

When the American Military Understood the British Empire

by Carl Osgood

Contrary to some legends that are circulating on the Internet, War Plan Red, the U.S. war plan for war against the British Empire, was developed in the 1920s, on the basis of the real geopolitical threat that that empire presented to the U.S.A. As Lyndon LaRouche noted in a webcast address delivered on Feb. 23, 2006, the British were concerned that the United States would emerge from World War I as the predominant military power in the world, and therefore, “had to be chopped down to size,” the issue at that time, being the United States Navy. The British, said LaRouche, “sought to build up a coalition of Italian, British, Japanese, and so forth naval forces, to out-power the United States. During this period, a plan for a war attack on the United States naval forces was organized, in which the two principal figures were England and Japan.” The Japanese would attack Pearl Harbor, while the British would take out the U.S. fleet in the Atlantic, “not to make an attack on the mainland of the United States, but to sink a good deal of the Navy and cut us down to size.”

LaRouche cited the case of Gen. Billy Mitchell, who was court-martialed and forced out of the U.S. Army in 1925, as indicative of those patriotic officers who saw the actual danger. Mitchell, a vocal proponent of air power, called for the development of long-range, land-based bombers, and of aircraft carriers to meet the challenge, warning specifically of a threat emanating from Japan (called “Orange” by U.S. war planners). In 1922, Mitchell toured the U.S. military facilities on the Hawaiian island of Oahu and, in a report delivered to the War Department afterwards, described how the Japanese would attack. What the Japanese wanted, Mitchell wrote, was the “complete extermination” of American influence in the Far East. “They recognize that if the United States keeps on, sooner or later, the United States will consider that the maintenance of a great military force by an Asiatic

nation is a direct menace to the safety of the American nation and Anglo-Saxon destiny in the Pacific. Therefore, sooner or later they must fight. The only question is how and when and where.”¹

It was Mitchell’s vociferous and incessant public campaigning to build up America’s defenses, especially its airpower, and for measures to meet the Japanese threat, that led to his court martial. LaRouche noted that, despite Mitchell’s court martial, the U.S. Navy developed aircraft carriers, anyway. And the use of carrier-borne aircraft, as well as land-based aircraft, added a new dimension to warfare. “It shifted the correlation of forces, where Japan’s possibility of winning the war over the long term had become hopeless,” after the Battle of Midway, LaRouche added.

The Republic vs. the Empire

Certain of the post-World War I planning documents and lectures betray an American officer corps that was disillusioned by its experience with the British in France. These officers understood the real, unbridgeable differences between the American Republic and the British Empire, even when they had to fight alongside the troops of that Empire. They understood that the goals and methods of the British Empire were incompatible with those of the U.S.A. It is from this standpoint that the significance of the between-the-wars war-planning must be understood. American participation in the war in France, 1917-18, crystalized the view among U.S. Army officers, in particular, that the alliance with Britain (and France) was an unnatural one, that could quickly dissolve into confrontation, because of the way it changed the relative relationship between the U.S. and Britain.

1. Burke Davis, *The Billy Mitchell Affair* (New York: Random House, 1967).



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The British feared that the United States would emerge from World War I as the predominant military power in the world, and therefore, “had to be chopped down to size.” A plan for an attack on the United States naval forces was organized, in which Japan would strike Pearl Harbor, while the British would take out the U.S. fleet in the Atlantic. Shown: The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Dec. 7, 1941.

As reported earlier by Dean Andromidas (“When America Fought the British Empire and Its Treacherous Sykes-Picot Treaty,” *EIR*, Jan. 23, 2009), Navy Lt. Cmdr. Holloway H. Frost noted this potential for confrontation with Great Britain, in a lecture delivered to the General Staff College on Sept. 19, 1919. Frost, who was then assigned to the Planning Division of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, referred to England’s exhaustion, as a result of the war, and the social and industrial unrest that was affecting many of the Empire’s dominions, including Ireland, India, and Egypt:

“But while these conditions apparently render a war with Great Britain an impossibility,” Frost wrote, “they may even be the direct cause of such a war. A revolution is today a possibility in any country; and once this is accomplished, it is impossible to predict what course the revolutionists may take; possibly they may, like the Russians, engage in war against their

former allies. But even assuming the impossibility of the success of a revolution in Great Britain, may not the desperate conditions which exist drive her into a war, if it becomes demonstrated that they can be improved in no other way! It is evident that no nation, which bases its prosperity on trade, can exist with an adverse trade balance of four billions annually, a figure which the British estimate will increase in the near future, rather than decrease. The United States is the direct cause of this adverse trade balance. If it develops that we can successfully compete with England on the seas, this adverse balance will be maintained. A nation doomed to commercial defeat will usually demand a military decision before this commercial defeat is complete. Therefore, there is always the possibility that

the British, however friendly they may wish to be, may be forced into a war to maintain their commercial supremacy of the seas, which is essential to the existence of the British Empire.”

