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### **Operation Overlord** *Planning and Executing the Allied Invasion of France, 1944*

During the 20th century, the nations of the world became embroiled in the two most costly wars in history. Known as the World Wars, these conflicts caused unprecedented death and destruction across the globe. The Second World War caused an estimated 40 to 80 million deaths from combat, famine, and disease, on a scale so large that the discrepancy between high and low numbers is in the millions<sup>1</sup>. During this time, the collective principles of organization, planning, and delegation of responsibility were put to the test in a military fashion, leading to victory for some, and disaster for others. Beginning with broadly defined goals regarding foreign and domestic political aims and ending with combat between soldiers, this period represents the collective abilities and limitations of the military and governmental process.

On June 6th, 1944, during World War 2, the combined Allied forces of The United States, Great Britain, and Canada invaded the beaches of Northern France in an attempt to liberate the area from the occupation forces of Nazi Germany and its Axis collaborators. Codenamed *Operation Overlord*, but colloquially known as D-Day, this operation was immortalized through the photographs taken by war correspondents who landed with the troops. Yet while it is easy to see the images of these events taking place, seldom is the immense scope of factors which lead up to this point fully understood. The scale and effort which went into the largest air and sea invasion to date, and its defenders attempt to stop it, was the cumulative result

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<sup>1</sup> Collingham, "The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food", 1

of the entire combined war efforts of the Allies and their Axis adversaries. Indeed, it is one of the only battles of its kind, and a testament to the capabilities of free nations willingly organizing for a greater purpose, while highlighting the demise of those who operate on the bases of intimidation and coercion.

During this struggle, the Allied powers inevitably succeeded in their invasion by properly organizing Tactical, Operational, Strategic, and Grand Strategic objectives and directly aiming for their acquisition. The resulting display of power was the product of methodical and careful planning and coordination by the Allied powers, who were backed up by stable and legitimate political systems and functioning economies. For the Axis, a deeply flawed misunderstanding of these principles of planning and organization lead to their local failures and ultimate dissolution as nations and political entities. Through a careful case study of *Operation Overlord* and its context, we can see the unity of theoretical concepts relating to military tactics and strategic policy be forged, resulting in the success of the Allied invasion of Normandy and the subsequent destruction of Nazi Germany and its allies.

The Second World War was waged between two major factions. The Allied powers, whose primary actors were The British Empire and its Commonwealths, France, The U.S.S.R, China, and later The United States, fought the Axis, consisting of Nazi Germany, Italy, Romania, Hungary, and the Empire of Japan<sup>2</sup>. While the tension had been rising since the mid 1930's, its start date is typically recognized as 4:40 a.m. on September 1st, 1939, when the German military released the full might of its vast army, known as the Wehrmacht, against its eastern neighbor Poland<sup>3</sup>. After a sweeping victory, the Germans turned west to face Britain and France.

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<sup>2</sup> Parker, "The Second World War", 1

<sup>3</sup> Hastings, "Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945", 8

Just over 20 years earlier, during the First World War, the belligerents had entered battle on the same grounds in the Benelux and Northern France, where millions died for little movement. This was due to the infamous practice of trench warfare, and so it was assumed that the coming conflict would operate in the same manner. However, despite this recent experience, the conflict of 1940 would manifest much differently than in years before. Commonly referred to as “Blitzkrieg”, translated from German to mean “lightning war”, but more accurately described as “Bewegungskrieg” or “movement war”, this old style style of fighting would be conducted with modern weapons, equipment, and communications systems, enabling rapid and coordinated advance across the battlefield<sup>4</sup>. First seen in the Poland campaign, this method of warfare, coupled with proficient local planning, resulted in French surrender as the English evacuated the European continent at Dunkirk after just 46 days of fighting<sup>5</sup>. On June 22, 1940, the French officially capitulated. They signed their surrender agreement in the same railway car as the Germans had when they signed the humiliating treaty of Versailles in 1919<sup>6</sup>.

Shortly thereafter, the German air force, known as the Luftwaffe, began bombing London, Bristol, Portsmouth, Birmingham, and other English cities and their facilities in an attempt to bring Great Britain to the negotiating table<sup>7</sup>. This ultimately failed, as Great Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave rabble rousing speeches to encourage the population to standfast in its lone struggle against the Nazi war machine<sup>8</sup>. Though the war was far from over, for the time being the pilots, air crews, intelligence services, and radar operators of England's Royal Air Force, or RAF, defended the skies above Britain and the English Channel from

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<sup>4</sup> Jacobson and Smith, “World War II, Policy and Strategy”, 16

<sup>5</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 58-59

<sup>6</sup> Hastings, 76

<sup>7</sup> Hastings, 91

<sup>8</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 56

German domination. They did so while inflicting heavy, irreplaceable losses on the seemingly invincible Luftwaffe<sup>9</sup>.

Meanwhile, having seen the sweeping victories of Hitler in Europe, Mussolini decided to bring his own nation, Italy, to arms against the Allies. He expanded the Second World War into the Balkans and North Africa, seeing them as easy pickings, and so there was no coordination with his German counterparts in securing them<sup>10</sup>. Woefully unequipped, he hoped to ride the coattails of German success to secure a stake in the new Europe. Believing firmly that the war would be over soon, Mussolini feared the Italians would be absent from the negotiating table once the conflict ended<sup>11</sup>. To his dismay, the notion that their new conquests would be done swiftly and concluded by the war's end shortly thereafter was disastrously flawed. Led by incompetent leaders who devised overly cautious plans, poorly equipped soldiers with low morale faced defeat on all fronts<sup>12</sup>. Symbolic of this roundly ineffective strategy, the Italian Ministry of War in Rome closed for business each day at 2:00 p.m., despite the disasters looming over them<sup>13</sup>.

In both North Africa and the Balkans, the German military would have to intervene to prop up their failing ally<sup>14</sup>. In the Balkans, the German military would be in full control by late May 1941, and have the area firmly in its grasp until war's end<sup>15</sup>. All the while, Erwin Rommel was setting up his command of the Afrika Korps in North Africa<sup>16</sup>. A well decorated and

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<sup>9</sup> Hastings, 88

<sup>10</sup> Hastings, 101

<sup>11</sup> Hastings, 101

<sup>12</sup> Hastings, 107

<sup>13</sup> Hastings, 106

<sup>14</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 108

<sup>15</sup> Hastings, 120

<sup>16</sup> Hastings, 111

admired German Lieutenant General, he had been a successful infantry commander in the First World War<sup>17</sup>. Up to this point in the Second World War, he had garnished an indomitable reputation as an ambitious and capable leader during the German campaigns in Poland and France<sup>18</sup>. At his new command in North Africa, he would achieve legendary local success against the Allies between 1941 and 1942<sup>19</sup>. He would go on to lead the German defense against the Allied invasion of France in 1944<sup>20</sup>.

