

Scylla and Charybdis: The Army's Development of War Plan Orange

**A Monograph
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Abstract

Scylla and Charybdis: The Army's Development of War Plan Orange by MAJ Adam M Cannon, United States Army, 52 Pages.

Planning for hypothetical wars represented one of the most daunting challenges for the Army in the interwar years (1919-1941). A challenging strategic environment, a weak force lacking in significant capability, and no unified national security apparatus all combined to limit the options available to the Army's War Plans Division. War Plan Orange, the plan to defeat Japan, emerged as the most likely contingency and received the greatest emphasis for development. Published in 1924, 1928, and 1938, War Plan Orange evolved in response to changes in the strategic environment and inherent constraints placed on the planners.

This monograph examines how the planners of the Army War Plans Division developed their contribution to the overall conception of War Plan Orange. By placing the plans within the context in which they developed like the strategic environment, the condition of the army, and the deliberations surrounding its development, a comprehensive picture of the plan emerges. This picture allows for a reasoned evaluation of the feasibility of the plan. Rather than make comparisons with Japanese capabilities and the likelihood of success against the Japanese, this monograph solely examines the initial objectives sought by the plan, and if they were achievable given the condition of the Army.

The War Plans Division produced plans of increasing feasibility during the interwar years. In the 1924 plan, through a combination of faulty assumptions and wishful thinking, the War Plans Division created an impractical plan in response to political pressure to immediately relieve the Philippines. The 1928 Plan, while marginally better, prescribed a rigid course of action the force commander would take to relieve the Philippines. Only the 1938 plan presented a plan that was within the capabilities of the Army, and allowed the force commander the flexibility to act according to his discretion. The evolution of the plan shows an increased awareness of the challenges of the operational environment and an increased willingness to make difficult decisions.

The first iterations of the plan lost sight of the ultimate purpose of the war: the defeat of Japan. In investing disproportionate energy in a relief of the Philippines and vastly overestimating the capability of the United States to build up its Army, the 1924 and 1928 plans would have led to an early defeat. The final plan took a more honest assessment of the capabilities of the Army, as well as recognizing that the initial actions of the Japanese during the war would shape

The development of war plans is relevant in the contemporary operating environment. The myriad of constraints and conditions that burden any operational artist in the crafting of a war plan is not unknown in Army history. The story of the development of War Plan Orange is useful in explaining the challenges and solutions applied by past operational artists when faced with seemingly impossible problems.

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Introduction

The end of the First World War complicated an already serious strategic situation for the United States. Japan's acquisition of the former German-administered islands in the Marianas, Marshalls, and Carolines fundamentally altered the challenges presented by America's possessions in the Western Pacific. Following their seizure from Spain in the Spanish-American War, the Philippines and Guam provided the United States with her first imperial possessions, but also real strategic vulnerabilities. The confluence of these two factors forced a wholesale reengagement of America's intended response to Japanese aggression: War Plan Orange. Although planning for a war with Japan began in the early 1900s, the post-Great War era required a fundamentally new approach to the problem.

War Plan Orange came into being through the Joint Army and Navy Board. Created in 1903 among many other military reforms in the wake of the Spanish-American War, the Joint Board did not achieve any real significance until following the Great War. Reinvigorated through the placement of the uniformed chiefs of the Army and Navy, the two services finally had a mandate to cooperate on matters of defense and the means to enforce them. Supported by the Joint Planning Committee, comprised of senior members of both services' war planning agencies, the Joint Board could proceed with the development of coordinated war plans. Although the subsequent "Color Plans" addressed threats ranging from Germany (Black), Mexico (Green), Brazil (Purple), and a host of other countries, War Plan Orange, a unilateral war with Japan, remained the most realistic. War Plan Orange had the highest priority of development during the interwar years until the emergence of the Rainbow plans in the late 1930s.¹

The development and evolution of War Plan Orange during the interwar years was a continuous process. Although the Joint Board produced distinct orders in 1924, 1928, and 1938,

¹ JB 325, Serial 210, "Order of Priority in preparation of War Plans," 07 June 192, Microfilm, Roll 9.

planning for a war with Japan continued during the intervening years. Updated estimates, briefings, and reports tracked the progress of planning, as well as meetings of the Joint Board and the respective War Plans Divisions. For the Army, the planning remained in the Army War Plans Division, created as a fifth branch of the Army General Staff in 1921. Given the mandate for strategic planning, the Army War Plans Division occupied a unique position on the Army General Staff. The nature of its work required it to synchronize the other branches of the General Staff and tactical units to develop realistic plans. The Army War Plans Division had to appreciate the aspects of mobilization, procurement, training, and numerous other considerations in order for the plans it created to have any utility. As only a part of a hierarchical system, the Army War Plans Division also had to content with directives imposed by influential military officers.

Besides the Army-internal considerations, the Army War Plans Division also had to understand the strategic context of the plans they developed. Political realities and the input of powerful civilians in the government exerted a significant influence on the options available to the planners. Contributing to this, developments outside of the government's control, like changes in technology and the actions of foreign governments also shaped how the Army War Plans Division fashioned its war plans.

Army-internal considerations, the strategic context, and the operational environment all served to create a series of constraints for the Army War Plans Division in the form of facts, directives, and political factors. It was within these constraints that the Army War Plans Division had to create their portion of War Plan Orange. This study will show that the Army portion of War Plan Orange creatively evolved during the interwar era, reflecting an improved understanding of operational art as it progressed from an unrealistic 1924 Plan to the 1938 Plan that informed the eventual victory of the Allies in World War II. The Army War Plans Division managed to accomplish this feat through constant communication amongst the General Staff, the use of the Army school system to identify and rectify fundamental problems, and an understanding of the Army's capabilities.

The foremost study of War Plan Orange comes from Edward Miller in his *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan 1897-1945*. Miller's book has consequently become the dominant narrative on the development of War Plan Orange. His book provides a comprehensive overview of War Plan Orange from its inception following the Spanish-American War to its eclipse by the Rainbow plans. As a naval historian, he focuses primarily on the U.S. Navy's role in the development of the plan over the years at the Joint Board and Navy Board levels. This view is understandable given the Navy's dominant responsibility for the execution of the plan. Miller describes two opposing camps as struggling for dominance in the Orange debate: those desiring an immediate relief of the Philippines, the "thrusters," and those favoring a more deliberate advance in case of war, the "cautionaries."²

While describing the Navy as having both "thruster" and "cautionary" tendencies, he portrays it as being the more rational service. He characterizes the Army's input as fundamentally reactive and hindering the development of the best possible plan. The Army, dominated by wishful thinking and powerful personalities, skewed the overall nature of the debate and consequently prevented a realistic plan from emerging. In this characterization, Miller does not deeply examine the internal debates the Army War Plans Division had to reach their final decisions.

Before Miller's book, the pre-eminent work came from Louis Morton's article in *World Politics* titled "War Plan Orange: Evolution of a Strategy." Like Miller, he provides substantial input on the mechanics of the development of the plan over time, but keeps his focus on actions at the Joint Board. While he provides better descriptions of the internal debates occurring within the Army over the plan, he has very little discussion of the factors driving the debates. Morton's work

² Edward Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 36. Miller defines the two terms in relation to the two groups that advocated the differing operational approaches. He initially refers to the "thrusters" as the adventurists, and the "cautionaries" as the realists. Miller's characterization of the thruster/cautionary debate shows which side he favors.

still provides useful insights on the tensions experienced by the staffs in the development of War Plan Orange.

The best work that looks at the troubled relationship between the Army, Navy, and Department of State during the interwar years is Fred Greene's paper "The Military View of American National Policy, 1904-1940." His paper details the divisions and tensions between these three cabinet-level positions on the overall strategic aims of the country during this critical period. Greene's depiction of the inability of the Army and Navy to agree on fundamental considerations, to say nothing of the lack of guidance received from the State Department, provides significant input into how the Army subsequently tried to define its missions.

There exist numerous excellent books providing overviews on the Army during the interwar period. Matthew Matheny's *Carrying the War to the Enemy* covers the development of American operational art during the interwar era, which includes war planning. Edward Coffman's *The Regulars* continues to be a comprehensive work covering the development of the Army standing force during America's rise in the early-20th Century. Lastly, J.E. and H.W. Kaufmann's *The Sleeping Giant* provides a synopsis on the various challenges faced by the Army during the 1920s and 1930s. Together, these books inform the state of the Army and provide insight into the realities the Army faced during this period. They vividly depict what would be possible for the Army to accomplish with respect to its war plans.

While many authors have covered the form of the Army during the interwar period, the shape that it took came because of intense debates following World War I. Although the sources above provide an overview, John McAuley Palmer's *An Army of the People* is an excellent source espousing the initial views of a citizen army and its relation to the Regular forces it would support. Coupled with Donald Kington's *Forgotten Summers*, an overview of the Citizens' Military Training Camps and the text of the National Defense Act of 1916, as amended in 1920, these works provide a window into the mindset of the Army and society on what the Army's responsibilities and focus should be. James Hewes's *From Root to McNamara* and Otto Nelson's

National Security and the General Staff help to complete this picture by looking at the relationship amongst the various divisions, bureaus, and branches within the upper echelons of the Army and how they informed the development of plans by the War Plans Division.

Two works cover the plans for mobilization during the interwar years. The first is Paul Koistinen's *Planning War, Pursuing Peace*. This work focuses primarily on industrial mobilization. Due to the baseline assumption in War Plan Orange that the conflict with Japan would be a prolonged war, the conversion of America's industrial power served as a consideration for the planners. The other work, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States* by Lieutenant Colonel Martin Kriedberg and First Lieutenant Merton Henry, places a primacy on the planning for the mobilization of manpower in case of war. Together, the two texts provide an overview for how the planners of War Plan Orange could foresee the expansion of America's military capabilities in response to potential threats. Kerry Irish's article "Apt Pupil" describes Dwight Eisenhower's efforts to add realism to the industrial mobilization process, a critical component to fighting the "long war" forecasted by all iterations of War Plan Orange.

Finally, several works available examine the impact of significant individuals on the development of War Plans. The first *MacArthur Speaks*, is a compilation of speeches made by General Douglas MacArthur. While the speeches do not cover his time as Chief of Staff of the Army, the views he espouses in them would be remarkably close to the sentiments that he had from his time in that office. The second work "Military Dissenter" examines the career of the chief of the War Plans Division in the mid-1930s, Stanley Embick. This work provides insight into the outsized role General Embick had in creating fundamental changes in War Plan Orange as influenced by his time in the Philippines. Finally, George Eaton's article "General Walter Krueger and Joint War Planning" and Kevin Holzimmer's book *A Soldier's Soldier* cover the career of a general better known for his accomplishments in World War II. The works on General Krueger, though, will provide additional context for the deliberations occurring within the War Plans Division over War Plan Orange.