Frost proposed that the U.S. Army and Navy ought to be prepared to defend the United States in such an eventuality, and not depend on allies in doing so. He then went on to develop a general outline as to how he thought such a war would develop, and what the general plan of the United States should be. In the opening phases, he supposed that Britain would launch a land campaign from Canada, and attack the U.S. Atlantic seaboard, the Panama Canal Zone, and U.S. possessions in the Caribbean. The U.S. plan of attack should be to take control of the entrance to the St. Lawrence Seaway, capture British possessions in the Western Atlantic and the Caribbean, and with that accomplished, attack British commerce throughout the world, and invade and capture Canada.



U.S. Air Force

Gen. Billy Mitchell's insistent demand that America build up its defenses, especially its airpower, against a possible Japanese air attack, led to his court martial, shown here (1925). The attack on Pearl Harbor proved that he was right.

The Anglo-American Alliance in World War I

While planning documents in preparation for a possible war with Great Britain can be found in the Navy's archives, dating back to 1890, and the U.S. Army War College conducted a number of exercises in 1913-1914 for the same eventuality, Frost puts the threat into a context that the earlier documents lack, that context being the American experience with its alliance with Britain in World War I. That alliance was fraught with difficulties, because of the differing war aims of the two sides. Britain, as was shown after the Sykes-Picot Treaty came to light at the end of the war, was seeking to expand its already considerable empire, and the U.S. was looking to end the war as decisively as possible, in the shortest time possible, so that it would have leverage in the peace that was to follow.

Many American officers understood that British and French imperial aims in the war were at odds with American national interests. American Expeditionary Force Commander Gen. John J. Pershing had to fight off British and French efforts to feed American soldiers into combat as piecemeal replacements for losses in British and French divisions, even as the British, in particular, were conducting operations in secondary theaters, such as Palestine and Mesopotamia. Pershing and Gen. Tasker Bliss had to fight for the American army to fight as a national army with its own section of the front lines, so that the American commitment to end the war decisively could be carried through. Pershing saw the Western Front as the decisive front,

and he therefore resisted efforts to siphon off American troops to other theaters, such as Italy.

General Bliss noted these difficulties in a May 22, 1929 lecture at the Army War College. Bliss, who had served as the American representative on the Supreme War Council, reported that, of the three principal allies, two of them, Britain and France, went into the war "with the primary purpose of securing, each for itself, certain widely separated territories; the third [the United States] with the initial purpose of warding off future danger by preventing the enemy from securing territory that would make her a constant menace..." Each of the three allies could have had three different military plans, "each handicapped by a political plan." Such an alliance was "likely to be an unnatural union," Bliss concluded. If there were any doubt of that, one need only look at the proceedings of the Paris Peace Conference: "the common enemy has been defeated; the alliance for war practically dissolved. Immediately comes to the front the underlying purpose with which each victor entered the war, a purpose which now may become of much more extended application in proportion to the magnitude of the enemy's defeat."

Maj. Gen. Fox Connor, who served as Pershing's chief of staff, and would later be a mentor to both Generals George C. Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower, amplified on the chaos that Pershing's headquarters found upon arrival in France in 1917, in a March 19, 1934 War College lecture. The British and French forces had

been fighting under two separate commands, with two separate agendas, for three years, since neither would consent to fight under a single commander who was not of their nationality. What was worse, was that in the British system, the Secretary of State for War, the Secretary of State for India, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and the Colonial Secretary “all felt themselves authorized to start wars on their own account and they all did so,” with little coordination with each other. “To add to the confusion of the war making powers in Britain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer [David Lloyd George, until he became prime minister in December 1916] had set himself up as the infallible Allied Strategist.”