Pivoting back Eastward, Hitler sought to expand his nation by invading Joseph Stalin's resource rich Soviet Union, while exterminating its population for the German's own benefit<sup>21</sup>. During the early morning hours of June 22, 1941, German troops crossed the border into the Soviet Union in a surprise attack<sup>22</sup>. Its stated objective was the destruction of all Soviet forces during a quick and ambitious campaign against its military forces, before the fall Rasputitsa and harsh winter months<sup>23</sup>. Furthermore, German economists forecasted that their vital oil supply would be used up by the end of 1941, making a quick war essential<sup>24</sup>. The largest land invasion ever conducted up to that point, it swept across the Russian steppe with vicious effectiveness<sup>25</sup>. In the massive encirclements near Kiev and Smolensk, thousands of tanks, guns, and supplies had been surrendered, while 1.2 million Soviet soldiers were killed, wounded, or captured<sup>26</sup>. By late November, 5 months after the invasion had begun, more than 3 million Soviet soldiers and

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<sup>17</sup> Mitcham, "Rommel's Last Battle", 1

<sup>18</sup> Mitcham, 2-3

<sup>19</sup> Hastings, 136

<sup>20</sup> Mitcham, 9

<sup>21</sup> Hastings, 138

<sup>22</sup> Hastings, 137

<sup>23</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 105-107

<sup>24</sup> Parker, 37

<sup>25</sup> Parker, 65

<sup>26</sup> Parker, 70

countless civilians were casualties of a savage war<sup>27</sup>. By early December, German forces occupied a significant amount of Soviet territory, with some units less than 25 miles from Moscow<sup>28</sup>. Yet due to the vastness of the Russian nation, and the steadfast commitment of its people, several chronic problems began to develop for the Axis powers. Facing exhaustion, with few replacements and low supply, the Wehrmacht was stopped short of its objective. This failure would have disastrous consequences as the war progressed.

In the Pacific, The Empire of Japan was aggressively expanding its sphere of interest. Since the early 1930s, it had sought to expand its base of resources to fund its growing industrial economy. Deeply embroiled in a vicious war with China since 1937, they sought to subjugate their larger neighbor under the guise of liberation<sup>29</sup>. Yet despite local success, and a massive commitment of manpower and materials to the region, the forces of Imperial Japan could not decisively conclude fighting on the Asian continent<sup>30</sup>. Under the constant threat of resource deficiency, this prolonged war severely drained its economy. Japan tried to further its raw material base by exploiting British and French defeats in Europe to seize resource rich regions of Southeast Asia<sup>31</sup>. The Dutch East Indies, French Indochina, and other Pacific islands, all of which had been European colonies, would come under Japan's control<sup>32</sup>. Japan's goal was to aggressively set up an economically self sufficient occupation zone, before moving to a defensive stance<sup>33</sup>. Then, on December 7th, 1941, in response to English and American efforts to

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<sup>27</sup> Hastings, 155

<sup>28</sup> Hastings, 151

<sup>29</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 167-168

<sup>30</sup> Hastings, 416

<sup>31</sup> Hastings, 190

<sup>32</sup> Hastings, 207, 209, 214

<sup>33</sup> Parker, 87

limit its expansion, Japan's naval air forces attacked in force<sup>34</sup>. The United States base at Pearl Harbor was bombed, causing immense destruction, and stoking the furnace of war to unprecedented levels<sup>35</sup>. At this point, the Second World War had truly become an all encompassing global conflict.

The local successes of the Axis powers and the territory they acquired was extensive. By September of 1942, they had shocked the world with their swift actions. In Europe, Poland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, the Baltic, North Africa, and almost all of western Russia was subject to Axis occupation. In Asia, the Japanese had expanded into some of the most resource rich regions of the world, thousands of square miles of land and sea under their control. This resounding success shocked the world, and while some of these regions were only occupied for a short time, the extent of these would be empires, and the Tactical victories which conquered them, should not be overlooked.

Yet despite some early victories, the Axis powers now found themselves at war with the largest superpowers in the world on multiple fronts. Using data from 1939, the Nazi party and its collaborators now fought at a significant manpower disadvantage, almost 3 to 1 against them<sup>36</sup>. By 1943, the Axis economies produced just a small percentage of what their enemies could in terms of both raw materials, like iron, coal, or oil, and finished equipment, such as tanks, ships, and airplanes<sup>37</sup>. They had committed themselves to fight a war while possessing a fraction of their enemies' strength. The grievous discrepancy of raw materials, manpower, and industrial capacity began taking a devastating toll on local combat, putting the Axis powers squarely on the

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<sup>34</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 167

<sup>35</sup> Hastings, 196

<sup>36</sup> Parker, 131

<sup>37</sup> Parker, 131-135

defense<sup>38 39</sup>. This political situation, which aligned the whole world against them, ultimately destroyed them. From this point, despite stiff resistance and some setbacks, the Allies would consistently regain their lost territory<sup>40 41</sup>. Without a clear and concise Grand Strategic and Strategic objective, the Axis created conditions which made their ultimate victory impossible. By failing to take these factors into account, they ultimately destroyed themselves.

At this point, one might be inclined to ask how and why this all occurred, and how the players involved determined their moves. In short, they followed principles and concepts which originate with our human nature. Long before economics, architecture, and law, the delicate balance between conflict and cooperation ruled the day. The oldest life on earth has evolved into what we know today as a result of this ever present dynamic. So what is conflict, and what is cooperation? What is their purpose? As defined by Merriam Webster dictionary, conflict is “[the] competitive or opposing action of incompatibles”<sup>42</sup> whereas cooperation is defined as “association of persons for common benefit.”<sup>43</sup> These actions take place every day at all hours; between both individuals and vast nations, everyone seeks to use these forces to further either their own interests or those of a cause they believe in.

Cooperation is the *modus operandi* of daily life, as each individual or group compromises on their wants and needs in relation to the world around them. When one side of a negotiation finds itself unwilling or unable to accept certain terms, conflict arises. And despite the extremely negative connotations of the word, most conflicts are more or less harmless, relegated to pizza

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<sup>38</sup> Hastings, 260

<sup>39</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 248

<sup>40</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 241

<sup>41</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 263

<sup>42</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Conflict”

<sup>43</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Cooperation”



toppings and meeting times, and can even be a force of positive change when people seek new solutions to seemingly unsolvable problems. These minor conflicts typically end in concessions one way or another. This is no different than the conflict and cooperation between nations. When the differences become irreconcilable, argument ensues. If groups desire things which are mutually exclusive to one another, cooperation becomes an impossibility, and so conflict is inevitable. In a divorce between spouses, cutting the kids in half is not an option, in the same way that occupying a single piece of ground cannot be done by two forces with opposite views on how the ground should be used.

As the stakes are raised, the treasure each side is willing to expend to achieve their aims is increased. When two nations seek to control the same piece of ground, the severity of the warfare which ensues is reflective of their desire to acquire its objectives. According to 19th century military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz, the object of war is to use “physical force to compel the other to do his will... to [incapacitate] his opponent in order to make him incapable of further resistance”<sup>44</sup>. War is thus conducted to secure your own goals by making resistance to their imposition impossible. These basic concepts form the basis of all military theories. As a natural result of these elements, we see that modern conflict is broken down into the well defined hierarchy of Grand Strategic, Strategic, Operational, and Tactical objectives, meant to reflect the complex dynamic between supporting and opposing forces.

To best understand these ideas in military terms, and the history which grows out of them, it is important to understand the glossary of vocabulary which explains it. Military terminology is in and of itself a complex subject, as a lack of consistency between nations and

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<sup>44</sup> Clausewitz, “On War”, 75

the time frame being discussed leaves room for simple yet confusing mistakes. For example, to state that an enemy vehicle has been “knocked out” could have multiple meanings. One author might define the term as the total destruction of an enemy vehicle by friendly weapons, while another might consider a vehicle which was disabled, out of fuel, or otherwise abandoned as a vehicle which has been “knocked out”. As such, for clarity purposes, all terms found herein will follow the definitions of Richard Bowyers 3rd edition Dictionary of Military Terms. In our example, the definition of “knocked out” would be “a destroyed vehicle”<sup>45</sup>. By using a standard set of vocabulary, all terminology will be easily accessible for cross referencing, while accurately and consistently describing relevant events, items, and concepts.