This study will use the sources above and, augmented with the records of the Joint Board, Army War Plans Division, and other primary-source documents, determine how the Army arrived at its decisions for inclusion into the Joint Plan Orange. The all-encompassing approach will attempt to demonstrate how the War Plans Division created a realistic method for addressing the pre-eminent security threat of its time.

The study will progress chronologically from the end of the Great War through the adoption of the Rainbow plans in the late 1930s while looking iteratively at the creation of the three major published orders of War Plan Orange. The 1924, 1928, and 1938 plans all occurred within distinct periods that merit a sequential examination in a separate section. Each section will begin with a review of the salient aspects of the published orders, followed by a description of strategic environment. Next will be a review of the changes in the domestic environment and effects on the Army. Coupled with a review of the circumstances of the Army (e.g. its budget, missions, size), the study will describe how the Army War Plans Division understood the environment in which they were planning. Next, the study will examine the decisions of the Joint Board and how they created the conditions the Army had to work within to design their own plan. Finally, the study will examine the responses within the Army and political establishment to further assess the feasibility of the plans. This systematic approach will show that the Army eventually adopted a realistic War Plan Orange that focused on the achievement of victory over Japan.

Background

The shape of the first re-examination of War Plan Orange began to take form soon after hostilities concluded on the Western Front. Recognizing the changed strategic situation forced a wholesale reconsideration of the problems faced by the U.S. military during a Pacific War. Japanese involvement in the war and her alliance with Great Britain guaranteed her a place at the negotiating table. What emerged was a League of Nations Mandate over former German possessions in the Pacific, specifically the Mariana Islands (less Guam), the Marshall Islands, and the Caroline Islands. While of negligible economic value, they provided Japan with some of the finest anchorages in the Pacific and the capability to further project her power into the region. More significantly for the United States, these islands lay astride the most direct route from Hawaii to the Philippines. The largest American possession, the Philippines, contained a substantial garrison of American soldiers, sailors, and marines. The uncertainty of America's future in the islands, however, had consistently hobbled the development of defensive infrastructure in the form of port facilities and fortifications. Outside of the Philippines, the most significant possession of the United States in the Western Pacific was Guam. With the threat against it by the Japanese acquisition of the remainder of the Marianas heightened, Guam gained new prominence and began to figure in substantively to the designing of American strategy.³

One factor about fighting an expeditionary war in the Philippines was clear: it would require close cooperation between the Army and Navy. To help facilitate cooperation between the two, they formed the Joint Army-Navy Board in 1903. The Board was relatively ineffective in its early years, fading into irrelevance during the Great War. Following the war, however, Secretary of War Newton Baker and Secretary of the Navy pushed for a stronger Board. By including the uniformed chiefs of the two services, their deputies, and the heads of the respective War Plans

³ Memo to the Secretaries of War and the Navy from the Joint Board, "Strategy of the Pacific," December 18, 1919, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, JB 325, Serial 28-d, Roll 9.

Divisions, the Army and Navy finally had the mechanism in place by which true joint war planning could begin. Subordinate to the Joint Board was the Joint Planning Committee. Comprised of the heads of the Army and Navy War Plans Division and their respective staffs, the Joint Planning Committee had the responsibility of completing studies and war plans as directed by the Joint Board. Following the receipt of monographs from the Army and Navy intelligence divisions at the end of each calendar year, the Joint Planning Committee would complete an Estimate of the Situation to establish the conditions for an updated war plan. Upon approval of the Estimate and completion of the war plan, the respective services would then develop their own war plans to meet the requirements listed in the Joint plan. The services thus had a top-down mechanism for the creation of war plans, ensuring that the individual services developed their respective supporting plans within the guidelines prescribed Joint Planning Committee.⁴

In addition to the reformatations within the Joint Board, two major events framed the post-Great War environment for the development of War Plan Orange. The National Defense Act of 1920 created the circumstances under which the Army would labor until the eve of World War II. The Five-Power Treaty between the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, and France set the conditions war planners would develop defensive schemes for the Western Pacific. Together, they provided the foundation against which all interwar iterations of War Plan Orange took place.

Passed after extensive discussions with the uniformed services, National Defense Act of 1920 established the structure and purpose of the army for the interwar period. According to the law, the Army of the United States comprised the Regular Army, the National Guard, and the Organized Reserves. The law recognized the lessons of the mobilization for the First World War, relying heavily on the ability of the military to rapidly expand from a peacetime Regular Army

⁴ Memo from General Pershing to the Secretary of War, "Coordination of Army and Navy War Plans," 07 June 1923, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 9, JB 325, Serial 210.

strength of 280,000 enlisted men and 18,000 officers. The National Defense Act came about because of a debate over the nature of the Army in the republic. On one side was General Peyton March, the Chief of Staff of the Army. He favored a large standing Army of 500,000 with a three-month universal military training provision that would enable the United States to field an expandable force of over a million men in the event of war.⁵ This large and expensive idea received much skepticism from Congress, many of whose members looked for a policy they perceived closer to traditional American values.⁶

Contrasting General March's ideas was the view espoused by Colonel John McAuley Palmer, an aide to General John J. Pershing, the recently-returned commander of the American Expeditionary Force. An advocate of the concept of the citizen-soldier, Palmer recommended a much smaller Regular Army of 280,000 with six-month universal military training of the citizenry.⁷ He felt that an army of trained national volunteers would be sufficient to deal with any large threats, but that a small Regular Army would be needed to respond to emergencies, train the citizenry, and assist with the mobilization of the mass army. Congress, with an eye on economy, showed greater favor to Palmer's view, commissioning him to assist with the writing of the act. The act as approved reflected Palmer's views on the size and structure of the Army, but opposition from several powerful senators prevented the inclusion of universal military training.

The prominence of the Organized Reserve in the act showed the devotion of Congress to the citizen-soldier. While Palmer's preference for universal military training did not find expression in the act, the creation of the Citizens' Military Training Camps emerged as an acceptable substitute. The camps would provide one month of training in the summer to accepted

⁵ J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann, *The Sleeping Giant: American Armed Forces between the Wars* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1996), 17.

⁶ "Senator Declares Army Bill Sets Up Staff Despotism," *New York Times*, 14 September 1919, Front Page.

⁷ John McAuley Palmer, *An Army of the People* (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1916). 148-9; "Senators to Frame A New Army Bill" *New York Times*, 17 November 1919, Special to the Times.

applicants, with the intention of creating a corps of reserve officers after three such summer sessions.⁸ Along with the parallel, but distinct, Reserve Officer Training Corps, the Act provided for the creation of a large body of trained officers to help lead the mass army raised in the next war. To complement the large numbers of Reserve Officers, the creation of the Enlisted Reserve had the effect of creating another echelon of readiness that required the Regular Army to devote training resources for its maintenance. The War Department understood that its primary mission became the training and development of the National Guard and Organized Reserves, with its secondary missions being the garrisoning of overseas possessions in the Philippines, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal, and maintaining a force capable of responding to emergencies.⁹

The final component of the National Defense Act that had far-reaching effects was the section providing for the division of the country into geographic areas of responsibility. Within the act's guidance of organizing into "brigades, divisions, corps" as it saw fit, the War Department divided the country into three field army areas, with a total of nine corps. Each corps would have one Regular Army, two National Guard, and three Organized Reserve divisions within its area of responsibility. Coupled with its responsibility to train the National Guard and the Organized Reserves, the Regular Army found itself dispersed to satisfy its training and mobilization duties. The scattering of the Regular Army into numerous posts within the corps area of responsibility had the detrimental effect of limiting the Army's ability to participate in large scale maneuvers at the brigade or above level, much less for providing for a cohesive emergency force.¹⁰ Division or above command post exercises provided the greatest source of training for commanders and staffs of that echelon. The cumulative effect of the National Defense

⁸ Donald M. Kington, *Forgotten Summers: The Story of the Citizens' Military Training Camps, 1921-1940* (San Francisco, CA: Two Decades Publishing, 1995), 10-11.

⁹ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1922, 16.

¹⁰ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1931, 40.

Act was to provide the Regular Army with enumerated responsibilities that would serve as the basis for extensive debate in the 1920s.

The National Defense Act created the overall framework under which the Army labored during the interwar years. Authorized at a strength of 280,000, the Regular Army struggled against systematic restrictions and responsibilities that prevented it from focusing on a mission of rapidly responding to an emergency. By 1924, the tasks of training the National Guard and Reserves began to consume the majority of time and resources available to Regular Army units.¹¹ While it appears that the overseas garrisons did not directly suffer due to the constraints on the continental-based army, nor could they expect additional augmentation under the guidelines established by the Act. The emphasis on training and mobilization support would consequently limit the size and capabilities of the overseas forces responsible for securing America's possessions.¹² Aside from local naval forces, these garrisons would face the initial brunt of an attack from Japan.

The second event that greatly shaped the post-war military was the Washington Naval Conference and its Five-Power Treaty in 1922. Envisioned to prevent a naval arms race between the victors of World War I, what emerged was a far-reaching security agreement intended to create conditions for stability in the Pacific region. While most commentators focused on the 5:5:3 tonnage ration for capital ship construction agreed to by Britain, the United States, and Japan, respectively, of significant importance was the restriction on fortification construction within defined areas. Under Article XIX of the treaty, the U.S., Japan, and Great Britain agreed to not build fortifications or naval bases within specified territories and possessions in the Western

¹¹ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1924, 4-5.

¹² Ibid, 6-7. This report stated that on 30 June 1924, the Army had 18,000 officers, and 118,750 enlisted men. Of the enlisted men, only approximately 63,000 were in the continental United States, and 46,000 of those were committed to training and mobilization activities

Pacific.¹³ For the U.S., this stipulation meant that the Army and Navy could not enhance the defense infrastructure of the Philippines or Guam. The treaty did allow for the routine maintenance of facilities and the replacement of worn-out equipment, but prohibited substantial improvements. Nonetheless, the services reacted harshly to the treaty, with the Joint Planning Committee calling it “a broken reed upon which to lean for protection.”¹⁴

The Joint Board consequently recommended there be no reductions to the forces in the Philippines, but remained vague on the treaty’s effects on the future of the Philippines. Recognizing this as fundamentally a political question, the board decided to make no changes to the mission of the forces in the Philippines.¹⁵ Without extensive fortifications, the defense of the Philippines rested on the size and strength of the mobile force committed to its defense, whether U.S. forces or indigenous. In the review of the defense of the Philippines following the signing of the treaty, the Joint Board recommended no change to the size of the overall military force guarding the Philippines.¹⁶

The final major impact of the treaty was on the viability of Guam as an advance base. Envisioned in the defensive scheme in the Pacific in the 1919 strategy review as the location for a

¹³ Memo for the Joint Board from the Chief of Staff of the Army, “The Defense of the Philippine Islands,” 08 February 1922, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 179. The memo cites the “Quadruple Treaty” as stating “The United States, the British Empire, and Japan agree that the status quo at the time of the signing of the present Treaty, with regard to fortifications and naval bases, shall be maintained in the respective territories and possessions specified hereunder” with insular areas as those territories adjacent to the U.S., Alaska, the Panama Canal, and Hawaii exempt from the provisions. The treaty states “the maintenance of the status quo under the foregoing provisions implies that no new fortifications or naval bases shall be established in the territories and possessions specified; that no measures shall be taken to increase the existing naval facilities for the repair and maintenance of naval forces, and that no increase shall be made in the coast defenses of the territories and possessions above specified.”

