphibious assault by preventing concentrated counterattacks. The necessary tide and moonlight conditions allowed for a short window, June 5-7, for the operation to occur. If the conditions did not suffice, a postponement would have delayed the invasion by at least another month. The weather on June 5 was overcast, stormy, and seemingly deteriorating. What appeared as unfavorable weather for an invasion ultimately provided good fortune for the Allies. The enemy was acutely aware of the necessary conditions, and the rough weather added credibility to the Allies' messaging that the launch would not occur in June, enabling the element of surprise. In the early hours of June 6, Germany's top leaders were far from the front. Rommel was visiting family at Ulm; Rundstedt was outside Paris; and Hitler, located at his mountain stronghold in Bavaria, had given his staff strict orders not to disturb his drug-induced sleep. The Führer did not learn of the invasion until noon on June 6.⁵⁷

It was not only Germany's strategic leaders who were paralyzed by elements of surprise and deception. On the ground in Normandy, German defenders, cognitively disrupted by indecision, were so physically and psychologically shaken from the bombing and shelling that many just wanted to surrender. Through the mines, a hailstorm of direct and indirect fire, smoke, debris, and blood-soaked beaches, the Allied forces accomplished the mission from amphibious and airborne assaults of the Normandy beaches through the occupation of a lodgment area with

⁵⁷ Ambrose, 183; Kennedy, 717-20.

spectacular success.⁵⁸ Though D-Day saw intense fighting, there were far fewer Allied casualties, around 5,000 in total with about 2,000 dead, than forecast.⁵⁹



Figure 1. Overlord Plan, Combined Bomber Offensive and German Dispositions, 6 June 1944. United States Military Academy Department of History, "Western Europe, 1940," United States Defense Printing Agency, accessed February 28, 2021, https://www.westpoint.edu/sites/default/files/inline-images/academics/academic_departments/history/WWII%20Europe/WWIIEurope53.pdf.

Historians consider Overlord the most thoroughly planned amphibious operation in history, and a debt is owed to those who laid the groundwork that enabled the grand triumph. That said, historians are not omnipotent beings. They cannot rerun the past to validate how priceless secrets of victory were achieved only with the supreme sacrifices made at Dieppe,

⁵⁸ A *lodgment* is defined as a designated area in a hostile or potentially hostile operational area (such as an airhead, a beachhead, or combination thereof) that affords continuous landing of troops and materiel while providing maneuver space for subsequent operations. US Joint Staff, JP 3-18 (2018), I-1.

⁵⁹ Ambrose, 576, 583.

leading to lower casualty rates in subsequent assaults. Perhaps, as Collin Powell posits, “there are no secrets to success.” His advice is not to waste time looking for secrets. Success, he advises, “is the result of perfection, hard work, learning from failure, loyalty to those for whom you work, and persistence.” The Allies were ready for opportunity when it came on June 6, 1944.⁶⁰ At the very least, the Dieppe raid was a reality check that served to concentrate Allied planners’ minds on the extent of the measures that they must take to breach Hitler’s embryonic Atlantic Wall. Hard work and learning from failure paid off. Arguably, the greatest compliment to Overlord planners came from Russell Weigley, who described D-Day as “anticlimactic.”⁶¹

Reflections on the Evolution of Allied Warfare

Overlord's success is not attributable to a single operational artist making decisions on when and where to fight. Instead, many political and military leaders share ownership in the planning and execution of the complex operation. War is the realm of chance, and these leaders sought to stack the deck in their favor. The evolution of warfare from 1942 to 1944 shows that even the most effective operations are a tragic waste of effort without effective tactics and strategy. Defeat is a great catalyst for change and a reminder that planners and commanders must ensure the proper alignment of ends, ways, and means. Through defeat, planners were able to give the problem of invading against a heavily defended coast enough structure to enable effective planning and lead to useful action.⁶²

⁶⁰ Juan Williams, "True Black Power—Colin Powell," *The Washington Post*, January 15, 1989, accessed December 7, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1989/01/15/true-black-power-colin-powell/07061cff-ecc8-48e1-967e-7fc6316020a9/>.