While logisticians, politicians, and general staff dictate broad strokes on the battlefield, the soldiers on the frontline and their close superiors are the ultimate deciding factor. Once his superiors have done everything in their power to place that soldier in the most advantageous set of circumstances, the soldier takes over almost exclusively as the deciding factor. This is where Tactical abilities, or Tactics, come into play. As defined by the United States Marine Corps. (USMC), Tactics are “the art and science of winning engagements and battles. It includes the use of firepower and maneuver, the integration of different arms and the immediate exploitation of success to defeat the enemy”<sup>46</sup>. This is the micro scale of the battlefield, where actual combat takes place. While this man to man fighting might seem like a tiny drop in an ocean, especially considering the massive scale on which some conflicts are fought, it is crucial for both commanders and the average soldier to understand their importance and contribution to the bigger picture<sup>47</sup>. The goal of Tactical maneuvers is to create circumstances where you are in a

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<sup>45</sup> Bowyer, “Dictionary of Military Terms”, 137

<sup>46</sup> United States Marine Corps, MCDP 1-3, 3

<sup>47</sup> MCDP 1-3, 23

significant position of superiority over your opposition. Known as Decisive Action, this might mean the destruction of an enemy force, the capture of a geographical location, or the securing of one's own footing. Regardless, these things should all contribute to the overall success of both Strategic and Operational objectives, and create conditions for future Tactical success<sup>48</sup>. A key part of this Tactical success is the effective use of combined arms warfare<sup>49</sup>. Combined arms warfare refers to the efficient use of multiple weapons systems, from rifles and artillery, to tanks, airplanes, and naval power, concentrated on one area for a compounding effect creating destruction which far exceeds any of the systems on its own. As stated by the United States Marine Corps:

“ The enemy should discover that if he stays hunkered down in fighting holes, Marine artillery and air will blast him out. If he comes out to attack, Marine infantry will cut him down. If he tries to retreat, Marine armor and airpower will pursue him to his destruction.”<sup>50</sup>

Further, the importance of speed on the battlefield cannot be understated. With conceptual roots going back to ancient times, being consistently faster than the enemy has been shown to be the number one deciding factor in a battle between evenly matched foes. This encompasses everything from a staff's planning ability, the efficiency of underlying government institutions, the decision making capacity of the commanders, to the actual speed of available units on the battlefield<sup>51</sup>. When all of these Tactical principles are soundly applied, in conjunction with the broader goals of political and military action, a key pillar of success is established.

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<sup>48</sup> MCDP 1-3, 22

<sup>49</sup> MCDP 1-3, 39

<sup>50</sup> MCDP 1-3, 40

<sup>51</sup> MCDP 1-3, 73

One level above Tactical planning is Operational planning. Operations are described as “a series of related military operations aimed at accomplishing a strategic or operational objective within a given time and space”<sup>52</sup>. This means that under the umbrella of a single Operational plan, many smaller Tactical plans are developed and implemented. Operational plans are created to achieve Strategic and Grand Strategic success, as well as create future conditions which ensure Operational and Tactical victories. As such, rather than acting as a linear hierarchy where directives and information move from a higher to lower positions or vice versa, it is more accurately described as a spider’s web. This is because pressure on one strand causes a ripple effect on the whole, even if that effect is nominal<sup>53</sup>. In its relation to Grand Strategy and Strategy, Operations must be conducted with the overall political aim in mind<sup>54</sup>. It is critical to note that armed conflict is an extension of political aims, and so any Operational plan should be reflective of the final political objective<sup>55</sup>. If this link between abstract aims and Tactical maneuvers is poorly made, the series of disjointed skirmishes that will ensue will be either useless or counterproductive. Yet just as Grand Strategy and Strategy outlines the goals of Operations, the Tactical situation simultaneously dictates the possibility of the prior. If a Strategic objective requires capabilities beyond those allowed by the Tactical situation, a breakdown in planning ensues. Further, if Tactical success requires resources greater than the provisions made by Grand Strategy, a breakdown in planning occurs in the opposite direction. Yet when both the higher and lower levels of organization are accurately taken into account, circumstances favorable to the side who achieves this careful dichotomy become self sustaining.

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<sup>52</sup> United States Marine Corps, MCDP 1-2, 3

<sup>53</sup> MCDP 1-2, 10

<sup>54</sup> MCDP 1-2, 13

<sup>55</sup> MCDP 1-2. 35

As such, flexibility of action and reaction is the principal trait of Operations. Due to its integral link between all parts of the command hierarchy, it is one of the most important levels of planning, making Operations the most dynamic and fluid aspect of the planning process<sup>56</sup>.

In 19th and 20th century combat, Operations are devised along two interrelated principles. The first strategy is a “strategy of annihilation”<sup>57</sup> while the second is a “strategy of erosion”<sup>58</sup>. The aim of the former is to so badly damage the military capabilities of the enemy that it becomes unable to resist changes to its political, economic, geographical, or military status quo<sup>59</sup>. This is achieved by capturing or destroying enemy formations, disrupting industry and supply, or any combination thereof<sup>60</sup>. This is typically seen as the main aspect of any major conflict, as its the more visible of the two. The “strategy of erosion” refers to the slow depletion of the morale, credibility, and support of the enemies leadership. Its goal is to create conditions which are so unfavorable to the top leadership that they risk irreparable damage to themselves domestically or from their own soldiers should the situation remain on its current course<sup>61</sup>. An example of a successful strategy of erosion would be during the Vietnam War, where the goal of the North Vietnamese was to unify Vietnam rather than force a total surrender or destruction of the U.S. government and its forces. As a result, they successfully utilized other means of demoralizing the American population outside of military maneuvers, yet still satisfying their stated objective<sup>62</sup>. During the Second World War, the goal was the “unconditional surrender”<sup>63</sup> of

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<sup>56</sup> MCDP 1-2, 10

<sup>57</sup> MCDP 1-2, 36

<sup>58</sup> MCDP 1-2, 38

<sup>59</sup> MCDP 1-2, 35

<sup>60</sup> MCDP 1-2, 35

<sup>61</sup> MCDP 1-2, 39

<sup>62</sup> MCDP 1-2, 38

<sup>63</sup> Jacobson and Smith, 242

the belligerent Axis nations, and the total dissolution of their political system. Since these nation's and their populations were unwilling to voluntarily comply with such demands, the only way to achieve this objective was through the use of force. As such, while there were certainly efforts to delegitimize and demoralize the Axis nations, progress would be largely determined by the destruction of their military capacity.

The USMC officially recognizes this level of planning as “Campaigning”, but it should be noted that for practical purposes this works interchangeably with Operations<sup>64</sup>. Here is just one of the many examples of where terminology breaks down, even within the same nations militaries. Further, the next most broad level of planning is referred to as “Warfighting” by the 1997 MCDP series of military manuals, but again conveys the same meaning with the same intention as the term Strategic planning<sup>65</sup>.