¹⁴ Memo for the Joint Board from the Joint Planning Committee, “The defense of the Philippine Islands,” 13 April 1922, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 179.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Memo for the Secretary of War from the Joint Board, “Policy re defense of Philippines. Effect of new Treaties,” 17 May 1922, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 179

first-class naval facility, the treaty rendered Guam strategically useless.¹⁷ Even more consequential was its anticipated seizure by Japan in the early stages of war. Such an action would force the United States Navy to penetrate a solid perimeter of Japanese-held possessions in order to reinforce the Philippines. Guam's capture would also necessitate the capture of intermediate bases in the Marshall or Caroline Islands to re-seize it.¹⁸ With the Philippines being the real strategic prize in the Pacific, any diversion to seize Guam would increase the time required for a relief or re-seizure of the Philippines. The projected loss of Guam early in a Pacific War and subsequent loss of a potential intermediate staging base created the conditions for the persistent debate over the correct approach to fighting Japan: a direct relief of the Philippines or a more cautious advance across the Pacific. The tension between the two schools of thought defined the debate over War Plan Orange in the interwar years.¹⁹

In providing focus to the Army and setting limitations in the Pacific, the National Defense Act of 1920 and Four-Power Treaty effectively bounded the environment within which War Plan Orange could take form. These two actions set limits upon what the Army could do to prepare for war with Japan. The War Plans Division had to operate within these limits in developing an operational approach to achieve victory.

¹⁷ Memo for the Secretary of War from the Joint Board, "Strategy of the Pacific," 18 December 1919, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 9, JB 325, Serial 28-d. Memo for the Joint Board from the Joint Planning Committee, "The defense of the Philippine Islands," 13 April 1922, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 179.

¹⁸ Memo for the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy from the Joint Board, "Strategy of the Pacific," 18 December 1919, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 9, JB 325, Serial 28-d.

¹⁹ Miller, *War Plan Orange*, 36.

War Plan Orange 1924

The 1924 version of War Plan Orange developed in response to the challenging strategic environment and inherent limitations placed on the military immediately following World War I. Law, geography, national sentiment, and disagreements within the Army shaped the final form of the plan, resulting in an awkward compromise that prevented a truly feasible plan from emerging.

The 1924 version of War Plan Orange began with the Joint Planning Committee's completion of its first Estimate of the Orange Situation on 25 May 1923. The general conclusions of the Joint Planning Committee reflect the collective decision that an immediate relief of the Philippines was a priority. The planners discussed in a logical progression that Japan was the primary threat and most likely source of a war in the Pacific and that most likely the war would strictly be between the United States and Japan. In order to effectively challenge the Japanese, an advanced base in the Western Pacific had to be established. As Manila Bay was the strongest location occupied by the U.S, it represented the best possible location for the base. Finally, projecting power in the Western Pacific would require repair and docking facilities for the fleet.²⁰

Following these seemingly self-evident requirements for success, the Joint Planning Committee identified the mission of the military during War Plan Orange was "to establish at the earliest date American sea power in the Western Pacific in strength superior to that of Japan."²¹ To accomplish this mission, they described the general concept of the war as primarily naval, with the objective being to cut Japan's line of communications and compel her surrender. In the discussion of the subordinate missions necessary to support this, the Army had the predominant responsibility to hold Manila Bay. The Joint Board's consequent determination influenced the development of planning for the defense of the Philippines. A memorandum from the Joint Board

²⁰ Memo for the Joint Board from the Joint Planning Committee, "Synopsis of the Joint Army and Navy Estimate of the Orange Situation, Section I, General Conclusions," 25 May 1923, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 325, Serial 207.

²¹ Ibid.

to the Secretary of War recognized that “it is not practicable to build up a local defense for the Philippines that would be strong enough to hold out against a determined attack by Japan for an indefinite period without relief from the United States.”²² The following sentence stated that “such a local defense would require the maintenance in the Philippines of a standing army out of all proportion to the military policies of the United States.”²³ Faced with a requirement to defend the Philippines, but limited in the number of forces that could be dedicated to its immediate security, the Army had little choice but to endorse the relief expedition.

The description of the initial findings of the Joint Board to the Secretary of War further states that the immediate reinforcement expedition would must be made of “sufficient strength to hold Manila Bay until the arrival of further reinforcements.”²⁴ In this vein, the Joint Board recognized that the initial emergency force sent would not be the only reinforcements the Philippines would receive, and that it only needed to be large enough to forestall a collapse and to secure the advance base for the Navy. In its outline for the requirements of the joint plan, the Joint Board specified that the relief force must assemble in Hawaii within two weeks of the initiation of hostilities and that the forces already in the Philippines must be able to hold Manila Bay against Japanese capture for six months.²⁵ These aspects provided the foundation that the War Plans Division build the remainder of the war plan.

The 1924 version of War Plan Orange received approval through the Joint Board on 20 June 1924. Its publication stayed generally in line with the recommendations of the 1923 Estimate of the Orange Situation and review of the defense of the Philippines. The mission, “to establish, at the earliest date, United States sea power in the Western Pacific in strength superior

²² Memo for the Secretary of War from the Joint Board, “Defense of the Philippines,” 07 July 1923, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 208.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

to that of Japan,” remained the same, as did the general concept. While the War Plan recognized that the execution would primarily be a naval responsibility, the Army received significant supporting tasks. The first task was assembling 50,000 troops within ten days (D+10) at Oahu, ready to deploy to the Philippines within fourteen days (D+14). A subsequent force of 15,000 would be ready within thirty days (D+30) for deployment in the Pacific to relieve marine garrisons in the Marshall and Caroline Islands and for the recapturing of Guam. Finally, the Army would mobilize additional forces to bring other overseas garrisons up to strength, create a Continental-based reserve for other contingencies, and provide additional forces to win the war against Japan.²⁶ To reach the initial number of 50,000 soldiers, the Army would need to rely disproportionately on the Regular Army. With the size of the Regular Army reduced in 1924 to 12,000 officers and 118,750 men and the commitments to garrisons overseas, the challenge was to balance the needs of the emergency force while continuing to support mobilization.²⁷

The considerations of fighting a war in the Western Pacific and the difficulties that began to arise in the number of soldiers available dictated the approach the Army took in designing its portion of War Plan Orange. The two major factors that shaped this approach were the marked deterioration in the size of the Regular Army and political direction to reinforce the Philippines. Together, these factors underline the tension of having sufficient soldiers available early enough to accomplish the reinforcement mission.

The Regular Army experienced a marked degradation in its size and capabilities soon after the approval of the National Defense Act. With the dominant consideration of the Harding Administration being a focus on “economy,” Congress pared back the money appropriated for the

²⁶ Report to the Joint Board from the Joint Army and Navy Planning Committee, “Joint Basic War Plan – Orange,” 12 March 1924, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 9, JB 325, Serial 228.

²⁷ Size of the Regular Army from the Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1924.

Army until by 1924 it could only field 12,000 officers and 118,750 men.²⁸ Compounding this crisis of manpower was the lack of additional funding for armaments and munitions. While the Army could use the stockpiles from the Great War, as early as 1921 the War Department recognized that this capability would degrade over time.²⁹ Even before planning for a war with Japan, the Army contended with limitations that shaped the feasibility of potential responses.

Despite the apparent weakness of the Regular Army, political factors influenced the requirement to defend the Philippines. In the Joint Planning Committee's report on the effect of the Four-Powers Treaty on the defense of the Philippines, a dissenting view by Major John Kingman, a member of the Army's General Staff, proposed a reduction in the force levels commensurate with a mission to solely "support the authority of the Governor-General in maintaining internal order in the Philippine Islands."³⁰ In his recommendation, Major Kingman felt that the conditions created by the Treaty meant that a half-hearted defense of the islands would be worse than all but conceding them in the early stages of a war.³¹ Major Kingman's dissent represented an early skepticism of the wisdom of holding the Philippines, and its inclusion in the official report shows that his ideas held weight in the discussions over the future of War Plan Orange.

It is difficult to know the pervasiveness of Major Kingman's views in the War Department, but even the Joint Planning Committee's majority opinion of the treaty's impact stated that the army would face many difficulties in a prolonged defense of the Philippines.³²

²⁸ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 20 June 1923, 2; Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1924, 6.

²⁹ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1921, 31.

³⁰ Memo for the Joint Board from the Joint Planning Committee, "The defense of the Philippine Islands, Dissenting Opinion by Major John J. Kingman," 13 April 1922, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 179.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Memo for the Joint Board from the Joint Planning Committee, "The defense of the Philippine Islands," 13 April 1922, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 179

While not advocating an abandonment of the Philippines, the committee's view opened the door for a cautionary approach to the relief of the Philippines. The dissemination of the report resulted in a letter sent to the Secretary of War from Leonard Wood, the Governor-General of the Philippines. In his letter, he expressed alarm with the idea that "in case of war with Japan, the Philippine Islands could not be defended, [and] must be abandoned."³³ His letter appealed to the honor of the United States and responsibility to defend her possessions as fundamental to any resulting plan. Wood advocated for the forces in the Philippines to "resist to the end and be strengthened in this resistance by the knowledge that the fleet is coming to their relief." Finally, the letter recommended that the Navy's mission should be first the relief of the Philippines and establishment of a forward base in Manila Bay, followed by the destruction of the Japanese fleet.³⁴ While Wood's letter did not need to contend with strong opposition, it further cemented the case for an immediate relief of the Philippines. In reaction to the letter, the Secretary of War acknowledged that both the War and Navy Departments were in agreement with Wood, effectively committing the Army to a prompt reinforcement of the Philippines in case of war.³⁵

An evaluation of the validity of the War Plan rests on the ability of the Army to provide the manpower necessary in a timely manner to align with the requirements identified by the War Plans Division. The essential component to evaluate would be the availability of the 50,000 men by D+10 with an onward movement from Hawaii by D+14 for reinforcement of the Philippines. One source of input for the availability of manpower came from the mobilization plans developed by the General Staff. Another source of input came from the use of the Army War College as a

³³ Ltr for the Secretary of War from the Governor-General of the Philippines, "Recommendations by the Governor General of the Philippines concerning measures of defense," 05 February 1923, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 209.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ltr for (MG) Wood from the Secretary of War John Weeks, 24 July 1923, War Department General and Special Staffs, War Plans Division General Correspondence, 1920-1942 (hereafter WPDGC), Box 13, WPD 532-5.

laboratory for the War Plans. An examination of the information coming from both sources is important to understanding the development of the plan.