⁶¹ Ambrose, 276-8, 293; Kennedy, 721; Weigley, “Normandy to Falaise” 395-7.

⁶² John A. Olsen and Martin V. Creveld, *The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), x, 224.

War is inherently chaotic and uncertain.⁶³ It is the job of the planner to make certain as many details as possible. Biologist Daniel Botkin postulates there are two kinds of uncertainties. Uncertainty of the first kind, he suggests, is “a problem about the facts of a situation that already exist, or, given present conditions, must occur.” Uncertainty of the second kind is “the occurrence of an event that has some probability of happening, but whose occurrence involves inherent uncertainty.”⁶⁴ As Normandy planners forecast a range of actions and outcomes, they invariably sought to understand these two kinds of uncertainties.

A close examination reveals that lessons learned from Dieppe carried over to history’s largest amphibious assault on June 6, 1944. The Allies analyzed the tragedy and immediately translated the lessons learned into improved tactics and general staff practices. Operation Jubilee paid high dividends in the form of these lessons and commanders put them to appropriate use when the time came for the actual invasion of Europe. The Dieppe raid was an experiment that allowed planners to explore problems, gauge risk, and understand the nature of a large-scale invasion. It tested the feasibility of a direct amphibious assault against a prepared defense. Normandy planners could not necessarily reduce the uncertainty of the invasion’s outcome by studying the fateful day in Dieppe. However, they did learn much about the kind of challenges the Allied force would face and what odds they were willing to accept to execute such a grand operation.

There is a period of time before an army is ready to fight. This boundary in time represents what Leonhard refers to as an army’s “time flanks.”⁶⁵ While the Allies understood they were launching the Dieppe raid left of this time flank, political pressure and a desire to test German defenses led to its approval. The ensuing failure clearly illustrated the importance of air

⁶³ US Department of the Army, *ADP 3-0 Operations* (Washington DC: Government Publishing Office, 2019), 3-8.

⁶⁴ Daniel Botkin, *Our Natural History: The Lessons of Lewis and Clark* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 42-43.

⁶⁵ Leonhard, 8.

cover, overwhelming fire support, combined arms and amphibious assault training, and the need for improved landing techniques, all of which the Allies remedied for Overlord. In addition to these advances, only in 1944 through the strategic planning of industrial production, did the Allies possess enough landing craft and logistical support to enable an operation of this magnitude. The mobilization of industry, manpower, and resources from the United States cannot be overstated in its criticality to achieve the strength to undertake an invasion from England. The changes necessary for success took precious time to fulfill. The Allies showed both patience as well as the courage to take risks to make the most of emergent opportunities while also preventing Russia from deviating to an undesirable course in the war.⁶⁶

The Allies gained air and maritime superiority prior to the conduct of the 1944 invasion. Eisenhower stated that Overlord was feasible only because of this advantage. Without it, the invasion was too risky. Dieppe was a critical and early step in claiming the conditions that would achieve an advantage in the air by June 1944. The RAF greeted the raid with delight. It provided the long-awaited opportunity to provoke the Luftwaffe into a battle that would favor the RAF and allow the Allies to attrit Luftwaffe aircraft.⁶⁷

“Failure does not strike like a bolt from the blue,” eminent psychologist Dietrich Dörner posited. “It develops gradually according to its own logic.”⁶⁸ In retrospect, the Wehrmacht’s failure to repel the Allied invasion was set in motion well before June 6, 1944. Germany’s prevailing thought regarding its western defenses was that past success made its military all but invulnerable to future failure. German success at Dieppe had only perpetuated the idea that the defense of the “Atlantic Wall” existed within an ordered external environment characterized by a clear cause-and-effect relationship. Such entrenched thinking led the Wehrmacht along a path of

⁶⁶ John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy: From D-Day to the Liberation of Paris June 6th-August 25th, 1944* (New York: Random House, 2011), 121-4.