Strategic planning is the second most broad level of organization. It focuses on the relationship between the fundamentally political nature of conflict and how it relates to military action. At this level of planning, the consequences of actions can make or break a nation's very existence. From this point, decisions are made by government bodies, and are a matter of policy and directive with the intent of creating an efficient military. The United States War Department and the German Ministry of Armaments and War Production would both be relevant examples of government bodies who determine the parameters of action to subordinates, while providing options and their limitations to superiors. Due to the size and scope of these nationwide levers of power, implementing changes to the system takes time. This is apparent by the growing production efficiency of all nations throughout the World War II, including besieged Germany,

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<sup>64</sup> MCDP 1-2, Foreword

<sup>65</sup> Bowyer, 234

but most significantly the U.S.A., despite shortages in manpower and materials<sup>66</sup>. As the nation's policies changed, so too did its outputs and capabilities. Due to the constantly evolving nature of the problems these organizations seek to address, all government bodies must adapt to changing circumstances or fail<sup>67</sup>. If the policymakers of a nation are indecisive or otherwise in disagreement, the policies it devises will be contradictory and ineffective. In order to be effective, planning must be made a distributive process which draws data from above and below<sup>68</sup>. Further, while Tactical and Operational failures can be rebounded from, Strategic blunders can spiral into irreversible catastrophes<sup>69</sup>. As such, Strategic planning should be conducted with the ever present intention coordinate efforts between Grand Strategic goals and Operational and Tactical possibilities.

The foundation for the completion of any task, no matter how big or small, necessitates a clear final objective. With a destination in mind, a good plan can be developed and implemented to best suit a situation as it develops. This is where all encompassing Grand Strategic planning comes into play. Only recently recognized as a distinct part of the decision making process, separate from Strategy, it considers the overall function of a nation's people and government as crucial to national security. This includes the maintenance and deployment of armed forces, the preservation of a healthy population and economy, as well as the conservation of beneficial alliances<sup>70</sup>. It is primarily concerned with;

“the process by which power is distributed in any society... The process of distributing power may be fairly orderly, through consensus, inheritance, election, or some time-honored tradition... [or it may be] chaotic, through

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<sup>66</sup> Smith, “The Army and Economic Mobilization”, 158

<sup>67</sup> United States Marine Corps, MCDP 1-1, 17

<sup>68</sup> MCDP 1-1, 96

<sup>69</sup> MCDP 1-1, 101

<sup>70</sup> Biddle, “Strategy and Grand Strategy: What Students and Practitioners Need to Know”, 39

assassination, revolution, or warfare... politics is inherently dynamic, not only the distribution of power but the process by which it [reacts] under constant pressure for change.”<sup>71</sup>

The most important consideration in all planning, it is also the most difficult to accurately control and predict. It is the “attempt to impose coherence and predictability on an inherently disorderly environment composed of thinking, reacting, competing, and conflicting entities” for political and military purposes<sup>72</sup>. Ultimately, all subsidiary levels of planning should contribute to the most favorable Grand Strategic positioning. However, more so than other aspect of planning and organization, it is heavily influenced by philosophical, moral, and ideological principles, which dictate the aims and intentions of the nation as a whole. The chasm between the Fascist, Democratic, and Communist systems of government, with their vast difference in industrial, military, and technological capabilities, in addition to their moral character, are examples of different Grand Strategic decision making systems<sup>73</sup>. When the upper echelons of a nation's leadership is at odds with itself, operates inefficiently, or is otherwise morally deficient, the result is a toxic indecisiveness which trickles down the whole chain of command. While Tactical and Operation victories can be attained under these conditions, there is a low likelihood of achieving sustained success. If a Tactical or Operational victory is achieved, it might happen at such a cost in manpower and materials that it cripples the acquisition of Grand Strategic objectives, making it a net negative<sup>74</sup>. As such, the final objective should be achieving Grand Strategic success, which culminates in the nation's prosperity, and ultimate security from all threats foreign and domestic.

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<sup>71</sup> MCDP 1-1, 11

<sup>72</sup> Biddle, 29

<sup>73</sup> Biddle, 30-31

<sup>74</sup> MCDP 1-1, 94



In summation, the goal of Grand Strategic decision making would be the preservation of one's own nation or the dismantling of another, while Strategic organization provides the underlying governmental mechanisms to attain these goals. Operational planning is the large scale distribution and objectives of available manpower and materiel, in offensive or defensive action. Finally, this all results in the maneuver of individual military units and their combat performance on the Tactical level. This phase is the result of the total sum of all superseding levels of organization, as their means and directives come from the hierarchy above them. While slight deficiency in a single category might be compensated by another, the neglect of any one aspect of this formula will inevitably end in disaster. Through the proper coordination of each of these principles, there is very little which cannot be achieved. Without properly taking into account this necessity, any group which relies heavily on any one will be inevitably overwhelmed by a mediocre but comprehensive unity of the four.

In the 5 years of conflict leading up to the Normandy Invasions, we can already begin to see an emerging pattern for Allied and Axis forces. Consistently, the Allies would outmatch their Axis counterparts in Strategic and Grand Strategic abilities, eroding the Operational and Tactical proficiency of the Axis.

For the Axis powers in both Europe and Asia, no concrete Strategy was ever established. Although each nation envisioned economic self sufficiency through territorial expansion, they saw this goal as their own individually. As such they often found themselves directly undermining the others progress. The Germans and Japanese, despite being more than 5,000 miles apart, directly hampered each other in an effort to achieve their own goals. In 1937, just after the start of the Second Sino-Japanese war, the forces of Imperial Japan besieged the city of

Shanghai in what would become one of the most violent episodes in the entire Asian theatre of war. As fighting reached a climax, a 50,000 strong Chinese Central Army moved to encircle the Japanese in the city. As a result of extensive cooperation with the Germans through the 1930s, this Chinese unit wore the infamous German Stahlhelm, or “steel helmet”, and carried German made rifles, grenades, and tanks, while utilizing German maneuver tactics and training<sup>75</sup>. While this counterattack was ultimately driven back, and the City of Shanghai lost, these Chinese troops with German training and equipment were a deadly and serious threat to the Japanese, who paid dearly for every inch of ground gained<sup>76</sup>. Although the Germans ceased cooperation with the Chinese shortly thereafter, the opening stages of the Second Sino-Japanese War is just one of many notable examples where one Axis nation either directly or indirectly interfered with the other’s ability to fight. This pattern of failure would undermine entire Axis war effort.

In Europe, the infighting between Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Italy was severely detrimental to the Axis war effort. On the eastern front, they fought against the Soviet Union as a coalition of hesitant collaborators who ultimately sought their own personal interest. On the Operational level, the German command denied much needed manpower and equipment to its partners<sup>77</sup>. Because of contempt for its allies perceived inferiority, and its own failure to accurately assess the situation, the German High Command inevitably sabotaged itself<sup>78</sup>. At the infamous Battle of Stalingrad during 1942-1943, Romanian and Italian units holding the flanks of the German army were destroyed, leading to the encirclement of the entire German 6th Army. As a result, the Italians and Romanians were vehemently blamed by the Germans and accused of

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<sup>75</sup> Crouch, “The Shanghai Gambit: World War II”, 56.

<sup>76</sup> Crouch, 57.

<sup>77</sup> Harward, “First among Unequals”, 470

<sup>78</sup> Harward, 471

cowardice in their failure to hold the line. However, contemporary analysis shows these second rate Axis units lacked the proper equipment to defend themselves from a large scale Soviet attack<sup>79</sup>. Despite this, they were entrusted with large, critical swaths of the front by the German High Command. Romania in particular contributed a significant amount of manpower to the frontline, but badly lacked the type of anti tank weapons available to the Germans<sup>80</sup>.

Nonetheless, these Axis subsidiaries were scapegoated as the cause for the humiliating defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad in 1943<sup>81</sup>. This Operational disaster, which led to massive Tactical defeats, was a one step in the Grand Strategic and Strategic destruction of the Axis as a whole.