In describing the problems of fighting alongside allies, Connor, like Bliss, noted the differing “ulterior motives” of the members of the alliance and observed that, with the exception of the U.S., and possibly Belgium, “the politicians of all nations, in the World War were filled with ulterior motives, and with grandiose ideas of the ‘compensations’ they would obtain at the peace table.” He added that all of these nations were “jockeying” for post-war “positions.”

The difficulties extended into the naval realm as well. The naval staff in Washington, led by Chief of Naval Operations Adm. William S. Benson, saw as its mission the transportation and support of an American national army in France. They were as loath to allocate American ships to British naval command as Pershing was to feed American troops into British divisions as replacements. The British, on the other hand, backed by American naval commander Adm. William S. Sims (a notorious Anglophile), wanted the American Navy subordinated to the Royal Navy, which was then engaged in convoying war supplies to Britain, in the face of the German U-boat threat, and in preventing the German High Seas Fleet from entering the North Sea. Bringing American ground forces to France, which U.S. strate-



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American Expeditionary Force Commander Gen. John J. Pershing (left) understood that British and French imperial aims in the war were at odds with American national interests. Maj. Gen. Fox Connor (right), who served as Pershing's chief of staff, noted the differing “ulterior motives” of the members of the alliance.

gists saw as the decisive front, was of secondary importance to the Royal Navy.

Benson and his co-thinkers, reflecting the American military tradition of the primacy of the strategy of the offensive, also argued that attacking German U-boat bases was essential, since it reduced the problems of trying to detect and destroy U-boats at sea. The British finally agreed to mining the approaches to the German U-boat bases, but American naval officers concluded, after the war was over, that the British never completely fulfilled their commitment to the mine barrier.²

Washington Naval Treaty

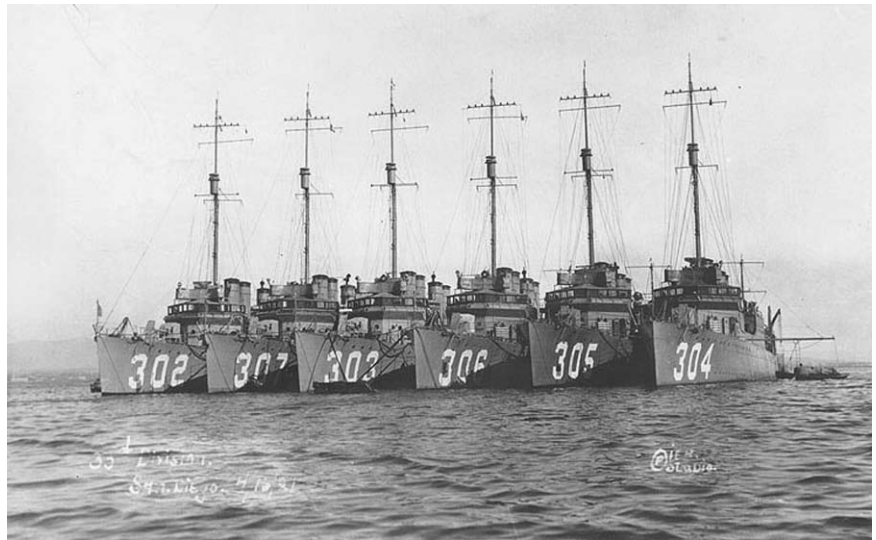
The Washington Naval Treaty of 1921, rather than being a disarmament treaty that reduced the danger of war, actually helped propel the U.S. towards war with Japan. Dean Andromidas, in the above-cited article, documented how American strategic thinkers such as Arthur MacArthur viewed acquisition of the Philippines as a bulwark against the European colonial empires in Asia, on America's extreme western flank. That

2. Dean C. Allard, “Anglo-American Naval Differences During World War I,” *Military Affairs*, April 1980.

flank came under threat when the Treaty of Versailles awarded the island chains of the Marshalls, Marianas, and Carolines, which had been acquired by Germany late in the 19th Century, as mandates to Japan, a British ally since 1902. Those island chains lay directly across the U.S. lines of communication from Hawaii to the Philippines and Guam. From the American standpoint, the Washington Treaty did two things: It cancelled the revived 1916 naval construction program, which would have brought the U.S. fleet close to parity with the Royal Navy, but with more modern ships, and it denied the U.S. the right to build fortified bases in the Philippines and Guam. While naval strategists debated whether or not Guam could be effectively fortified anyway, the defense of the Philippines became all but impossible after the treaty was ratified. Despite Gen. Douglas MacArthur's heroic effort in 1942 to defeat the Japanese invasion, full-scale defense of the archipelago had been abandoned by the war planners by no later than 1935.