⁶⁷ Ambrose, 183.

⁶⁸ Dietrich Dörner, *The Logic of Failure: Recognizing and Avoiding Error in Complex Situations* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1996), 10.

complacency on its Western front, which in turn doomed Rommel's efforts to improve coastal fortifications and strengthen the defensive posture. The German approach to repelling a large-scale invasion from the West collapsed from a fundamental failure to understand the complexity and the interdependency of variables. In essence, a failed approach toward harnessing uncertainty disrupted the German decision cycle leading up to the 1944 Normandy invasion.

There is no perfection in the art and science of war. Warfare is nuanced, complex, competitive, and fast-moving. Where Dörner suggests failure has its own logic, Clausewitz posits that “war has its own grammar, but not its own logic.” War’s grammar concerns the concepts, principles, and procedures germane to its conduct.⁶⁹ Employing war’s grammar to achieve an advantage requires dynamic learning.⁷⁰ In a 2009 paper, psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Gary Klein wrote, “Without opportunities to learn, a valid intuition can only be due to a lucky accident or to magic.”⁷¹ Dieppe provided the Allied planning effort an opportunity to learn and to reflect critically on the means necessary to achieve success in future large-scale amphibious operations.

Advancing the Future of Warfighting

Examining the Army’s wartime lessons is as pertinent today for studying operational concepts and doctrine to advise the future of warfighting as it is in a time of war. Former National Security Advisor and retired lieutenant general H. R. McMaster asserts that “an interdisciplinary inquiry into the past is essential to understanding the present and contemplating the future.”⁷²

⁶⁹ Antulio J. Echevarria, “American Operational Art, 1917-2008,” in Olsen and Crevelled, 137.

⁷⁰ Dynamic Learning applies the process of learning through experience. Robert Dilts and Todd Epstein, *Dynamic Learning* (Scotts Valley, CA: Dilts Strategy Group, 2017), 7.

⁷¹ Philip Tetlock and Dan Gardner, *Superforecasting: The Art and Science of Prediction* (New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2015), 29-30, 43-44.

⁷² H. R. McMaster, “Developing Strategic Empathy: History as the Foundation of Foreign Policy and National Security Strategy,” *The Journal of Military History* 84 (July 2020): 690.

Learning from history is essential if the US Army is to maintain a competitive advantage over its enemies. Securing a lodgment for the projection of forces into a theater of war is a timeless requirement and continues to be a critical consideration for operational planners. Meanwhile, adversaries seek to contest US military advantages in all domains.⁷³ These adversaries employ an advanced network of defenses and long-range capabilities as they strive to disrupt the arrival of US forces into a theater of war and to force culmination before those forces reach their objective. The key to victory on future battlefields may well lie in an examination of the past.

In the words of contemporary military theorist Everett Dolman “A strategy that anticipates only victories is unrealistic and will ultimately fail.”⁷⁴ The question ‘Can we afford another Dieppe?’ examines a topic more profound than merely a single engagement measured in the progress of an entire war. “Victory, as well as defeat,” Dieppe historian Will Fowler notes, “can be the result of the interaction of events and conditions, many of which are beyond the control of the troops in battle.”⁷⁵ Planners must define and consider the criteria used to evaluate their plan’s suitability, feasibility, and acceptability. The failure at Dieppe is a memorable demonstration of why the operational planner must calculate risks and balance the wisdom of investing the time necessary to achieve concentrated combat power against a need to conduct operations more quickly but with limited forces. The conditions surrounding the raid demonstrate how political will and strategic dialogue influenced the prospect of success and the integration of ends, ways, and means. Failure to achieve tactical victory should not be the criterion that scuttles strategy.⁷⁶

⁷³ US Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet (TP) 525-3-1, *The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations, 2028* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, December 2018), 6.

⁷⁴ Everett Dolman, *Pure Strategy: Power and Principle in the Space and Information Age* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

⁷⁵ Fowler, 234.

⁷⁶ Dolman, 18.