In reality, the only binding force between the Axis nations was their predatory nature and ambition to achieve self reliance of resources through expansion. Despite numerous rapid victories on an Operational and Tactical level in the early days of World War 2, these nations lacked the political and diplomatic stability to effectively sustain their success. Further, their alignment on political and economic issues was hardly unilateral, especially considering the radical racial politics of Imperial Japan and the Nazi Party, which deemed some of their own allies to be inferior people. Additionally, the prejudice and the atrocities which followed against the Axis' enemies, such as the Holocaust and systematic starvation of Russian populations by the Germans, and the Japanese animosity against the Chinese at places like Nanking, actively encouraged resistance by the targeted populations. Coupled with the severe inefficiencies of the totalitarian system, the Grand Strategic planning of the Axis was badly handicapped.

Undoubtedly, this poor performance of the Axis was a leading factor in their demise. In their vain attempt to help themselves, the this kabal of bullies ultimately crippled one another.

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<sup>79</sup> Harward, 456

<sup>80</sup> Harward, 463

<sup>81</sup> Harward, 464

To the contrary, the Allies understood the necessity of unifying these principles from the top down and bottom up in a delicate balance. Tactical, Operational, Strategic and Grand Strategic planning was all taken into consideration, with a unified goal. By operating in this manner, responsibilities were delegated to their most efficient point, ensuring that subsequent actions would be conducted smoothly for a common cause. Within the Allied context of *Operation Overlord*, we see this proficiency of planning and organization clearly come into play. Grand Strategic planning, the broadest objective, and the desired outcome of all actions, was determined immediately. It would consist of the unconditional surrender of the Axis powers to the Allies, and the imposition of favorable policies by the Allies in a post war world. As such, *Operation Overlord* would be a critical part in attaining Grand Strategic objectives<sup>82</sup>. The Strategic objective, one level narrower, refers to the overall area of operations whose boundaries have been determined by the political and governmental hierarchy. This encompasses the collective intent of military action taking place in a specific region during a specific timeframe. *Operation Overlord* contributes to the Strategic objective of liberating Western Europe from German occupation, in the Summer of 1944, before starting the advance into Germany itself<sup>83</sup>.

Operational actions refer to the planning and preparation of a specific military maneuver, which contributes to both superseding objectives. It is the organization of forces which will directly participate in offensive or defensive action. This consists of the armies, navies, and air forces of multiple nations, performing logistic, medical, and combat roles, and is where the word “Operation” in *Operation Overlord* stems from. Its stated objective was to secure a foothold on the European continent, from where more offensive actions against Nazi Germany and its allies

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<sup>82</sup> Harrison, “Cross-Channel Attack”, 450

<sup>83</sup> Harrison, 454

could occur<sup>84</sup>. It was a coordinated series of military actions in an attempt to attain well defined goals. Tactical planning, being the narrowest field, is where direct, individual action takes place. In *Operation Overlord*, this would be Allied forces assaulting the Normandy coast to destroy positions, clear landing obstacles, and generally advance inland against the Germans, while inflicting as much damage to their capabilities as possible<sup>85</sup>.

The fierce infighting of the Axis stands in stark contrast to the Allied war effort. From the outset, the Allied “Big 3” of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union each agreed on a “Germany First” Grand Strategy, which focused on ending the war in Europe first and foremost rather than the one against Japan in the Pacific<sup>86</sup>. Starting as soon as 1940, almost the entirety of Allied manpower and material would be sent to the European conflict<sup>87</sup>. As such, the power of each nation could be concentrated in one theater, rather than working piecemeal to resolve their individual issues across the globe. Indeed, this broad cooperation of man and materiel across all levels of the organizational and planning structure was the deciding factor in the Allied victory over the Axis.

Though it only officially entered the Second World War in 1941, the latest of any major belligerent, the United States of America had started taking steps to prepare the nation’s industries, military, and government bodies for war as soon as the escalating global conflict became apparent<sup>88</sup>. Neutrality was the official policy as per the 1939 Neutrality Acts, a joint resolution which sought to “preserve [The United States] neutrality between foreign states and

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<sup>84</sup> Harrison, 450

<sup>85</sup> Harrison, 451

<sup>86</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 193

<sup>87</sup> Leighton and Coakley, “Global Logistics and Strategy 1940-1943”, 716-718

<sup>88</sup> Bureau of the Budget, “The United States at War”, 17

desiring also to avoid any involvement therein.”<sup>89</sup> But by 1940, with the fall of France looming, the Roosevelt administration took steps against this directive. They leased naval and air facilities from the British, while occupying several strategically important areas<sup>90</sup>. By mid 1941, with the threat of permanent German domination of Europe and Japanese expansion in the Pacific everpresent, the United States began a series of massive assistance programs to aid Great Britain and the Soviet Union<sup>91</sup>. Reeling from German pressure, these nations greatly benefited from the mass of American arms and equipment throughout the war<sup>92</sup>. Once the United States had officially entered the war, its government committed to a five point plan of action;

“[It] built and sustained a functional civil-military relationship that facilitated all other activity. Second, they found ways to mobilize men and material, and to fight inside a democratic, capitalist paradigm that worked in concert with the 33 [Allied] nation’s existing institutions. Third, the Americans leveraged the moral high ground ceded to them by their enemies and sustained national will by relying on mechanisms with well-established roots in the culture. Fourth, they used their ongoing relationship with the British to make better strategic choices than they might have made entirely on their own. Fifth, they embraced adaptability and resilience, which allowed them to learn from their many mistakes and take advantage of their enemies’ mistakes.”<sup>93</sup>

President Roosevelt met with Churchill in only 26 days, where they determined the “Germany First” strategy, and within 90 days, the U.S.A. was deeply involved in supplying and coordinating Allied war efforts<sup>94</sup>. All the while, they took drastic steps to increase their own military involvement. This immediate coordination of Grand Strategic goals, which was

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<sup>89</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 36

<sup>90</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 89

<sup>91</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 151-157

<sup>92</sup> Collingham, 109-112

<sup>93</sup> Biddle, 90

<sup>94</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 196-201

motivated by the desire to rid the world of aggressive expansionism, coupled with the Strategic goal of doing it in Europe first, was indispensable. It enabled the Allied powers to rebound from the many defeats they sustained at the hands of the Axis in the early stages of World War 2.

Without making these initial Grand Strategic assessments, the combat that would liberate France and eventually all of Europe would have never been possible.

Domestically, the massive industrial capabilities of the United States were stoked immediately. While there is often vigorous, though typically inconclusive debate regarding the U.S.'s efforts, often ending with either overrepresentation or minimization of its contributions, the massive stockpiles of fuel, food, ammunition, and other materials it produced is nonetheless undeniable<sup>95</sup> <sup>96</sup>. As soon as war began, rationing of domestic fuel consumption, in addition to increasing production goals, provided America's allies with a vast supply of fuel for its ships and airplanes<sup>97</sup>. Meanwhile, in response to the global rubber shortage caused by Japanese occupation of rubber producing areas, the United States petrochemical industry under government subsidy began a massive synthetic rubber program which would far surpass its expectations<sup>98</sup>. By 1944, American rationing and recycling programs had yielded huge results in all areas of raw materials; steel, aluminum, and magnesium being the most successful<sup>99</sup>. The production of all food stuffs, such as wheat, beef, and eggs, met, were narrowly short of, or exceeded their production goals. Except for peanuts and soybeans for the years 1943 and '44, which fell far short<sup>100</sup>.