That the treaty left the British in a superior position was not lost on the Navy's war planners. Capt. Frank Schofield, in a lecture dated Oct. 24, 1923, not only noted that the treaty left the U.S. weaker in capital ships and cruisers than "the next strongest power," it also "took from us every possibility of an outlying base in the Pacific except one [Hawaii]. We gave up our new capital ships and our right to build bases for a better international feeling, but no one gave us anything." Schofield also bluntly reported that the treaty left the British with a significant gunnery advantage over the U.S. fleet.³

The treaty also caused a full-scale shift in naval war planning. Whereas war planning prior to 1921 was focused on Red and Red-Orange scenarios, after 1921, naval war planning shifted almost entirely to Orange



The Washington Naval Treaty of 1921, rather than being a disarmament treaty to reduce the danger of war, actually helped propel the U.S. towards war with Japan. It also left the British in a superior naval position, leaving the U.S. weaker in capital ships and cruisers than Britain. Shown, U.S. Destroyer Division 33 off San Diego, Calif., April 1921.

(i.e., Japan), despite the recommendations of Schofield after he became the director of the Plans Division in the Office of Naval Operations in 1927. Schofield had concluded that the Anglo-American impasse at the Geneva Naval Conference of that year was the result of Britain's determination not to surrender supremacy on the seas, nor to accept naval parity with the U.S. He also observed "understandings and relations" between the British and Japanese delegations not shared by the other delegations to the conference. Schofield argued that Japan would never attack the United States except in alliance with a European power. Therefore, Schofield, in his estimates for 1928, called for Orange, Red, and Red-Orange plans to be available. However, despite his recommendations, the Navy gave very little attention to the War Plan Red effort, focusing instead on Orange, and leaving Red to the Army.⁴

'The Great Pacific War'

The British did give in to a key U.S. demand at the Washington naval conference: the end of the Anglo-

3. Lecture by Capt. Frank Schofield, "Some Effects of the Washington Conference on American Naval Strategy," P.D. 210-2, Secret and Classified Correspondence of the Chief of Naval Operations, U.S. National Archives.

4. William R. Braisted, "On the American Red and Red-Orange Plans, 1919-1939," *Naval Warfare in the Twentieth Century: Essays in Honour of Arthur Marder*, edited by Gerald Jordan (New York: Crane Russak, 1977).

Japanese alliance. But the British did not give up their goal of bogging the U.S. down in a long Pacific war. They merely shifted strategy. In *The Great Pacific War* (1925), Hector C. Bywater, an English naval analyst, envisioned a surprise Japanese strike against the U.S. fleet based at Manila, followed by assaults on Guam and the Philippines. The initial American response is to deploy the Atlantic fleet through the Panama Canal on a long drive across the Pacific, which ultimately fails because of its logistical over-extension into Japanese-controlled waters. The Americans then turn around and launch a Pacific island-hopping campaign, ending in a climactic battle at the island of Yap in the Carolines, approximately two years after the Japanese sneak attack that started the war.

Bywater's scenario bore a surprising resemblance to the drafts of War Plan Orange that had been circulating among Navy planners. Indeed, biographer William H. Honan, in his 1991 book *Bywater: The Man Who Invented the Pacific War*, speculates that Bywater may have learned details of the plan through William Howard Gardiner, a naval writer who was vice president of the Navy League, and consequently close to Admiral Sims, who was then president of the Naval War College. In any event, the book caused a sensation among Navy planners, who then set about revising their war plan, away from the thrust across the Pacific that had dominated their thinking before 1925, to something closer to the island-hopping campaign that was actually carried out in 1942-45.

Bywater's book didn't capture the attention of only U.S. planners, however. The book was rapidly translated into Japanese, and became required reading at the Imperial War College in Tokyo. It caught the attention of a young naval officer, Isoroku Yamamoto, who, as commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy, would be responsible for Japanese naval strategy, beginning with the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, until his death in 1943. He adopted key elements of Bywater's scenario for his Pacific war strategy. Bywater and Yamamoto met on at least two occasions during the 1930s, when Yamamoto was detailed to the Japanese Embassy in London, and they undoubtedly discussed Bywater's Pacific war scenario.