Following the Great War and the passage of the National Defense Act amendment, mobilization came under the responsibility of three entities. The first entity was the General Staff. Within the General Staff, both the G-3, the Operations and Training Division, and the War Plans Division, had responsibilities. The War Plans Division would create the studies to determine the mobilization requirements for particular situations. From these requirements, the G-3 would have responsibility over the recruitment and mobilization of the Army.³⁶ The War Plans Division would provide the G-3 with the requirements of mobilization, in terms of manpower and the infrastructure.³⁷ The second entity was the newly created position of the Assistant Secretary of War. While the General Staff would devise the plans for mobilizing the Army, the Assistant Secretary of War would control the procurement and industrial mobilization to support the Army being created.³⁸ The final entity was the Army itself. Each corps would have responsibility for the mobilization of the National Guard and Reserve formations within its Area of Responsibility.³⁹

With these considerations for mobilization in mind, the War Plans Division was at the nexus of planning for the next war. Any plan created with the approval of the Joint Board would drive the development of mobilization plans. When the War Plans Division drafted War Plan Orange, it had the War Department Mobilization Plan, 1924 as its reference. Derived from the first detailed Mobilization Plan developed in 1923, the plan anticipated almost 400,000 soldiers

³⁶ Otto Nelson, *National Security and the General Staff* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1946), 290.

³⁷ Marvin A. Kriedberg and Merton G. Henry, *History of Military Mobilization in the United States Army, 1775-1945* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1955), 382-3.

³⁸ James E. Hewes, *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1975), 54.

³⁹ Kriedberg, et al., *History of Military Mobilization*, 399.

available for duty on M-Day, with an additional 100,000 available on M+30.⁴⁰ Under the planning assumptions for manpower availability, it was possible for the War Plans Division to assume that there would be an emergency force of 50,000 men available within the first ten days of war for marshaling at Oahu. Although once published, the Mobilization Plan encountered criticism from across the service, as it existed in 1924 the War Plans Division had sound reason to believe in the planning factors.

To generate ideas that would help the War Plans Division develop War Plan Orange, they relied on the Army War College. Located in Washington D.C., the Army War College served an important function with respect to the War Plans Division. As its graduates would fill critical staff roles within the Army following graduation, the War Plans Division used the College as a think-tank to develop solutions to some of the more difficult challenges encountered.⁴¹ War Plan Orange was such a challenge. An entire course, Development of War Plans, existed to help fulfill this function. Divided into separate committees, the students would work on the War Plans in parallel, with each committee afforded the latitude to develop its own plans given specific guidance. Students had the mandate to develop their plans to answer questions such as “what are we going to do to defeat him,” “what means are required to make possible the execution of this strategic conception,” and “what measures must be undertaken to make available those means at the time and places needed?”⁴² The approaches taken by three committees tasked to develop appendices on mobilization and employment in 1923 illustrate the process by which the War

⁴⁰ Ibid., 402. M-Day was the day that mobilization would begin. Although not specified in the 1924 version of War Plan Orange, later versions listed D-Day and M-Day as the same day, anticipating no warning of war.

⁴¹ Harold G. Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 29.

⁴² Remarks on Development of War Plans, Colonel Geo. S. Simonds, Assistant Commandant, 12 April 1923, Record Group 165, War Department General and Special Staffs, War College Division and War Plans Division, Army War College, Army War College Instructional Records, 1912-1946 (hereafter WCD-WPD) Box 18, Course at the Army War College, 1922-1923, Development of War Plans, Documents 1-7, Part 1, NARA II.

College tackled the development of war plans. All three committees envisioned an approach beginning with concentration in Hawaii, early seizures of advanced bases in the Marshall Islands, Caroline Islands, and Guam (by approximately D+30), with operations against the Philippines delayed by as much as six months.⁴³ Absent in every committee was a promotion of a direct thrust across the Pacific to relieve the Philippines. Concerns about the “thruster” approach to securing the Philippines were not limited to just the exercises. Following a Blue-Orange map exercise in May of 1923 and based on the Estimate of the Situation formally published later in the month, a student committee savagely criticized several of the baseline assumptions. The committee objected that a force of 50,000 would be ready in Oahu by D+14, stating, “an expeditionary force of 50,000 is easier to create in a G1 Appendix than in fact” and recommended that it should be excluded from the plan.⁴⁴ It was not just the students who objected to the then-envisioned approach to a war with Japan.

A lecture to the War College class of 1924 by LTC W.L. Goldsborough seemed pessimistic about the chances of a rapid relief of the Philippines. He stated that the current plan envisioned that the expeditionary force would most likely make it to the Philippine Islands within six to seven months following the beginning of hostilities, if the initial 50,000-man relief expedition failed to make it to the Philippines within D+30 or D+40. As he viewed the Navy incapable of launching an immediate attack against Orange due to logistical limitations, the

⁴³ Committees 1-3, Appendices 1A, 3A, and 4A to Basic War Plan Orange, Conference, 03 May 1923, RG 165, WCD-WPD, Box 18, Course at the Army War College, 1922-1923, Development of War Plans, Documents 1-7. NARA II. In these cases, the plans called for the early seizure of the advanced bases in addition to the seizure of Amami O-Shima, an island in the Ryuku Island chain located south-southeast of the Japanese Home Islands. The plans used brigades, divisions, and corps as the major maneuver units in discussing the disposition of forces, although sporadically, numerical values would be attached to indicate the manpower required.

⁴⁴ Critique of Blue-Orange Map Exercise, 19 May 1923, RG 165, WCD-WPD, Box 20A, Course at the Army War College, 1923-1924, Command, Documents Nos 31-75, Vol II, Part II., No 74. NARA II

dedication of resources to a rapid build-up in Hawaii was wasteful. Consequently, the “stupendous effort and risk incident to the above plan seems to me sufficient to condemn it.”⁴⁵

With the War College apparently so opposed to the idea of a “thruster” strategy, the Army’s adherence to the concept of 50,000 soldiers in Oahu ready to sail for the Philippines by D+14 seems increasingly incoherent. With its introduction into the concept for War Plan Orange, the immediate use of an emergency force set off a firestorm of criticism from within the General Staff between the War Plans Division and the G-3 Section, headed by General Hugh Drum. The controversy centered on different views of the mission of the Army. The view of the War Plans Division was that the “training of the citizen components has possibly been allowed to exert an undue influence at the expense and detriment of” the size of the overseas garrisons and the creation of an effective expeditionary force.⁴⁶ The Acting Chief of the War Plans Division, Colonel J.L. DeWitt cited a recent test of Special Plan Tan, the invasion of Cuba, and difficulties mobilizing the 9000 men required for the execution of the plan as evidence of the inability of the Regular Army to quickly field an expeditionary force.

A follow-on memorandum stated that the Philippine Islands were the most vulnerable of the America’s overseas possessions and were the least easy to reinforce. Additionally, the War Plans Division felt that even with a reduced force size, the overseas garrisons must be at their authorized strength. This increase would be at the expense of troops not assigned to mobile units or fixed defenses; therefore, the increase would come from those forces training the civilian components. The memorandum cites General Order 31, signed by General Pershing in 1921, mandating that an expeditionary force must be at strength and ready “without change or

⁴⁵ Lecture by LTC W.L. Goldsborough, “Basic War Plan (Orange): A Strategic Comparison of the Northern and Southern Routes,” 12 June 1924, RG 165, Box 21, WCD-WPD, Course at the Army War College, 1923-1924, Misc. Documents, Nos 1-13, Vol VI., Misc. No 12. NARA II.

⁴⁶ Memo for the Chief of Staff, from the Acting Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, “Report of the Operations and Plans Division, General Staff,” 17 December 1923, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 73, WPD 1549. NARA II.

expansion,” a principle violated in the disposition of the Army in 1924. With these considerations in mind, the War Plans Division pushed for an expeditionary force of one corps headquarters and four infantry divisions, approximately 66,000 men.⁴⁷

In reply, General Drum felt that the primary mission of the Army was the preparation of the citizen components of the military. This mission required that the Regular Army must rotate its units through training the National Guard and Organized Reserve. The demand from the Corps Area Commanders to support training was such that units were spending up to five months per year away from their families to support this training. Because of this, it was impossible to maintain the three standing infantry divisions and one cavalry division called for in the reduced force structure. Drum felt such a standing force would prevent the successful training of the civilian components and create a woefully undertrained mass Army. He noted that the distribution of the Regular Army across the country came because of a competition between conflicting requirements, leaving no one completely satisfied. In the end, though, Drum stated that the War Plans Division must revise the plans to meet the actual conditions rather than attempt to conform the overall mission of the Regular Army to the wishes of the plan.⁴⁸

While this debate showed no clear sign of being resolved, the War Plans Division included the original concept of the concentration of 50,000 men by D+10 into the Orange Plan. That the Joint Board retained it shows that it had the approval of the Chief of Staff of the Army. Approximately one week before the approval of the plan, the G3 section of the War Plans Division provided several recommendations to the Assistant Chief of Staff of the War Plans Division, General Stuart Heintzelman, to ensure that the nation would be prepared to face the

⁴⁷ Memo for the Chief of Staff from the Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, “Annual Report of the Operations and Training Division,” G-3 for the FY 1923, 29 January 1924, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 73, WPD 1549. NARA II.