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<sup>95</sup> Parker, 132-136

<sup>96</sup> Collingham, 107-110

<sup>97</sup> Bureau of the Budget, 285-286

<sup>98</sup> Bureau of the Budget, 294

<sup>99</sup> Bureau of the Budget, 300

<sup>100</sup> Bureau of the Budget, 349

Massive contracts were arranged with many major American corporations. Ford Motor Corp., Goodyear Tire & Rubber, Winchester Firearms, and General Electric were among the many companies participating<sup>101</sup>. These private groups operating under government contracts yielded massive outputs. At war's end, nearly 30 million ¼ pound cans of foot powder had been produced; a cheap, effective luxury which increased morale and decreased attrition casualties, though it was not made readily available by other nations industries<sup>102</sup>. 2.2 million trucks and other transport vehicles, 40 million rounds of various ammunition types, and 231 thousand aircraft of all types had all been produced<sup>103</sup>. To transport these raw materials and finished products to Allied forces across the globe, a massive merchant shipping fleet was built and judiciously employed, the largest in the world by far<sup>104 105</sup>.

Rather than being attributed to “hard work”, these numbers are the result of the staggering efficiency per worker as a result of assembly lines, resource efficiency, and meticulous management processes, resulting in a 2:1 production ratio when compared to Germany, and nearly 4:1 when compared to Japan<sup>106</sup>. In all categories, except total production of artillery guns, which was granted to the Soviet Union, the United States out produced all other nations<sup>107</sup>. Between 1943-'44, the United States produced more warships, merchant vessels, and trucks than every other major belligerent combined up to that point in the war<sup>108</sup>. This massive war economy was created in less than 2 years. There were many heated disagreements between

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<sup>101</sup> Smith, 63

<sup>102</sup> Smith, 21

<sup>103</sup> Smith, 9, 13, 27

<sup>104</sup> Bureau of the Budget, 136, 141, 143

<sup>105</sup> Parker, 135

<sup>106</sup> Parker, 142-144

<sup>107</sup> Parker, 134

<sup>108</sup> Parker, 134-135



government institutions and the civilian sector in doing so<sup>109 110</sup>. This included but was not limited to matters regarding price fixing, Constitutional restraints and overreach, inflation concerns, profiteering, and many contract renegotiations with varying degrees of success, all of which warrant their own careful studies. Furthermore, while quality is not necessarily reflected in these numbers, quantity does in fact have a quality all of its own. Nonetheless, the outcome is clear. From staunch isolationism to the arsenal of democracy, the United States conducted a Grand Strategic policy change unlike any seen before or since. Thus, it created the means for success in all subsequent Strategic, Operational, and Tactical plans for the Allies as a whole.

In the United States, the ineffectiveness of the War Department was recognized as early as the 1920s, and a comprehensive plan was developed to address these issues<sup>111</sup>. By 1942, this “streamlined war department” had bloomed as an adequate replacement for its predecessor<sup>112</sup>. Simultaneously, it had recognized the need to replace the dated War Plans Division with a modern mechanism which reflects the complexity of modern Strategic-Operational planning<sup>113</sup>. This concluded with the creation of the Operations Division (“OPD”) as a centralized entity responsible for imposing order on the massive deployment of manpower and material across the globe<sup>114</sup>. While these systems had many shortcomings, and was far from perfection, they far surpassed the capabilities of any other nation to coordinate civilian and military matters domestically and internationally<sup>115</sup>. It still suffered from rivalries and de facto disagreements regarding successful action based thereupon, but still provided an efficient means of compromise

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<sup>109</sup> Smith, 235

<sup>110</sup> Bureau of the Budget, 235

<sup>111</sup> Cline, “Washington Command Post: The Operations Division”, 19

<sup>112</sup> Cline, 94

<sup>113</sup> Cline, 124

<sup>114</sup> Cline, 125

<sup>115</sup> Cline 104

among these groups<sup>116</sup>. This massive reorganization along Strategic-Operational lines early on permitted the Allies to utilize the whole depth of their resources. With this central, multifaceted coordination, which appropriately delegated responsibilities to its subordinates, the massive resources of the Allies could be allocated effectively and efficiently, serving as the foundations for their Tactical and Strategic success in the late war years.

As 1944 approached, the world was in flames as it never had been before. Across the globe, the Allied powers were making new strides in undermining the effectiveness of the entire Axis war machine. Starting with themselves, the Allies restructured their command system to accommodate the huge workload of coordination. Twenty-four total nations pledged to devote the full capacity of their nations to defeating the Axis, and would provide one another with military and civilian accommodations if need be, and set up the proper channels of communication to do so<sup>117</sup>. It was from this framework that the Operational success of the Allied powers was built. Despite this unilateral commitment, there was still disagreement on where the Allied assault against Hitler's "Fortress Europe" should take place<sup>118</sup>.

During the 1943 meetings between American and English military and policy decision makers in Canada, they created the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces ("SHAEF"), under American General Dwight D. Eisenhower, as a foundational structure from where this decision could be finally made<sup>119</sup>. A man well known for his character and emphasis on teamwork, he had already conducted three other amphibious invasion jointly with the British armed forces, and was determined to be the logical choice for head of this massive cooperative

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<sup>116</sup> Cline, 99

<sup>117</sup> Cline, 95

<sup>118</sup> Jacobsen-Smith, 242

<sup>119</sup> Cline, 203

action<sup>120</sup>. By 1944, despite a few dissenting voices, the decision had been made to attack Northern France, and it became apparent that yet another system would be required to coordinate between Washington and London if this invasion were to be carried out successfully on the massive scale envisioned<sup>121</sup>. Allied planners created the Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (“COSSAC”), lead by American General Frederick E. Morgan, as a bureaucratic body with the intention of coordinating all Allied efforts in relation to what would become known as Operation Overlord<sup>122</sup>. Bernard Montgomery, an English General, was assigned as commander of the Allied ground troops, which were organized into the 21st Army Group<sup>123</sup>. The naval and air branches would also be commanded by Englishman, Sir Bertram Ramsay and Sir Arthur Tedder, respectively<sup>124</sup>. This caused some contention among American servicemen of all ranks. They felt that an invasion which was primarily planned by the U.S., funded by their weapons, ships, equipment and airplanes, should be lead by an American; especially with regards to the massive, very costly American bomber fleet<sup>125</sup>. It was in settling these quarrels that Eisenhower’s abilities were most obvious. By understanding the link between policies and performance, he knew the English must serve with some form of authority over the invasion, and so took steps to reassure his countrymen of its importance<sup>126</sup>.

While several contingency plans had been developed to address the changing global situation, such as an emergency invasion to support the Soviet Union if it was in danger of

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<sup>120</sup> Ambrose, “D-Day” 65-66

<sup>121</sup> Cline, 291

<sup>122</sup> Jacobsen-Smith, 263-265

<sup>123</sup> Hastings “Overlord”, 29, 31

<sup>124</sup> Hastings “Overlord”, 29

<sup>125</sup> Hastings “Overlord”, 39

<sup>126</sup> Ambrose, 69

collapse, they all functioned along the same basic principles<sup>127</sup>. Its subsidiary branches were broken down to coordinate the essential parts of any major military Operations planning. It was divided into five branches: Army, Navy, Air, Intelligence, Administration, and Logistics<sup>128</sup>. Furthermore, despite its sometimes cumbersome nature, its responsibilities gradually expanded to incorporate civil issues such as psychological warfare<sup>129</sup>. This includes boosting the morale of Allied troops while making efforts to demoralize their Axis adversaries. Within 6 months of the creation of COSSAC, the United States and its bureaucratic structure had served as an embryo from which a coordinated American, English and Canadian invasion force could be created<sup>130</sup>.