Bywater was not just an incredibly insightful journalist, however. In the years prior to World War I, Bywater had been picked up by the British Secret Service to spy on the German Navy, using a fake American

passport. While operating as a spy, Bywater continued to write columns for various British naval journals, as well as the *New York Herald*, cementing his reputation as a keen observer of naval affairs. As he was making the transition from spying on German naval targets to becoming an expert on foreign military intelligence and a mouthpiece for the British imperialists, Bywater was picked up in 1910, by James L. Garvin, the editor of the London *Sunday Observer*, the main propaganda outlet for a group called the Compatriots.

The Compatriots, founded by Leo Amery, who ran the Rhodes Trust, functioned as a brain trust of the Milner Group. Besides Amery and Garvin, its members included Alfred Milner, Leo Maxse, Halford Mackinder, and W.A.S. Hewins (see "How British Imperialists Created the fascist Japotsinsky," by Steven P. Meyer, *EIR*, Jan. 23, 2009). Its purpose was to create and promote the policies necessary to restructure the British economy and military in order to secure the empire after the acquisition of southern Africa, and to prepare for the next phase of warfare and imperial acquisition. Garvin and Amery were experts on military preparedness and military affairs. The Compatriots, in effect, organized Britain's preparedness for World War I.

Bywater likely would have been a useful acquisition for the Milner group, helping, through his writings and access to top naval officials in Britain, the U.S., and Japan, to set the stage for the future wars they were planning. Biographer Honan does not provide more than a few sketchy details of Bywater's relationship with Garvin. The extant correspondence between the two apparently ends in 1911, but in 1923 Garvin hired Bywater to be the naval correspondent for the *Sunday Observer*, while he was writing *The Great Pacific War*.

Canadian War Planning

While American war planners were considering Red-Orange scenarios, and the Harding Administration was negotiating away future American naval strength, a Canadian colonel by the name of James Sutherland "Buster" Brown, was writing "Defense Scheme No. 1" for the defense of Canada against the United States.⁵ The plan calls for a rapid preemptive offensive against the United States, which was obviously impossible to

5. "Canadian Defence Scheme Number One: A Defensive Preemptive Strike Against the United States, Circa 1921," <http://www.taoyue.com/stacks/defence-scheme-one.html>.

execute, without the reinforcement of the then nearly non-existent Canadian army by imperial forces. At the time of writing, the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance had yet to be decided, but Brown wrote that, “there is not much doubt, in case of war between the British empire and the United States, that Japan would take immediate military action against the American Republic, in which case it would make matters much more favourable to us, especially at beginning of the campaign, if we would find that Japan would carry out her traditional policy of delivering their Declaration of War and an Operation at the same time. . . .”

An Estimate of the British Empire

In late 1925, the U.S. Army War Plans Division produced a “Strategic Estimate Red” in which they stated, “if Blue becomes involved in a war with Red it will be because of the expansion of Blue foreign trade as to be a dominant factor in menace to the Red favorable trade balance which Red has so long maintained and which is essential to Red’s existence.”⁶ The planners estimated that Red goals would be the destruction of the Blue Navy and Merchant Marine, the destruction of Blue trade, the acquisition of the Panama Canal, and the capture of Blue possessions in the West Indies. The planners also thought that Canada would go for part, or even all of Alaska, that Australia would have its eyes on the Philippines, and New Zealand might be interested in acquiring American Samoa.

“The main consideration involved,” wrote the planners, “in the determination of the probable Red course of action, is the first objective. *Red war aims require the destruction of the Blue fleet, but Red’s purpose is to force Blue to sue for peace on terms dictated by Red*, and for this purpose, Red must bring such military and economic pressure to bear on Blue as to make it impossible for Blue to continue the war. This will require Red to invade and occupy Blue territory, and specifically, the industrial region in the vicinity of Pittsburgh in order to deprive Blue of the power to wage war” (emphasis added).

The planners envisaged that Red would move its fleet to Halifax and from there, secure control of the Western Atlantic so that an expeditionary force could be moved via Halifax and Quebec for an advance on Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Raids on the Panama Canal

and the Caribbean would be dependent on the success of the above operations.