⁴⁸ Memo for the Chief of Staff from the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, “Missions of the Regular Army,” 15 February 1924, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 73, WPD 1549. NARA II.

eventuality of the war with Japan. Among the recommendations for General Heintzelman were to increase the size of the overseas garrisons, as the holding of the Philippine Islands against a determined foe was essential for the rapid prosecution of the war. Additionally, the memorandum stated that even the G3 division recognized that the current system was broken and foresaw three possibilities to fix it. The first recommendation was to increase the size of the Army, a recommendation contingent on Congress appropriating additional monies and consequently unlikely. The second recommendation was to provide a temporary reprieve to the Regular Army for its training requirement; however, this responsibility would eventually return. The third recommendation was a new system of organization and distribution to meet each requirement faced by the Regular Army.⁴⁹

The third recommendation was the only feasible one, and would force resolution on the debate over the proper role of the Army. To make its preferences more palatable, the memo stated that an active corps headquarters and consolidated regiments would be acceptable in preparing the foundation of the expeditionary force required to execute any of the special plans. While both of these recommendations would encounter resistance from the G3, as they would detract from the training of the civilian components, the memo hinted that they are necessary to respond in case of “emergencies.”⁵⁰

This final memorandum brings into focus the central debate over the nature of War Plan Orange: was it possible for the Regular Army to generate enough combat power early to forestall the loss of the Philippines? The garrisoning of the Philippines presented a challenge to the planners: the requirements for the garrison would draw a disproportionate number of troops from the Regular Army, but would still be insufficient for an adequate defense. With the War Plans

⁴⁹ Memo for the Assistant Chief of Staff, WPD, from the Chief, G-3 Section, War Plans Division, “Organization and Distribution of the Regular Army,” 11 June 1924, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 73, WPD 1549-2. NARA II

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Division boxed in by the inherent weakness of the Regular Army, the lack of an adequate standing emergency force, and the outright requirement for a quick reinforcement of the Philippines (from the Secretary of War and Governor-General Wood), there were only two “solutions”: cheating and wishful-thinking. These two solutions allowed the War Plans Division to produce a seemingly workable plan.

The “cheating” solution came with a critical assumption made by the War Plans Division that there would be time to mobilize before hostilities commenced.⁵¹ By implicitly providing no less than thirty days of mobilization prior to the initiation of the war, the War Plans Division resolved the lack of an adequate emergency force, the need to bring the civilian components to peak readiness, and the difficulties in assembling the required force. The War Plans Division failed, however, to specify the conditions under which they would recommend beginning mobilization. This assumption would rely both upon identification of an impending threat and a willingness from the politicians to initiate mobilization on that information. A committee at the Army War College that analyzed War Plan Orange recognized the faulty assumption that M and D-Day were not coincident.⁵² Instead, the War Plans Division allowed the impression to exist that an emergency force stood ready for an immediate relief of the Philippines if called upon. In the next iteration of war planning, the War Plans Division corrected this assumption, making for a more realistic version of the plan.

The wishful-thinking solution implied Army could change to conform to the plan. As already demonstrated by the exchange of views between the Chief of the War Plans Division, the Army G-3, and the Chief of Staff of the Army, the War Plans Division wanted to impose reforms

⁵¹ George B. Eaton, "General Walter Krueger and Joint War Planning, 1922-1938," *Naval War College Review* XLVIII, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 97.

⁵² Report of Committee No 1, “Military Situation of the United States,” 20 November 1925, RG 165, WCD-WPD, Box 24, Course at the Army War College, 1925-1926, G-3 Course, Docs Nos 1-20, Vol. III. NARA II

on the organization and priorities of the Army to make the execution of the plan possible. A memorandum from the G-3 to the Chief of Staff stated “(a) war plan to be worth anything must be susceptible of immediate application upon the outbreak of the emergency it is to meet.”⁵³ Because the plan called for forces that would not be available in the time required, the “strategical conception for the plan is thus destroyed.”⁵⁴ That the Army stood incapable of executing the war plan in its current state demonstrates the inherent failure of the War Plans Division to develop a feasible approach to the challenges of a Pacific War in 1924. The War Plans Division soon had to face up to this problem in its next iteration of the war plan.

⁵³ Memo for the Chief of Staff, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, G3, “Transmittal Memorandum with Formal Memorandum Relative to Army War Plan Orange,” 18 July 1925, RG 165, TSC, Box 268, WPD-1991. NARA II

⁵⁴ Ibid.

War Plan Orange 1928

Following the publication of the 1924 plan, the War Plans Division developed an updated plan, published in 1928, taking into account errors identified in the previous plan and changes in the status of the Army. The challenges faced by the War Plans Division in 1928, while similar to those in 1924, differed in the continued degradation of the condition of the Regular Army, but also in a maturation of the planning process. With these considerations, the War Plans Division in 1928 developed a plan with several substantial changes.

The Joint Board sent the next version of War Plan Orange to the Secretaries of War and the Navy on 14 June 1928. In framing the strategic environment, the 1928 plan had little variation from its 1924 predecessor. One of the more substantial changes was with the recognition that the war may begin without notice, precluding any mobilization in advance of the war, but that did not necessarily remove the option of mobilizing prior to a declaration of war.⁵⁵ The clear statement of this assumption at the beginning of the plan corrected the glaring deficiency with the 1924 plan. The missions of the Army and Navy remained essentially the same, with the goal being a direct drive to the Philippines after assembling a preponderance of combat power in Hawaii.⁵⁶ What really distinguished the 1924 and 1928 plans was the cautionary character of the 1928 version. Whereas the 1924 plan assumed a rapid build-up of forces capable of immediately seizing the initiative and retaking or reinforcing the Philippines, the 1928 version proposed a more conservative approach. The plan made this approach apparent in the size of the combat forces initially committed and the development of the courses of action.

The most apparent difference between the 1924 and 1928 plans was the size and timescale of the build-up of Army forces in Hawaii in anticipation of the commitment to the Philippines. In 1924, the plan presupposed the concentration of 50,000 in Hawaii by D+10. The

⁵⁵ Steven Ross, *American War Plans, 1919-1941*, Vol. 2 (New York: Garland, 1992), 36.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

contrast in 1928 was a substantial downward revision: 16,000 by M+30 concentrated in Hawaii with 67,000 available for deployment from the United States, 55,000 by M+60 with 18,000 available, 50,000 by M+90 with 150,000 available, and 150,000 per month thereafter.⁵⁷ Additionally, the plan considered requirements for increasing the garrison in Panama by 14,000.⁵⁸ This numerical enumeration was significant for two reasons: it consisted of a slower build-up of combat troops, indicating a realization that mobilization might be slower, but also projected increased manpower over a greater time span. While the 1924 plan only took into account additional forces as necessary, the 1928 plan specified the timetable for more forces to become available.

The second significant feature of the 1928 plan was the development of operational approach the military would take. The 1924 plan contained little detail on how the Joint Planning Committee arrived at its determination for a direct thrust across the Pacific to secure an advanced base at the Philippines. The 1928 plan, by contrast, took a practical approach to developing the operational approach the military would use in case of war. The 1928 plan first considered whether the military would conduct a strategic offensive or defensive. The strategic defensive would consist of maintaining the military concentrated around Hawaii and using economic pressure to force Japan to sue for peace, at the risk of losing the Philippines, Guam, and Samoa. The strategic offensive would seek to force Japan onto the defensive as soon as possible and wage an aggressive war against Japan, seizing territory and isolating the Japanese Home Islands. Despite the risk and large initial losses involved in the strategic offensive, the Navy determined it would be the only way to exert pressure significant enough to force an early conclusion to the war.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid., 116-118.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 116.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 119-122.

The second consideration was the path of the strategic offensive. The 1928 plan considered a northern route and a southern route, with the southern route having three variations. The northern route would take the offensive via the Aleutian Islands through to northern Japan. The committee determined there were no advantages to this route and gave it little consideration. Within the southern route, the advantages over the northern route included offering good anchorages for the fleet, freedom of choice for which intermediate bases the military could seize, and favorable weather. The drawbacks included long lines of communications and the possibility that Manila would fall before the offensive could reach the Philippines. Despite this possibility, the committee determined the southern route would be the best possible, with the variation on the subsequent route, north, south, or through the Japanese Mandate islands, to be determined by the commander as the situation developed.⁶⁰

The third consideration by the committee was the timing of the offensive, whether it should be early or delayed. The early offensive, occurring between M+30 and M+90, would take advantage of the situation where Japan had not consolidated its position in the Western Pacific and the Army had a better chance of holding on to Manila Bay. The committee viewed the still relatively undeveloped military potential as being the greatest detractor. The delayed offensive would give time to maximize the military potential through complete mobilization, a period of two years. This delay would provide the Japanese time to fortify its conquests and prove costly to retake. The committee subsequently recommended the early offensive.⁶¹

The fourth consideration the committee took into account was the location of the advance base, essentially the direction of the initial offensive. The three options presented to the planners were a base on the Asiatic mainland, a base in the Japanese possessions, and a base in the Philippines. The committee saw the base on mainland Asia as being the most effective at cutting

⁶⁰ Ibid., 122-123.

⁶¹ Ibid., 124-125.

Japan's lines of communication, but would require the consent of either the Chinese or British governments and would be extremely susceptible to a strong Japanese counterattack. A base in Japan's possessions could be in either the mandate islands or islands immediately south of the Home Islands. Due to the distances involved, a base in the mandates would only be intermediate in nature, and would require another base closer to Japan to achieve the ultimate war objectives. A base immediately south of the Home Islands would, like a base on the Asiatic mainland, be susceptible to an overwhelming Japanese counterattack. Due to a reasonable distance from Japan and the strength of the existing infrastructure, the committee recommended the Philippines as being the best destination for an advance to the Western Pacific.⁶²

The final consideration would be whether to advance directly to the Philippine Islands or proceed in a step-by-step advance. The direct advance would have the advantage of preventing Japan from consolidating its hold, maximizing the chance of securing an advance base at smaller cost, and forces an early battle with the Japanese fleet. The step-by-step advance would secure the fleet's lines of communications back to Hawaii and force the Japanese fleet into battle on terms more favorable to the U.S. fleet. The downside to the step-by-step would be the loss of Manila and a delay in bringing economic pressure against Japan. In this consideration, the committee did not take a definite stand. It stated that although the direct advance would appear to be more favorable, the ultimate course of action would depend on the actions of the enemy at the onset of the war.⁶³

The conclusion of the Joint Planning Committee was that a strategic offensive, taking a southern route from the Hawaiian Islands, advancing between M+30 and M+90 towards the Philippines would best set conditions for an early resolution of the war. While apparently rationally depicting the case for a bold advance to relieve the garrison in Manila, that the

⁶² Ibid., 125-128.

⁶³ Ibid., 128-130.

committee delayed throwing its weight behind a direct advance to the Philippines displayed an increasing realization of the difficulties the situation presented. For the Army, the challenge of defending the Philippines until relieved and massing enough combat power early enough to make a substantial effort against a large Japanese force on Luzon loomed.⁶⁴ Coupled with the reduced projections of manpower available early in the war, the Army appeared to be more pessimistic about its capabilities in the late 1920s.

In developing this comprehensive approach to the prosecution of a war with Japan, the Joint Planning Committee invested significant time developing a detailed operational approach that the force commander, specified as coming from the Navy, would follow. The approach developed was subject to the laws of reality that would dictate how quickly forces could be assembled for employment in the theater of operations. The continued deterioration of the quality of the Army and the impact this would have on crafting a feasible plan limited the options available to the Army.