While this Strategic-Operational framework has been a topic of debate in terms of its actual effectiveness versus what its effectiveness could have been, it is nonetheless undisputed that the joint coordination between Allied planners and policy makers did provide an adequate means of compromise and delegation to its members<sup>131</sup>. Without this foundational structure, any Operation on the proposed scale of the Operation Overlord would have been impossible.

It was determined that before any action could be taken across the English Channel against German occupied France, absolute naval supremacy was required. While the German surface fleet was all but irrelevant at this point, the submarines it possessed, known as “U-Boats” were a harmful nuisance to Allied shipping from the United States to Great Britain<sup>132</sup>. In an 8 month period starting in April 1943, despite the tide turning against them, German U -Boats sank nearly 600 tons of Allied cargo bound for Great Britain<sup>133</sup>. In two instances, German submarines

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<sup>127</sup> Harrison, 51

<sup>128</sup> Harrison, 51

<sup>129</sup> Harrison, 52

<sup>130</sup> Harrison, 52

<sup>131</sup> Cline, iiv

<sup>132</sup> Morison, “The Atlantic Battle Won” 244

<sup>133</sup> Morison, 365

were sunk less than 20 miles from the East Coast of the United States<sup>134</sup>. These Tactical actions against Allied shipping affected their Operational and Strategic plans; if the submarines could not be adequately dealt with, the Operational effectiveness of the invasion of France would be constantly hampered by low supplies. The response was the utilization of new techniques and weapons by the Allies. The use of specially built anti-submarine ships and airplanes cut the effectiveness of the U-Boats in half<sup>135</sup>. By 1944, only about 350 tons of cargo was sunk<sup>136</sup>. With the threat of this covert menace minimized, and the massive numerical supremacy of Allied surface ships well established, a naval invasion force could safely cross the channel and be supplied once it reached its destination.

Leading up to the planning stage of the Normandy invasion, the Allied powers had already gathered some amphibious invasion practice in North Africa, Italy, and the Pacific<sup>137</sup>. However, no other amphibious invasion influenced COSSAC and Allied commanders as much as the August 1942 Dieppe Raid<sup>138</sup>. This action was a Tactical disaster. Of the 5,100 mostly Canadian soldiers who landed, only about 1,500 returned to England<sup>139</sup>. Despite this failure, it could be argued that the experience gained in this defeat made it an Operational victory. In this costly excursion, Allied planners learned many lessons and so changed their attitude towards finding a suitable landing zone<sup>140</sup>. Local terrain, composition of the beach sands, proximity to major ports, and the state of roads beyond the beaches all were re-emphasized as major

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<sup>134</sup> Morison, 179

<sup>135</sup> Morrison, 226-228

<sup>136</sup> Morrison, 365

<sup>137</sup> Harrison, 54

<sup>138</sup> Harrison, 54-56

<sup>139</sup> Harrison, 55

<sup>140</sup> Harrison, 55-56

requirements for a landing zone<sup>141</sup>. Other raids, such as the successful attack on St. Nazaire, further tested Allied invasion principles and prodded the techniques used by the German defenders<sup>142</sup>. Using a deductive process, COSSAC determined the only suitable invasion zones would be the Cotentin Peninsula and Caen; both of which had their own major issues<sup>143</sup>. Despite this progress however, many unanswered questions remained regarding the amount of landing zones, how airborne units would be used, and the overall concentration of forces taking part in the invasion. Up until mid 1943, planners largely dismissed the “lawyers agreement” which asserted a final date and plan regardless of circumstance, which was requested by a small yet vocal minority, and instead opted for freedom of action as the opportunity to take it arose<sup>144</sup>. While this has been criticised by both contemporary and period analysts as overcautious, it ensured the highest chances of success against an enemy which grew weaker by the day. These small scale Tactical defeats and victories gave the Allied planners a thorough understanding of the task at hand, and enabled them to achieve their desired Operational-Strategic-Grand Strategic goals.

In addition to the many other factors which contributed to the Allied planner’s headaches regarding *Operation Overlord*, the most severe issue was the lack of adequate landing craft for the invasion<sup>145</sup>. Despite the massive production capacity of the United States, its industry and designers had only created their first landing craft in 1940, and the landing craft already available were spread across the European and Pacific wars<sup>146</sup>. To remedy this problem, the invasion of

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<sup>141</sup> Harrison, 56-57

<sup>142</sup> Harrison, 135

<sup>143</sup> Harrison, 57

<sup>144</sup> Harrison, 96

<sup>145</sup> Harrison, 61

<sup>146</sup> Harrison, 62-64

Southern France designed to tie down German reinforcements in the area would be canceled<sup>147</sup>. This, coupled with a reallocation of vessels from the Pacific and Mediterranean theatres, would give the Allies a sufficient amount of landing craft to properly conduct *Operation Overlord*. This initial lack of landing craft, an essential part of amphibious warfare, is exemplary of the interconnected nature of Strategic-Operational-Tactical actions. The lack of landing craft was the result of an inadequate means of producing and allocating them, which in turn limited the Operational ability to land the desired number of troops on the battlefield, which in turn negatively affected their ability to perform their role in combat. To remedy this issue, the importance of *Operation Overlord* superseded all other actions; a compromise was made across the board to facilitate the success of this primary effort.

Nonetheless, in early February 1943, the joint commanders of ground, naval, and air forces created the *Neptune Plans*<sup>148</sup>. Yet rather than a rigid Tactical outline that unit commanders were to follow, the goal of the *Neptune Plans* was to facilitate planning which:

“Proceeded almost simultaneously on all levels. Outline plans for armies, corps., and naval task forces were prepared early and used as a framework for the planning of lower echelons. The lower echelon plans in turn filled in and modified the army, corps., and task force plans, which were generally issued in final form as field [Tactical] or operation [Operational] orders.”<sup>149</sup>

This method of planning gave commanders of many ranks and perspectives the ability to modify their own orders based on their close proximity and familiarity with their own unit’s capabilities, an integral part of Tactical and Operational planning which ensure high level decisions are not made in a vacuum.

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<sup>147</sup> Harrison, 125-126

<sup>148</sup> Harrison, 173

<sup>149</sup> Harrison, 174

Five months later on July 27th, 1943, after taking into account as many relevant factors as possible, Allied commanders had created a comprehensive Operational plan<sup>150</sup>. This plan individually addressed every issue faced by Allied planners and commanders, and provided viable solutions. The digest of the Operation states:

“The objective of Operation “Overlord” is to mount and carry out an operation with forces and equipment established in the United Kingdom, and with [the] target date the 1st of May, 1944, to secure a lodgment on the Continent from which further offensive Operations can be developed. The lodgement area must contain sufficient port facilities to maintain a force of some 26 to 36 divisions, and enable that force to be augmented by follow-up shipments from the United States or elsewhere of additional divisions and supporting units of the rate of 3 to 5 divisions per month.”<sup>151</sup>

While the start date of the invasion would be postponed until June 6th due to a variety of factors, something not uncommon for large scale Operations, all other aspects of this final plan would remain constant until troops first set foot on the European Continent. From here, a 37 point plan is outlined to ensure success of the above stated goal<sup>152</sup>.