The remainder of the estimate is a description of the political, economic, and military situations in the Red Empire. The description of the economy is notable for the fact that it identifies to what degree Britain is dependent on imports of food and raw materials from the colonies and from continental Europe. The planners estimated that if control of the seas is conceded to Red, then Red can supply all of its war needs, including replacing those materials that it imports from Blue, such as copper.

War Plan Red

The parameters of what finally emerged as War Plan Red⁷ in 1929-30 (**Figure 1**) were set by Brig. Gen. George Simonds, the director of the Army War Plans Division, who, like Fox Connor, had had first hand experience with the British on the Western Front in 1918. In a memo dated Feb. 11, 1928, Simonds asked the Army Intelligence Division (G-2) for an estimate of the situation with respect to Red. The first consideration Simonds raised was on the ability of the British government to prepare for and conduct war. “In the past,” Simonds wrote, “it has been the British habit to commit themselves strategically in the conduct of military operations in accordance with their political requirements without a thorough consideration of the demands on men, munitions and transport vessels which their commitments entail.”

Simonds reports on the following quote, which was made in reference to Britain’s “Mesopotamian operations”: “It was the old story of vague and ill-considered policy, dissipation of resources, vacillation and compromise in the essential and ultimate thing, blind and bull-necked confidence in the means to an end.” Simonds comments that this quote could easily be applied to Britain’s Crimean, Dardanelles, and South African campaigns, as well. He wanted to know, in connection with this, whether there had “been any Act of parliament or any announced policy since the World War which would indicate a departure in the future from methods of the past? This question is of interest because of its peculiar applicability to a situation that might lead to the commitment of large British forces to a theater of

6. “Strategic Estimate Red,” Dec. 24, 1925, in the files of the Army War Plans Division, file #2444, U.S. National Archives.

7. A record copy of War Plan Red can be found, today, in the Records of the Army and Navy Joint Board, J.B. 325, Ser. No. 435, U.S. National Archives.

FIGURE 1
War Plan Red: Primary Lines of Attack



operations in Eastern Canada or the coastal region of the United States which would be extremely disadvantageous to the British.”

Under the heading, “Unity of the Empire and support of the United Kingdom by the self governing dominions,” Simonds asked “What is the strength of the irreconcilable element in the Irish Free State? Would it be organized and would it be able to give active support to an American Expeditionary Force attempting to secure a base of operations on the Irish coast?” He also asked about the degree of support that might be provided by Australia and New Zealand.

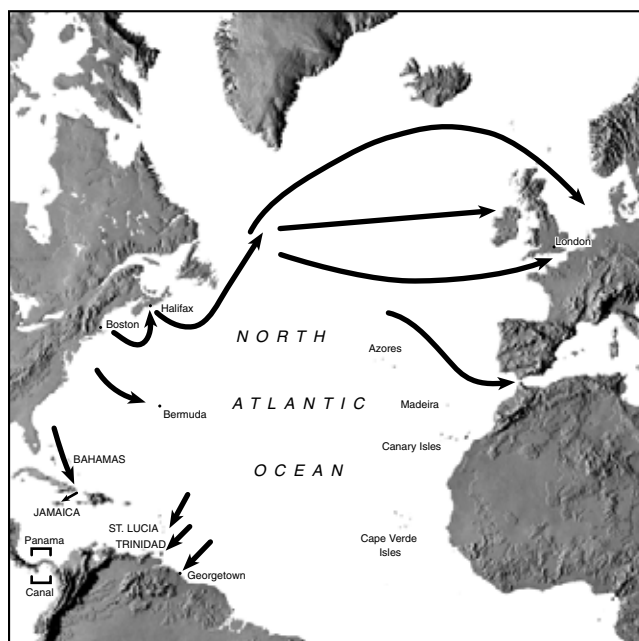
Under the heading, “The initial requirements of security for British transoceanic trade routes,” Simonds noted that “at the outbreak of the World War, although threatened at home by the German High Seas Fleet, and although supported by the French and Japanese Navies, the British were compelled to establish and maintain Control Forces on nine stations throughout the world to protect their transoceanic trade against a few commerce raiders. . . . What important trade routes would be most vulnerable to attack by American light cruiser?” What naturally followed from this was, “What British trade routes, if any, are so important that their security will demand a higher priority in assigning naval forces for their protection than in assigning naval forces to a decisive naval concentration in the Northwestern Atlantic?”