After 1924, the overall manpower levels of the Army remained steady, but well below the authorized strength of 240,000. Of the 12,000 officers and 118,000 men in the Regular Army, almost half were overseas garrisoning America's possessions in the Philippines, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal Zone.⁶⁵ This left approximately 62,000 men available within the United States to assist with training and mobilization activities.⁶⁶ The expectations of this force remained unchanged from the guidelines of the National Defense Act. As the Army understood it, the maintenance of the overseas garrisons, training the reserves and National Guard, and providing the emergency force encompassed the Army's mission.⁶⁷ The biggest deficiency the Army faced,

⁶⁴ Ibid., 111. The Estimate of the Situation predicted the Japanese Army having 700,000 men available in the first few weeks of general mobilization.

⁶⁵ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1924, 7.

⁶⁶ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1926, 44.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 53.

however, came in the realization that the veterans of the Great War no longer comprised a sufficient body of reserves. As originally premised in the National Defense Act of 1920, the Regular Army would be able to rely on the veterans for some time. By 1926, though, the Army recognized that this was no longer an option.⁶⁸ This lack of a large pool of trained reserves had a proportionate effect on the time estimated to bring units into a completely mobilized status. By 1928, General Charles Summerall, the Chief of Staff of the Army, thought that it would take ten to eleven months of training until full combat divisions would be ready.⁶⁹

In addition to the difficulties faced by the Army by inadequate manpower numbers, the political situation in the Philippines continued to remain in doubt. In an effort to address the future of the islands with respect to the United States, the Secretary of War charged the Joint Board to develop recommendations in case the U.S. granted complete independence and if the U.S. created a protectorate along the same lines as Cuba. Within the constraints of the Four-Power Treaty and past U.S. actions in the Western Pacific, the Joint Planning Committee strongly advocated against the independence of the Philippines, arguing that it would sacrifice U.S. interests in the Far East and would increase the likelihood of war. If the U.S. granted independence, they advocated the U.S. should withdraw completely from the Philippines, to remove the possibility of war under severely unfavorable conditions. Similarly, if the U.S. created a Cuba-style protectorate, the Army's security requirements would increase, as they projected the government would be unable to maintain order on the island.⁷⁰

While seemingly unusual for the military to provide recommendations for the retention of U.S. territory, in the post-Great War environment, the lack of dialogue between the military and

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 Jun 1928, 78.

⁷⁰ Memo to the Secretary of War from the Joint Army and Navy Board, "Relations with the Philippine Islands, and Military and Naval Bases in Case Independence is Granted," 14 March 1924, Microfilm, Records of the Joint Board, Roll 6, JB 305, Serial 227.

the State Department left the Army uncertain on policy goals.⁷¹ This uncertainty on the future of the Philippines, and the divergent measures that Philippine independence would call for, did little to help the Army decide on a definite status for the defense of the islands. Even though the Four Power Treaty precluded the build-up of additional defenses, Congress remained reluctant to support the replacement of existing defenses as they became obsolete, or to support the development of civilian infrastructure that could augment the military in case of war (e.g. oil depots). As such, the Secretary of War stated that the indefinite political status of the Philippines actually limited the development of the islands.⁷²

With the basic problem of reinforcing the Philippines unchanged and taking into consideration the continued deterioration of the post-war Regular Army, the War Plans Division had to adjust the 1924 plan. Important work continued at the Army War College to determine a suitable upgrade to a plan now viewed as impractical and unworkable. A review of the Army Strategical Plan Orange in 1925 saw a general agreement among three committees that a practical expeditionary force, numbering approximately 50-60000 soldiers would not be assembled at Pacific Coast ports earlier than M+45.⁷³ These numbers remained consistent with the previous predictions of the time required to mobilize and transport such large groups of soldiers.

Following the publication of the Mobilization Plan of 1924, feedback from across the Army found flaws that would need correction to provide a true picture of manpower availability. One criticism of the plan was that the rate of mobilization presented was the maximum possible,

⁷¹ Fred Greene, "The Military View of American National Policy, 1904-1940," *The American Historical Review* 66, no. 2 (Jan., 1961), 355-358. Greene's article holds that the military remained uncertain about U.S. policy objectives, and remained reluctant to set them or change them, believing that military policy must remain subordinate to national policy.

⁷² Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1927, 3.

⁷³ Report of Committee No. 3, Subject: Army Strategical Plan Orange, 14 April 1925, RG 165, Box 23, WCD-WPD, Course at the Army War College, 1923-1924, War Plans Division Course, Vol. VIII, Part III, Docs Nos 24-27, Doc No. 25. NARA II. Also Reports of Committee No. 4, Doc No. 26; and Committee No. 5, Doc No. 27.

and that it was impossible to reach such a level due to real-world complications.⁷⁴ The other major criticism stemmed from a sentiment that the rate of supply to keep mobilized units functional was inadequate, and that the rate of mobilization had to decrease to levels commensurate with industrial mobilization.⁷⁵ As the General Staff deemed supply as the dominant consideration of the 1924 plan, it exerted a direct effect on the maximum mobilization rate.⁷⁶ Thus, the G3 had to overcome these two issues in order to present a more realistic mobilization plan. In order to produce sufficient manpower in case of war, the G3 decided that supply and training would be sacrificed in order to ensure the number of soldiers produced was at its highest possible levels.⁷⁷ This would permit the Army to produce 3,500,000 soldiers by M+5 months, a comparable number to the 1924 plan, but reduced by the atrophy experienced by the Army.⁷⁸ With these numbers in mind, the War Plans Division had similar numbers of manpower availability as in 1924, but could anticipate a force less well-trained than earlier expected. Thus, the war planners could, by trusting in the veracity of the mobilization plan, expect the soldiers required to be available for the plan they developed.

Despite the appearance of a suitable pool of soldiers available for the execution of the plan, whether or not it was actually feasible was another factor. The operational approach, a strategic offensive advancing directly towards the Philippines as soon as possible, remained the same from the 1924 plan. The “thruster” mentality continued to hold the minds of the planners, albeit with a slower timetable than envisioned by the previous version. The rigid character of the

⁷⁴ Memo for the Assistant Chief of Staff, G3, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, G2, “War Department Mobilization Plan to Strategic Plan, and Army War Plan Orange,” 18 May 1925, RG 165, TSC, Box 268, WPD-1991. NARA II

⁷⁵ Paul Koistinen, *Planning War, Pursuing Peace: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1920-1939*, (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1998), 38.

⁷⁶ Kriedberg, *History of Military Mobilization*, 417.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 418.

plan drew the most criticism from the Army. As early as 1923, a student at the Army War College remarked that war plans “should not be prescribed (in) a detained and inflexible form to fill out.”⁷⁹ That this was exactly what the 1928 plan envisioned begs the question of why such a plan came into being.

The answer lied in the consequences of a delayed offensive. The proximity of the Japanese Home Islands, the relative strength of the Japanese Navy, and the weakness of the Philippine garrison meant that, over the short term, the Japanese would hold a relative advantage in the Western Pacific. While all estimates held that the garrison would be able to hold the entrance of Manila Bay by up to six months,⁸⁰ the ability of the Japanese to reinforce its initial invasion forces at will would increase the difficulties of retaking Luzon. With the estimate of approximately 100,000 Japanese troops on Luzon by M+15,⁸¹ an early defeat of the Japanese Navy and interdiction of the reinforcements to Luzon became an imperative. Thus, the Army and Navy moved for the early decisive battle to ensure that it would not lose its proposed advance base in the Manila Bay area. The fall of Luzon would deprive the Navy of its ability to project power into the Western Pacific, and relegate the military to a step-by-step advance, much more costly in lives and time. An Army War College theater study succinctly stated the two alternatives for the Army: an immediate strike or a slow build-up of a ten division expeditionary force over

⁷⁹ Comments on War Plans Division Course 1922-1923 by Lieutenant Colonel Upton Birnie, 12 April 1923, RG 165, WCD-WPD, Box 19, Course at the Army War College 1922-1923, War Plans Division, Documents Nos. 1-22, WPD Course No. 22, NARA II.

⁸⁰ Report of Committee No. 1, “Joint Plan Orange,” 12 April 1925, RG 165, WCD-WPD, Box 23, Course at the Army War College, 1924-1925, War Plans Division Course, Vol. VIII, Part II, Docs Nos. 21-23, War Plans Period No. 23, NARA II.

⁸¹ The use of M in this instance refers to Japan’s mobilization schedule, not that of the United States.

nine months.⁸² With these presented as the two alternatives, it is easy to see why the early strategic offensive would be more convincing.

The 1928 Plan consequently rested on several assumptions. The foremost was that the garrison on the Philippines would be able to hold for approximately six months. This assumption relied on the ability of the U.S. Fleet to traverse the Pacific, refit in Manila Bay, then engage the Japanese Fleet on favorable terms.⁸³ The 1928 plan changed the mission of the garrison from defending Manila and Manila Bay to a primary mission of holding the entrance to the bay, with a secondary mission of holding the Manila Bay area as long as possible and consistent with the primary mission.⁸⁴ Such a change came after a finding in 1927 that the garrison was incapable of accomplishing the previous mission.⁸⁵ In recommending the change to the mission, the garrison's efforts were to focus on the defense of the Bataan Peninsula and the island of Corregidor for six months.⁸⁶ With the reduction in scope of the mission of the garrison, it would appear that its capabilities would adequately support the goals envisioned in the 1928 plan. Two separate memoranda in late 1928, however, contradict this. The first, from the commander of the Philippine Department, General William Lessiter, asked for an increase in the size of the mobile force, that is, those not assigned to coastal artillery positions, anti-aircraft platforms, or guard installations.⁸⁷ The second, from General Douglas MacArthur, the subsequent commander of the

⁸² Theater Study No. 3, Western Pacific Areas Situation and Requirements, 14-20 March 1935, RG 165, Box 40, RG 165, WCD-WPD, Box 40, Course at the Army War College 1934-1935, War Plans, Vol VIII, Part 2, Docs Nos 9-29, War Plans Course No. 17-B, NARA II.

⁸³ Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 87. Gole remarks on the consequences of a rapid fall of the garrison and the subsequent affect it would have on the "thruster" strategy.