The preliminary phase would consist of a combined effort of all means. Air and sea power, propaganda, political and economic pressure, and sabotage would all contribute to weakening the German military, in conjunction with a false invasion in Southern France to mislead German planners<sup>153</sup>. During the preparatory phase, which is the immediate lead up to the assault, Allied airpower would concentrate on reducing the effectiveness of the fighter formations of the German air force<sup>154</sup>. In doing so, Allied bombers would be able to operate

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<sup>150</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 265

<sup>151</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 265

<sup>152</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 265-272

<sup>153</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 269

<sup>154</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 269



freely, harassing German ground units, destroying their communications and supply networks, while reducing their morale as they became subject to constant fear of air attacks<sup>155</sup>. This is constantly asserted as a matter of utmost importance, and an action which would determine the whole outcome of the invasion<sup>156</sup>. Once these goals had been met, the beach and airborne assaults would begin. They would seize the town of Caen, and establish a defensive line between that town and Grandcamp<sup>157</sup>. From here, improvised harbors, known as “mulberries”, would be established on the secured beachheads to act as temporary harbors, bringing in supplies and reinforcements<sup>158</sup>. Fourteen days after the assault had been launched, the Allies would have to be in control of the city of Cherbourg<sup>159</sup>. Thereafter, the situation would dictate to Allied commanders further actions, depending on all previous actions<sup>160</sup>. With this plan largely accepted, with some expected anxiety regarding certain Tactical plans, the stage had been set for *Operation Overlord*.

On 6 June, 1944, General Dwight D. Eisenhower broadcasted to more than 150,000 servicemen of multiple nations “You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you”<sup>161</sup>. The Great Crusade, *Operation Overlord*, was about to begin. Despite heavy casualties, especially for some American units, the invasion of France was a success<sup>162</sup>. The intelligence services had accurately located many

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<sup>155</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 269

<sup>156</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 271-272

<sup>157</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 269

<sup>158</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 270-271

<sup>159</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 270

<sup>160</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 270

<sup>161</sup> Eisenhower, “D-day Statement to Soldiers, Sailor, and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force” 1

<sup>162</sup> Ambrose, 576

German static emplacements and units<sup>163</sup>. In the skies, the Allies had total domination. A German army joke said if you see a silver plane its American, blue are British, and the invisible planes are ours<sup>164</sup>. Yet the invasion was not without problems. Allied troops, after successfully cracking the formidable German defences failed to continue their push inland, and were woefully unequipped for the particular nature of fighting in the French hedgerows<sup>165</sup>. Many airborne troops were lost in an ill fated night time airdrop, where they became disorganized and ineffective<sup>166</sup>. Even so, they cracked the German “Atlantik Wall”, which had taken the Germans four years and tons of concrete and steel to produce in only twenty four hours<sup>167</sup>. Furthermore, the shortcomings of the German military, stemming primarily from the upper echelons of the political and economic system, were far more self destructive<sup>168</sup>. Less than a year later, shortly before midnight on 8 May, 1945, Nazi germany would surrender unconditionally to the Allies<sup>169</sup>. Thus, this Allied success, despite its shortcomings, is a product of years of planning, supported by effective governmental bodies operating from the moral high ground, inevitably achieved success along Grand Strategic, Strategic, Operational and Tactical levels.

In the scope of the research found herin, it is important to note several factors. First and foremost, while I have done my best to create a comprehensive picture of *Operation Overlord* and the Allied war effort, it is nearly impossible to analyze every detail to its fullest extent in a single work. This Operation is one which relied on all aspects of the Allied war effort. It is a complex blend of everything from production and logistical capabilities and the management of

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<sup>163</sup> Ambrose, 578

<sup>164</sup> Ambrose, 577

<sup>165</sup> Ambrose, 577

<sup>166</sup> Ambrose, 578

<sup>167</sup> Ambrose, 577

<sup>168</sup> Ambrose, 578-579

<sup>169</sup> Parker, 223

political strife between Allied commanders, to the use of outright espionage, ending in a violent combat phase, making it a topic of near limitless study. As such, the focus of this piece is somewhat limited in scope by necessity, while taking into account as many relevant factors as possible. As it was most accurately stated by Prussian military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz, “Everything in war is simple, but the simplest thing is difficult.”<sup>170</sup>

Further, it is important to make certain caveats regarding the data and its interpretations used in this piece. It should be noted that different sources assert different pieces of data to be true when referring to the same events. This does not imply deception, though sometimes this could be the case, but rather different techniques and parameters for recording data. For example, when examining the naval forces which participated directly in the invasion, it is clear that ships are assigned based on requirements, maintenance needs, and situational necessity, so some ships were rotated through the invasion force as time progressed. As such, numbers can only be determined with a certain amount of accuracy. That said, the conclusion that the Allies possessed an overwhelming superiority in all aspects of sea power is the same. Further, statistics like “number of tanks destroyed by Allied air power” are even more contentious. What constitutes a “kill” can be disputed, as one author might assert that a kill refers to a tank completely destroyed, while another might define a kill as a tank being badly damaged or disabled, using either German or American records and recording techniques. As such, they are talking about the same event, but producing different sets of data. Again, however, the indisputable conclusion is that Allied air power was overwhelmingly superior, and provided an effective means of suppressing the German ability to operate.

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<sup>170</sup> Clausewitz, 119

Additionally, while I have included them where applicable, the words of those directly involved with events are only supplementary to data. Reputations, careers and political situations are inherently in these people's interests, incentivizing manipulation to suit their personal goals. Indeed, in everyday life people often dodge responsibility for mundane things. Now imagine that millions of lives and the future of the world is at stake. As a result, it is important to take much of this information with a grain of salt. However, when taken as a whole, both data and first hand accounts can produce observable trends. In examining these trends, we can align ideas which build a comprehensive picture of the actions and reactions taken by nations and individuals alike.

Amid the many successes of the Allied powers, there were many instances of infighting and heated disagreement between nations, armed services, commanders, and supposedly friendly populations. During this late war period, when the defeat of the Axis became a matter of when rather than if, the seeds of the Cold War between the capitalist western powers and the socialist east were being sown<sup>171</sup>. Almost as soon as the shooting stopped and victory parades concluded, the Grand Alliance broke apart and faced off against one another. Nonetheless, they still put aside their disagreement for long enough to work together for a unified goal, that being the eradication of the Axis powers as political entities.

In the past two decades or so, many have sought to be critical of this action<sup>172</sup>. Even more recently, there has been a drive to delegitimize the efforts and good will of the Allied powers, especially those of the United States, in the 20th century. While many fair criticisms are to be had of these nations and their actions, many more of these criticisms do not take into account what could have been if not for the underlying institutions and foundations which coordinated for

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<sup>171</sup> Jacobsen and Smith, 268

<sup>172</sup> Hastings "Overlord", 11-13

a common cause. As the largest combined air and sea invasion force to date, *Operation Overlord* challenged leaders and their subordinates to catalogue a seemingly endless stream of data to build a comprehensive picture of problems and solutions. Since this Operational action concluded with such success, it is easy to speculate that this action was destined to do so. However, while victory was a given considering the circumstances, these circumstances were the result of the unseen planning and coordination of Grand Strategic, Strategic, Operational, and Tactical objectives. With this, the greatest feat of combat ever undertaken was achieved with astounding success, making the liberation of Europe, and the whole world, from National Socialist Germany, Imperial Japan, and its Axis collaborators possible. If not for the Allied ability to soundly apply these principles, innovate, and overcome, the world today would be different in such a way that to only entertain the thought is truly the stuff of nightmares. By studying this reality, we can ensure the safety of ourselves and generations to come should the need to defend what hold dear arise once again.

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