The final version of War Plan Red, which was approved in May of 1930, started from the conception that a war would be of long duration, involving a maximum effort by Blue, directed initially at separating Crimson (Canada) from Red, the defeat of Red forces in the Western Hemisphere, and eventually, the economic exhaustion of the Red United Kingdom (**Figure 2**). The Army’s mission was to destroy Red armed forces in North America and occupy the territory of Crimson and Red possessions in the Western Hemisphere “as may be necessary.” The Navy’s mission was to gain control of the oceans adjacent to both coasts of Crimson, and ultimately to extend such control to “areas necessary to effect the economic exhaustion of Red.” The Army was to prepare for operations to include a joint overseas expedition against Halifax, overland operations to take the Montreal-Quebec area, and an operation to cut rail connections in the Winnipeg area.

The Navy was to concentrate sufficient forces to destroy the Red fleet in the North Atlantic and cut com-

FIGURE 2

End Phase of War Plan Red



munications between Red and Crimson. The Navy was also to blockade Crimson’s Pacific coast. Secondary operations were to include the taking of Red’s Caribbean territories, and operations in the Great Lakes region to secure U.S. access and deny Red/Crimson access to the locks and waterways. The Panama Canal was to be held “inviolable,” and the defense of Hawaii, the Philippines, and Alaska was to be carried out with the forces available.

The Estimate of the Situation that accompanies the war plan reflects, very well, the concerns of the Empire cited by Holloway Frost in his 1919 lecture, and the concerns of the Milner group, with respect to growing U.S. economic and naval power after World War I. It describes Red foreign policy as “designed to protect and advance the commercial, financial and economic interests of the RED Empire,” and particularly of the United Kingdom and its seaborne trade. Red policy is “actively exerted in favor of acquirement of, or unrestricted access to, the world’s supply of raw materials and to expansion of RED commerce.” The estimate warns that while Red had no known military allies at that time, it was unlikely to enter into a war against Blue without them. Orange was considered the most likely such ally, but Red was also expected to seek agreements with such other powers as needed to secure the interests



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Even after the U.S. entered the war in an alliance with Britain, the strategic threat presented by the British Empire remained, as was recognized during World War II by President Franklin Roosevelt, who expressed his intention to dismantle the European colonial empires once the war was over. Shown: FDR and Churchill at Yalta, February 1945.

of Red around the world during a war with Blue.

The estimate identified “the constantly increasing Blue economic penetration and commercial expansion into regions formerly dominated by RED trade, to such extent as eventually to menace RED standards of living and to threaten economic ruin” as the most probable cause of a Red-Blue war. Therefore, Red’s war aims would be the “definite elimination of BLUE as an important economic and commercial rival in international trade.”

The estimate goes on to develop and assess the political and economic strengths and weaknesses of both Red and Blue, and to assign likely missions to the military forces of both sides. Perhaps the most important political quality of Blue, however, is that it possesses “an anti-Red tradition, and it is believed that the Blue government would have little difficulty in mobilizing public sentiment in favor of a vigorous prosecution of the war, once hostilities began.”

War Plan Red was declared obsolete in 1936, and directives were issued that no further planning was to be undertaken under Red. Even so, it was not withdrawn from active files until 1939, nor was Britain nec-

essarily considered a friendly ally with the same objectives as the United States, by this time. Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Harold Stark, in his famous “Plan Dog Memorandum,” of Nov. 12, 1940, implied that if the U.S. were to allow Great Britain to be defeated by Germany, Britain could end up joining Germany, France, and Japan, in war against the United States. Indeed, the British continued to act with imperial arrogance during U.S.-British staff conversations that took place in early 1941 at Stark’s recommendation, demanding that the U.S. protect British imperial interests such as Singapore.

The American officers involved in those conversations rejected that demand, fearing that were the U.S. fleet to be deployed to Singapore, it would be at great risk of being destroyed by the Japanese. Even after the U.S. entered the war in alliance with Britain, the strategic threat presented by the British Empire remained, as was recognized even during World War II by President Franklin Roosevelt, with his intention to dismantle the European colonial empires once the war was over.

Steven P. Meyer contributed research for this article.