The modern battlespace has much in common with those of World War II. The reemergence of great-power competition with China and Russia poses difficult challenges to national security in a resilient yet weakening international order. To achieve a military advantage over competitors and adversaries, the 2018 National Military Strategy advances the notion of *joint combined arms*, defined as the conduct of operational art through the integration of joint capabilities in all domains.⁷⁷ While the document claims to introduce the term, the concept of joint combined arms is nothing new. Much like a conductor of an orchestra bringing all the instruments together to create a beautiful harmony, Allied leaders such as Mountbatten and Eisenhower harnessed Anglo-Allied military power to create powerful synergies. Operations Jubilee and Overlord exhibited a combined arms approach applied in multiple domains. Through the evolution of the joint combined arms approach, the Allies built cohesion through readiness, interoperability, and mutual trust. These factors resulted in the whole being greater than the sum of its parts, which in turn enabled victory.

As the US Army anticipates a range of alternative futures that includes the military engaging in LSCO, it must seek to understand the continuities and changes in war's grammar. Timeless lessons learned in the evolution of Allied warfare from the 1942 Dieppe raid to the 1944 Normandy invasion apply to military thinking in the future operational environment. Through the study of Jubilee and Overlord, planners encounter concepts such as risk, dynamic learning and convergence. Historical analysis is a doorway into modern and emergent military thinking.

Risk

Risk is a part of all military operations and cannot be avoided. Identifying, mitigating, and accepting risk is a function of command.⁷⁸ Among the many risks considered by Eisenhower,

⁷⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Description of the National Military Strategy 2018* (Washington DC: The Joint Staff, 2018), 2.

⁷⁸ US Department of the Army, ADP 5-0, *The Operations Process* (Washington DC: Government Publishing Office, 2019), 1-17.

the use of airborne forces during Overlord was perhaps the highest in terms of the likelihood of loss and approximation of its potential harm.

A notable critic of the decision to deploy paratroopers was Air Marshall Leigh-Mallory, who served as the Commander of Air Forces for both the 1942 and 1944 Normandy invasions. Leigh-Mallory doubted the success of an airborne drop and warned the Supreme Allied Commander that an airborne operation would result in “futile slaughter.” He predicted a 70 percent loss of gliders and a 50 percent loss of paratroopers. Eisenhower carefully weighed Leigh-Mallory’s cautions and later remarked, “It would be difficult to conceive of a more soul-racking problem.” Ultimately, Eisenhower proceeded with the plan to drop airborne divisions. He understood well the second-and third-order effects of canceling or reducing the airborne action. He also understood that while Leigh-Mallory’s logic was solid, it was based mostly on a historical perspective. In reality, much had changed regarding the manning, equipping, and training of airborne units. While Jubilee illustrates the pitfalls of groupthink, Overlord highlights a critical approach to understanding the environment.⁷⁹

In writing on the evolution of operational art, historian Dennis Showalter articulated that it “must serve a strategic objective. Otherwise, it becomes grand tactics.”⁸⁰ There is a fine line between what history will view as a calculated and prudent risk versus one perceived as careless and injudicious. One may view Eisenhower as a genius and Mountbatten as half-witted because of their responsibility for the respective operations studied here. It is wise, before applying such judgment, to understand the environment in which each leader operated. Different conditions and different circumstances led to different approaches toward the calculation of risk. By the time the

⁷⁹ Ambrose, 178-9.

⁸⁰ Dennis E. Showalter, “Prussian-German Operational Art, 1740-1943.” In Olsen and Creveld, 56.

Allies invaded Normandy in 1944, they had not only acquired the means to fulfill their strategic ends, but they also benefited from experimentation on how to achieve success.