⁸⁴ Memo for the Chief of Staff, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, "Mission of Army Forces in the Philippine Islands," 25 June 1928, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 99, WPD 3022-2. NARA II

⁸⁵ Memo for Army Members, Joint Planning Staff, from Acting Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, "Mission of the Army Forces in the Philippine Islands," 22 September 1927, WPD-3022. NARA II

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Letter to the Chief of Staff, from Commander, Philippine Department, "Basic Plan Orange," 27 September 1928, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 107, WPD-3251. NARA II

Philippine Department, recommended a much more comprehensive change to the defensive scheme of the Philippines. He requested additional white troops from the United States, the consolidation of skeletonized units stationed in the Philippines, a reorganization of the Philippine Scouts, and the application of the American reserve system in the Philippines (inclusion of the Reserve Officers Training Corps, the Organized Reserve, etc.).⁸⁸ All of these steps intended to bolster the capabilities of the forces defending Luzon. That they came following the publication of the 1928 plan and in the course of the department's development of its own defensive plan reflected a sentiment that even the new, limited mission was beyond the capabilities of the force assigned.⁸⁹

The second assumption was that there would be a force between 55,000 and 71,000 available for employment by M+60. Given the condition of the Army, the focus on manpower generation in the mobilization plan, and the time available to raise such a force, the assumption seems sound. Returning to the debate between the G3 and the War Plans Division in 1924 over the proper mission of the Army, that there was no subsequent concentration of the proposed emergency force showed that the G3 prevailed in the debate. The War Plans Division's answer to this was the delayed timetable in accordance with the alignment of D and M Day. The lack of a comparable rift between the G3 and War Plans Division over the manpower projection numbers in the 1928 plan shows at least a rough accordance with the War Plans Division's view. That the Army could have generated the numbers required seems plausible, enough so for the assumption to be valid.

The 1928 Plan appears to reconcile several of the outlying features of the 1924 Plan. By aligning D and M Day, the planners removed the most glaring deficiency of the 1924 plan.

⁸⁸ Memo for the Chief of Staff, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, "Defensive Plans for the Philippine Islands," 06 November 1928, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 107, WPD-3251. NARA II

⁸⁹ D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970), 1:335.

Additionally, the plan appears to conform to the condition of the Army at the time of its writing. Thus, the feasibility of the plan rests on the two assumptions stated above: the first, that the garrison of the Philippines could hold until the relief expedition arrived; the second, that the Army could produce the required number of soldiers. While the second assumption seems plausible for the planners to hold due to its alignment with the mobilization capabilities, the first assumption is more problematic. That the garrison could hold for the six months estimated seems plausible, even if the commanders there thought it doubtful. As the question of if the garrison could have held until the relief expedition arrived remains firmly within the realm of chance, it remains a plausible assumption. Consequently, the 1928 Plan appears feasible, and a much improved evolution over the 1924 Plan. The circumstances under which the plan developed, however, changed within the next few years to necessitate yet another revision.

War Plan Orange 1938

The strategic underpinnings of War Plan Orange changed dramatically following its publication in 1928. While adequate for the context in which the War Plans Division developed it, the subsequent shift in the strategic environment required a wholesale revision of the foundation of the plan. What makes the final revision of 1938 significant is the effect that a handful of planners had on the resulting product.

The Joint Planning Committee published the final War Plan Orange in 1938. The plan reflected a radical departure from the 1928 plan in that it proposed no action beyond remaining on the strategic defensive within the perimeter established by Alaska, Hawaii, and the Panama Canal. Absent from the plan are courses of action, detailed mobilization schedules, and talk of relieving Manila. Instead, the plan called for assuming a position in readiness until “conditions” could be set that would allow for a strategic offensive.⁹⁰ The purpose of the position in readiness was to “afford freedom of action to the forces available to the Army and the Navy for the execution of any operations that may be required by the situation existing.”⁹¹

The 1938 plan provided cursory mobilization numbers in the amount of 230,000 men by M-Day and an additional 220,000 after M+30. Of those troops, 20,000 would be available to conduct limited amphibious operations in support of the Navy.⁹² These troops would augment the garrisons of Oahu, Alaska, and the Panama Canal. The forces of the Philippines had the mission of delaying the Japanese at Subic Bay to allow for an orderly withdrawal into the Bataan

⁹⁰ Ross, *American War Plans*, 183. The plan specifically states that “The object of the position in readiness is to provide for a disposition of the U.S. Armed Forces, which will give protection to U.S. interests at home and abroad and at the same time will facilitate the prompt execution of that Joint Strategic Plan in Part III which will be selected by the President of the United States as suitable to meet the conditions existing.”

⁹¹ Ross, *American War Plans*, 163.

⁹² Ross, *American War Plans*, 183.

peninsula, from which it would defend the entrance of Manila Bay.⁹³ The plan provided no guidance for how long the garrison must defend or if it can expect relief from the United States.

While a significant change from the 1928 plan, the 1938 plan continued the cautionary tone exhibited in its predecessor. First in abandoning an explicit approach to achieving victory against Japan, and then in not planning for a relief of the Philippines, the 1938 plan discarded key tenets of previous plans. Despite appearing to be cautious to a fault, the development of the 1938 plan reflected both the impact of the tumultuous decade between 1928 and 1938, but also the influence of strong personalities in shaping the debate over feasible approaches to victory in the Pacific.

The dominant strategic event following the publication of the 1928 version of War Plan Orange was the onset of the Great Depression. While the political, economic, and social aspects of the Depression are well documented, the effect on the Army was no less significant. One of the more noteworthy effects was the slashing of the procurement budget. Reliance on ammunition stocks from the Great War already limited the amount of money the Army received, but the consequences of the Depression increased this shortfall.⁹⁴ By 1931 this shortfall became critical, impacting the readiness of the Organized Reserve.⁹⁵ While manpower levels did not change during the Depression, the effect on training severely limited the readiness of the force. Years of reliance on an undermanned Regular Army to train the citizen components had a cumulative effect. In his farewell report to the Secretary of War, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Charles Summerall, reported that several months of training were required to bring divisions to a level of competency before they could be employed.⁹⁶ Furthermore, the lack of alignment

⁹³ Ross, *American War Plans*, 191.

⁹⁴ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1930, 9.

⁹⁵ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1931, 39.

⁹⁶ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1930, 90.

between the role of the Army intended in the National Defense Act of 1920 and the force levels authorized by Congress meant that the “sufficiency [of the Army] is open to question.”⁹⁷ It is possible to consider this time to be the nadir of the interwar Army, were it not for the subsequent implementation of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933. A New Deal measure intended to provide immediate employment relief, the Army would play a substantive role in its implementation.⁹⁸ This commitment proved to be a double-edged sword for the Army. On the one hand, General MacArthur, then the Chief of Staff of the Army, provided his full support, and received credit for preserving much of the Army’s funding as a result.⁹⁹ Conversely, the dedication of much of the Army’s personnel to the support of the Civilian Conservation Corps destroyed unit readiness.¹⁰⁰ Although the Regular Army began to transition its many of its responsibilities to activated civilian components, it retained overall oversight of the program.

Concurrent with the shock of the depression was similar turmoil within mobilization planning. Subsequent tests of the 1928 mobilization plan and a 1931 revision proved unable to generate the manpower necessary and would create leaderless units.¹⁰¹ The lack of sufficient numbers of enlisted men in the Regular Army would mean that there would be a minimum of four to six months of training before even the initial units would be ready for combat.¹⁰² In an apparently hopeless situation with regard to being able to execute even the barest requirements of

⁹⁷ Ibid. 88.

⁹⁸ Edward Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army 1898-1941*, (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2004), 242-243.

⁹⁹ Daniel Holt and James W. Leyerzapf, ed., *Eisenhower: The Pre-War Diaries and Selected Papers, 1905-1941* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 252-253.

¹⁰⁰ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1933, 10.

¹⁰¹ Kriedberg, *History of Military Mobilization*, 424.

¹⁰² Ibid., 433.

mobilization, the Army requested additional men for the regular component to meet the basic function of defending the nation in case of war.¹⁰³

In his final report as Chief of Staff of the Army in 1935, General MacArthur painted a bleak picture of the status of the Army. He reiterated that there was a minimum requirement of 165,000 men to carry on the missions assigned to the Regular Army, a statement first made by General Summerall in his farewell message.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, the Regular Army suffered from obsolete equipment and a lack of training. Any emergency force would strip the country of the forces that would enable the civilian components to mobilize.¹⁰⁵ He closed his report with the remark: “(t)here can be no compromise with minimum requirements.”¹⁰⁶ His catalogue of deficiencies in the Army might be dismissed as simply a request for more funds, but his views provided great latitude to the planners in the War Plans Division to implement a much more conservative approach to the next iteration of War Plan Orange.

Amidst the troubling situation for the Army in the early 1930s, the catalyst for changing the 1928 plan came from the Philippines. The commander of Harbor Defenses for Manila and Subic Bay, General Stanley Embick, wrote a memorandum for the commander of the Philippine Department summarizing the situation in the islands, stating that there was a progressive weakening of the military position there. As such, he felt that the islands were a liability, and to execute War Plan Orange in its current configuration would be “an act of madness.” He felt that Corregidor was the only important military asset, but it would not be able to support an advanced base for the fleet, and could only “sell itself at the highest possible cost” to the enemy. He

¹⁰³ Ibid., 437.

¹⁰⁴ Annual Report of the Secretary of War, 30 June 1935, 4.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 43.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 71.

therefore recommended two courses of action to resolve this dilemma: a massive build-up or the neutralization of the Philippines and a withdrawal to an Alaska-Oahu-Panama defensive line.¹⁰⁷

General Embick's memorandum, forwarded to the General Staff, provoked a defensive response from the War Plans Division. Due to his previous service in the War Plans Division as both a member and the Executive Officer, his views carried immense weight. Acknowledging the difficult position the Philippines presented, the War Plans Division stated that the 1928 Plan did not require an immediate advance. Furthermore, they stated that Manila Bay still held value, not just Corregidor. The War Plans Division did concede, though, that under the present conditions, the movement of an expeditionary force as soon as possible could be of dubious worth. By recasting the 1928 Plan as simply providing options rather than dictating action, the War Plans Division began a shift away from a salient feature of the previous two iterations of War Plan Orange.¹⁰⁸

Despite the reservations expressed by the War Plans Division, Embick's memo served as the genesis for the final iteration for War Plan Orange. The Army attempted to graft changes onto the fundamentals of the plan, for instance changing the route of approach to the Philippines from across the Pacific to through the Suez Canal.¹⁰⁹ These "cursory" changes undermined the essence of the plan, reinforcing the requirement for a wholesale revision. With the reassignment in 1936 of Embick from the Philippines to serve as the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, the trajectory of the next iteration of War Plan Orange was set. His guidance for the War Plans Division, following his subsequent appointment as the Deputy Chief of Staff, was to "assume a

¹⁰⁷ Memo for the Commanding General, Philippine Department, from Commander, Harbor Defense, Manila and Subic Bay, 19 April 1933, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 108, WPD 3251-15. NARA II.