Karl Marx once commented on the Hegelian quote that “all major events in world history happen, so to speak, twice,” saying, “He forgot to add that they take place, the first time, as a tragedy, and the next time, as a farce.”⁸¹ Tactical solutions, such as the defeat of the Canadian 2nd Infantry Division on the shores of Dieppe, are dynamic, suitable only for a moment in time until the enemy adapts, and then that solution is no longer of value. The means and ways required to achieve the strategic end cannot be judged in a vacuum. The joint combined force must not only strive to understand the environment but also consider the interconnectedness of tactical actions. Understanding failure and applying lessons enabled the Allies to accept thoughtfully mitigated risk and pursue emergent strategies necessary to ultimately succeed at the operational level. This effort requires a learning organization focused on reflection and improvement. It also requires a culture that has inculcated a sound understanding of risk.

Organizational Learning at the Operational Level

Organizational learning proved critical to victory in World War II and it will remain vital in future conflicts. When tragedy struck Jubilee, an operation testing the feasibility of a large-scale direct amphibious attack against German coastal defenses in Normandy, Allied leaders searched for a signal in the noise—anything that might explain the chaos.⁸² Unraveling the lessons of Dieppe required embracing both the logic of loss and organizational learning at the operational level. Bringing order to the environment became the foundation for planning the major invasion necessary to end the war in Europe. One can see the evolution of the Anglo-

⁸¹ Karl-Heinz Frieser, *The Blitzkrieg Legend: The 1940 Campaign in the West* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 352.

⁸² “The signal is the truth. The noise is what distracts us from the truth.” Nate Silver, *The Signal and the Noise: Why So Many Predictions Fail, But Some Do Not* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2015), 17, 145.

American Alliance's learning by comparing the actions of forces at the operational level in the two Normandy invasions. Operational artists adapted to changes in the environment. This achievement was no accident; it required holistic thinking from key institutions that developed a deliberate system of learning to inform decision making and enable mission command.⁸³

The 1944 invasion of Normandy showed marked improvement in Anglo-Allied operational art. Chief among the examples of this are the collective, integrated efforts to achieve a unity of effort and purpose. Better cooperation among the joint services led to the successful employment of more than 175,000 troops from more than 4,000 ships and landing vessels supported by 600 warships, 2,500 heavy bombers, and 7,000 fighters.⁸⁴ Over the course of multiple campaigns, organizations began to learn and practice fighting as a unified whole, pulling capabilities together to realize the full potential of joint combined arms in warfare.

Planning is a continuous learning activity of the operations process. In generating operational knowledge, some prior ambiguity may become evident in time and space. Some uncertainties will inevitably become certainties. Even so, the staff should understand that knowing more makes us more, not less, uncertain. The need to learn is enduring and should intensify as doubt increases. Doubt amongst an operational planning team is of great value. It can accelerate the creative and critical thinking power leveraged to develop an approach and solutions. Careful measurement aids planning efforts and enables more accurate assumptions about future endeavors.⁸⁵

The Dieppe tragedy had a profound impact on Allied thinking. The lessons planners derived from that defeat would help sculpt a grand invasion of the continent and, ultimately, help

⁸³ Holistic thinking refers to the "art and science of handling interdependent sets of variables." Jamshid Gharajedaghi, *Systems Thinking: Managing Chaos and Complexity: A Platform for Designing Business Architecture* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2011), 8.

⁸⁴ Echevarria, 148-9.

⁸⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 102.

win the war. It epitomizes operational level learning organizations. Jan Angstrom, a professor of war studies at the Swedish Defense University, identifies two critical phases in organizational learning. The first step is simply the recognition of something to be learned. The second step involves assessment and inferences about what one should learn from a crisis in war.⁸⁶

In essence Jubilee, a massive probe across a broad front, was an early experiment in which the Allies identified the need for learning and established a methodology to record lessons learned. While leaders did not anticipate a tragedy, defeat only served to amplify this need to learn. Operation logs, interviews, and post-battle reports provided Allied leaders with volumes of objective information. It helped them avoid causal oversimplification.⁸⁷ Wherever feasible in warfare, it makes sense to experiment. Experimentation becomes a crucible where methods, tactics, and techniques can be tested, altered, rejected, or perfected. It enables learning in action through experiential feedback.

Convergence in Joint Forcible Entry Operations

As the world's preeminent land warfighting force, the US Army must maintain the adaptive space essential to building the capacity to enter and conduct LSCO when necessary through cohesion, interoperability, and ultimately convergence.⁸⁸ Historical cases provide context for contemporary and emergent military concepts affecting the future operational environment. World War II saw these aspects in the realm of the traditional domains of air, land, and sea.

⁸⁶ Jan Angstrom, "Contribution Warfare: Sweden's Lessons from the War in Afghanistan," *Parameters. US Army War College Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (Winter 2020): 62-3.

⁸⁷ The Canadian Military Headquarters alone published ten major reports on Operation Jubilee before the execution of Operation Overlord. These reports are available through the Directorate of History and Heritage at <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/rep-rap/index-eng.asp>; Causal oversimplification is "Explaining an event by relying on causal factors that are insufficient to account for the event or by overemphasizing the role of one or more of these factors." M. Neil Browne and Stuart M. Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007), 142.

⁸⁸ US Department of the Army, ADP 1 *The Army* (Washington DC: Government Publishing Office, 2019), v, 1-1; adaptive space refers to the dynamic tension which occurs in the interface between the operational and entrepreneurial system. Michael Arena and Mary Uhl-Bien, "Complexity Leadership Theory: Shifting from Human Capital to Social Capital," *People + Strategy* 39 (Spring 2016): 23-4.

The US Army's multi-domain operations (MDO) concept emphasizes the threat of concentrating too soon or too late. It also emphasizes disaggregated maneuver along splintered axes of advance to conduct distributed and globally integrated operations. Rapid aggregation is a challenge facing the future joint force. It must have the ability to enter foreign territory and immediately employ capabilities to accomplish assigned missions in the presence of armed opposition, including advanced area denial systems, while overcoming geographic challenges and degraded or austere infrastructure. The US Army and its joint and international partners must be capable of achieving local domain superiority to penetrate an enemy defense. To explore the problems inherent in these challenges, the joint force must understand the requirements of convergence in the context of the environment within which it operates.⁸⁹

ADP 3-0 defines *convergence* as the continuous integration of capabilities from multiple domains to create multiple dilemmas for the enemy. The MDO concept expands on this definition by describing convergence as the “rapid and continuous integration of capabilities in all domains.”⁹⁰ The MDO pamphlet introduces the term *cross-domain synergy*, an evolution of combined arms maneuver.⁹¹ While the use of the term convergence has become popularized around the US Army today, its concepts have deep historical roots. During World War II the Allies created multiple dilemmas through this synergy and paralyzed German defenses. The threats exceeded Germany's capability to respond.

⁸⁹ US Army, TP 525-3-1, D-4, E-1; US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, *Joint Concept for Entry Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2014), 10.

⁹⁰ US Army, TP 525-3-1, 20.

⁹¹ “*Cross-domain synergy* is an idea introduced in the Joint Operational Access Concept and continued as a key idea in the Capstone Concept for Joint Operations. It is defined as the complementary vice merely additive employment of capabilities in different domains such that each enhances the effectiveness and compensates for the vulnerabilities of the others to establish superiority in some combination of domains that will provide the freedom of action required by the mission.” US Army, TP 525-3-1, GL-2, 20.

Mission command and specifically disciplined initiative enable convergence. The planners of Overlord discovered there was no school solution to the configuration of assault waves. The idea of a ‘single formula’ was nonsense. Each assault faced its own unique problem nuanced with complexities based on the nature of the defense it faced, as well as the composition and shape of the beach. Planners therefore empowered each assault section to solve its own problem.⁹² This realization enabled the Allies to integrate convergence with the principles of mission command. Contemporary doctrine echoes the approach employed in Overlord by noting that “operations need synchronization for rapid execution with leader initiative at every level to deal with uncertainty.”⁹³