¹⁰⁸ Memo for the Chief of Staff, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, "Military Policy of the United States in the Philippine Islands," 12 June 1933, RG 165, WPDGC, Box 108, WPD 3251-15. NARA II.

¹⁰⁹ Ltr for Captain G.T. Meyers (USN), from Lieutenant Colonel Collins (War Plans Division), 29 January 1934. RG 165, WPDGC, Box 108, WPD-3251-16.

position in readiness that will cover that sector of the Eastern Pacific extending westward to include the general line Alaska-Oahu-Panama,” a reiteration of his position from 1933.¹¹⁰

Assisting Embick in the War Plans Division was Colonel Walter Krueger. With Embick’s departure from the War Plans Division in late 1936 to become the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army, Krueger assumed the role of Chief of the Division. Like Embick, Krueger had extensive experience in the War Plans Division, including serving as the primary author of the Army’s contribution to the 1924 Plan.¹¹¹ Since then, his views had evolved into rough accordance with those of Embick. By 1937, Krueger was of the mind that War Plan Orange consisted of two distinct parts. The first part was the massing of the Army’s forces within the defensive perimeter of Alaska-Oahu-Panama, while the second part was the subsequent conduct of operations. While the first part was firmly within the realm of the War Plans Division, the second part would consist of multiple strategic operations plans that would indicate in a general way what the military would do. The commander would have to use his judgment as to the proper course of action.¹¹²

The generation of the Army’s version of the War Plan met resistance from the Navy, which still advocated offensive operations. While the Army’s version did not intend to eliminate offensive operations, it only intended to create the conditions for the most favorable and effective offensive.¹¹³ In advocating for its plan, the Army Chief of Staff stated that the Army plan would

¹¹⁰ Memo for the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, from the Deputy Chief of Staff, “Draft of a Directive to Planning Committee in re A New Orange Plan,” 05 November 1937, RG 165, TSC, Box 269, WPD-2720-104 (OCS/15916-31). NARA II

¹¹¹ Kevin C. Holzimmer, *A Soldier's Soldier: A Military Biography of General Walter Krueger*. (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, 2000), 90-91.

¹¹² Memo for the Chief of Staff, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, “Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan Orange,” 28 October 1937, RG 165, TSC, Box 269, WPD-2720-104. NARA II; Memo for the War Plans Division, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, “Some Thoughts on the Joint Basic War Plan Orange,” 22 November 1937, RG 165, TSC, Box 269, WPD-2720-104, NARA II.

¹¹³ Memo for the War Plans Division, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, “Some Thoughts on the Joint Basic War Plan Orange,” 22 November 1937, RG 165, TSC, Box 269, WPD-2720-104, NARA II.

provide security to develop potential war power and offer the best guarantee against an early reverse, one of the major risks associated with earlier war plans. The Army plan reflected the inherent lack of readiness of the Army's forces to execute operations promptly.¹¹⁴ The approval of the Plan along the lines of the Army's thinking shows the strength of the argument developed by Embick and Krueger. Their accurate depiction of the capabilities of the Army in the 1930s and comparable vulnerabilities shifted the nature of the debate over the war plan from what the military should do, to what it could do.

Concurrent with the development of the War Plan was the development of new mobilization plans to support them. Following an interim plan published in 1933 that allowed for incremental mobilization based on the size of the emergency, the Chief of Staff of the Army directed the General staff to work on a Protective Mobilization Plan.¹¹⁵ A drastic departure from past plans, the Plan, published in 1936 and revised in 1938 and 1939, envisioned the mobilization of the required forces in three stages, with the first stage supporting an overall defensive strategy.¹¹⁶ This mobilization scheme would enable a force of almost three million men to support the subsequent war effort, while preserving existing resources to the maximum extent possible.¹¹⁷

It is difficult to provide an evaluation of the 1938 Plan, as the subsequent development of the Rainbow plans quickly overshadowed it. While never fully implemented, the plan nonetheless contributed to the intellectual underpinnings for the plans that led to victory in World War II.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Memo for the Chief of Naval Operations, from the Chief of Staff, "The Two Basic Drafts of a Proposed Joint Basic War Plan-Orange submitted by the Joint Planning Committee," 07 December 1937, RG 165, TSC, Box 269, WPD-2720-104. NARA II.

¹¹⁵ Kriedberg, *History of Military Mobilization*, 476.

¹¹⁶ George B. Eaton, "General Walter Krueger and Joint War Planning, 1922-1938," *Naval War College Review* Vol. XLVIII, no 2. (Spring 1995): 106

¹¹⁷ Kriedberg, *History of Military Mobilization*, 477.

¹¹⁸ Kent Roberts Greenfield, *Command Decisions*, (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1960), 20-22. Greenfield discusses that the combat of World War II would take place in multiple theaters, and that the military commanders would have to execute operations

What Krueger eventually developed a plan that “is flexible, envisages realities and not [sic] transcends what is feasible” should be what every plan aspires to be.¹¹⁹ Compared to its predecessors, the 1938 Plan represented a marked improvement in developing a practical plan that responded to the challenges of the strategic environment. Coupled with a mobilization plan that directly supported its goal of a position in readiness, the 1938 Plan looks to have been capable of successful implementation.

In response to the changes in the strategic environment, the 1938 Plan provided a sound and feasible foundation for the prosecution of a war with Japan. In contrast to the faulty assumptions of the 1924 Plan and rigid, prescriptive structure of the 1928 Plan, the final version attempted to provide the maximum flexibility to the executing commander. While this approach would eschew immediate decisive action, it would allow the United States to fully mobilize its considerable manpower and industrial resources to meet the threat presented by Japan, and then commit to whatever course of action deemed most prudent.¹²⁰ This recognition of an evolving international situation, the need for flexibility, and providing strategic options echoes modern approaches to war planning.¹²¹ The impact of Embick and Krueger bringing about the 1938 Plan cannot be underestimated. These two individuals managed to drastically alter the course of War Plan Orange, and place it on sounder foundations than the predecessors. Against the powerful influences of General MacArthur, who remained committed to the defense of the Philippines, Embick and Krueger created a plan reflective of the situation faced by the United States.

based on the forces available and the interests involved. This approach would require the flexibility that underpinned the 1938 effort of choosing offensive operations when the circumstances were right.

¹¹⁹ Memo for the Chief of Staff, from the Assistant Chief of Staff, War Plans Division, “Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan Orange,” 28 October 1937, RG 165, TSC, Box 269, WPD-2720-104. NARA II.

¹²⁰ Eaton, “General Walter Krueger and Joint War Planning, 1922-1938,” 109.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

Conclusion

War Plan Orange evolved during the interwar period in response to a constantly changing strategic environment. This environment consisted of the geopolitical situation, political sentiment, and the state of the Army. The interaction of these elements created constraints on the planners that inherently limited the range of options they could consider. Foremost among those constraints were the requirements to garrison the Philippines and the failure of Congress to fund the Army at levels commensurate with its responsibilities. The War Plans Division had to develop Orange within these constraints, and it did not have the ability to say “No” to the political leadership. It is easy to condemn a plan as unworkable when removed from its context. That said, the three plans developed during the interwar years reflected the strategic context that bounded them. Whether that context allowed for a feasible plan is another matter.

The 1924 Plan, trapped between the requirement to quickly reinforce the Philippines and an army incapable of accomplishing the mission without expansion, relied on a faulty assumption and proposed changes to the Army to make its plan appear feasible. In 1928, following the death of Wood, the planners removed the assumption, but still created an ambitious plan that rigidly dictated the actions necessary in case of war. With the imperative to forestall collapse in the Philippines, the plan committed the bulk of the Regular Army to reinforcing the Philippines before Manila Bay would fall. The two plans sought to find a median between the constraints, with the result being the imposition of a level of risk that is unacceptable in hindsight. The loss of the Philippines would have made the war longer and bloodier, but the concurrent loss of the bulk of the United States Fleet and Regular Army would have been catastrophic.

In addition to developing the plans, the military attempted to fight back against the inherent limitations placed on it. The 1924 Plan attempted to change the disposition and missions of the Army to meet the most likely threat to the nation. Similarly, the War Plans Division made recommendations to the State Department to change the status of the Philippines and to remove

the Army's presence in China. Both efforts attempted to improve the military's position in the western Pacific and create an environment more conducive to the prosecution of a war. Both efforts, though, failed to produce appreciable results, leaving the planners with the same basic constraints throughout the interwar years.

Only the 1938 Plan sought to reconcile the conflict between the two constraints by inserting a level of flexibility into the plan that allowed the field commander the opportunity to select from various courses of action. While not excluding a relief of the Philippines, the plan did not explicitly provide for its reinforcement. In doing so, though, the plan allowed the commander to remain fixed on the overall objective of the defeat of Japan. Rather than gambling his forces on a battle with the Japanese under less-than-favorable conditions near the Philippines, the commander would have the ability to shape the environment in a favorable way. The plan recognized tactical actions were subordinate to the strategic endstate.

The cost of this flexibility might well have been the Philippines. Distasteful as it seems to abandon a force in the field, the cost of rescuing it was too high. Recognizing this, the Army and Navy pushed for clarity on the future of the Philippines, as it would have enabled them to either bolster the defense infrastructure, or abandon it wholesale. Failure to achieve resolution from the civilian leadership, the defense of the Philippines languished. The moral peril of abandoning the Philippines was not lost on the planners, but the 1938 Plan did not lose sight of the fact that there was more to the war than relieving the garrison. The Philippines only served as one aspect of the greater object to defeat Japan. The operational artist must understand that operations are sequenced to ultimately achieve the strategic endstate, and that overreliance on any one aspect of the plan could lead to its downfall.

Perhaps the greatest value in the development of War Plan Orange was the process. Forcing the Army and Navy to cooperate on a realistic war plan fostered the collaborative relationship that was essential in World War II. Besides the Joint Board, education at the Army War College, Army Command and General Staff College, and the Naval War College

emphasized joint operations, often with exchange officers providing mentorship.¹²² These interactions allowed the Joint Planning Committee to consider the multitude of factors pertinent in a general war and develop institutional knowledge. This institutional knowledge combined with the cultivation of personal relationships among the planners created a joint staff ready to expand its efforts to a global war. With the maturation of the Rainbow Plans, culminating in Rainbow 5, the United States entered into the war with a sound understanding of how to proceed towards victory.¹²³

¹²² Michael R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 82-88.

¹²³ Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*. Part II of Gole's book goes into detail on how the Army War College included "Participation With Allies" into the curriculum starting in 1932, and that subsequent exercises using Orange, Purple, and Black as foes progressively integrated other nations into existing war plans, thus forming the foundation for the Rainbow plans.

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