All assets that a military force puts into the field should be prepared to work together, and the political will should exist to allow them to do so. Eisenhower and his CCS understood and harnessed the capability the US Army brought into the fight and had the political backing to succeed. The Allies also understood the centrality of the commander, who owns the risk and mission responsibility, and exhausted every resource at their disposal before committing forces to close-in fighting. They understood the requirements of convergence and how to integrate and synchronize the means available to shape, fight, and win in JFE operations. The sum total had a greater effect than its individual components.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that understanding the tragedy of defeat at the operational level provides a framework for developing theory and doctrine. In October 1941, Churchill told Mountbatten to “prepare for the invasion of Europe, for unless we can go and land and fight Hitler and beat his forces on land, we shall never win this war.”⁹⁴ The contrast of the tragedy at

⁹² Ambrose, 108-9.

⁹³ US Joint Staff, JP 3-18 (2018), I-1.

⁹⁴ Ambrose, 40.

Dieppe in 1942 with the success at Normandy in 1944 is also a contrast of two very different approaches toward the conduct of large-scale amphibious assaults. The lessons of Dieppe and Normandy, placed side by side, provide much for the operational artist to reflect upon. Amphibious assaults represent some of the most complex operations in military history. A study of Allied planning efforts for an invasion of Europe serves as an example of mission command that led forces from defeat and toward victory. An evolution in military thought forged a framework for operational art based on experience, theory, and strategic requirement.

Practitioners wrestle with the preservation of the methods, tactics, and techniques that have met the needs of the past while simultaneously adapting to the challenges in a complex, volatile, and uncertain present. They do this not in a binary construct but instead as an exploration as they strive to see both the new and the old in a single frame. As the US Army enters the third decade of the twenty-first century, it finds itself at another historical inflection point, where distinct yet interrelated components of the operational environment create a situation where rapidly evolving trends profoundly affect the concepts and doctrine in which it prepares for its next battle. As the US Army adopts concepts and drafts doctrine to lead its forces into the future, it should heed the advice of Niccolò Machiavelli, who observed, “For since men almost always walk on paths beaten by others..., a prudent man should always... imitate those who have been most excellent, so that if his own virtue does not reach that far, it is at least in the odor of it.”⁹⁵ Military thinking leverages a tension between continuity and change to benefit future warfighting.

The dictum that people who lose a battle tend to study it more carefully reigns supreme with Operation Jubilee and the lessons it provided for the Allied staff. The 1942 Dieppe raid had a cascading effect on operational thinking on both sides of the English Channel. The Germans experienced a degree of “victory disease” leading to overconfidence and hubris across the tactical, operational, and strategic levels of warfare. This cognitive state elicited complacency that

⁹⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (London: Penguin, 2003), 108.

proved disastrous to German efforts to repel the inevitable invasion. Germany, in essence, fell into the trap of believing its own propaganda. The Allies, on the other hand, were enlightened by failure. Paradoxically, failure provided more benefit and influence than success on the strategic outcome of the war. Eisenhower understood that “sometimes the tactician must pay a premium price to assure operational results.”⁹⁶ Interpreting the failures at Dieppe forced a realization amongst the Allies that they knew less about the world than they thought they did.

Military leaders on the losing side of battle tend to make an effort to study the phenomenon carefully. While history does not precisely repeat itself, it does tend to rhyme. Lessons learned from mistakes provide the energy and impetus to avoid significant errors in the future when the stakes are high. Led by General Roberts, Operation Jubilee provided the Anglo-Allied staff the opportunity to study through an empirical basis the theory of massing forces in Europe.

America has a long tradition of not being fully ready for war. False confidence amid ill-prepared forces is a recipe for disaster in the next conflict. The combat performance of a past victory does not magically reappear as troops march off for their next conflict. Can we afford another Dieppe? The fate of US and multinational forces' preparedness benefits from answering this question as objectively and honestly as possible. Given that LSCO against a peer threat is no longer unimaginable, it is the moral imperative of the United States to ensure that it sends no soldiers into combat unless it can agree on the major purposes and objectives, and that it can adequately train, organize, equip, and lead them.

⁹⁶ Michael R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy: American Operational Art to 1945* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 192.

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