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# American Pre-War Planning: The Origins of "Germany First"

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> It is of the utmost importance that we appreciate that defeat of Japan does not defeat Germany and that American concentration against Japan this year or in 1943 increases the chance of complete German domination of Europe and Africa... Defeat of Germany means the defeat of Japan, probably without firing a shot or losing a life.
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> Franklin D. Roosevelt (July 1942)[1]

Before America entered World War II, her strategic planners evaluated how to fight a two-front war against the Axis. They quickly reached the conclusion that America should make her main effort in the Atlantic and remain on the defensive in the Pacific until German defeat was assured. This strategic principle was known as "Germany First." The principle was grounded in geography, logistics, and military strategy. Germany was much closer to the United States than was Japan, and America could concentrate her military power more easily against Germany than Japan due to the superior ports and other infrastructure in

[1] Memorandum for Hopkins, Marshall, and King, 16 July 1942. Quoted in Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1953), 272-273.

Europe relative to the Pacific. Moreover, Germany was militarily stronger than Japan, and more threatening to the other nations in the anti-Axis coalition. In early 1941, the United States secured British agreement to the principle of Germany First, and incorporated the principle into her pre-war joint war plan, Rainbow 5. The American decision to allocate large forces to the Pacific in 1942 and 1943 contravened pre-war planning and prior agreement with the British, but certainly was not taken in ignorance of the potential costs and risks of doing so.

From 1919 to 1939 the predecessor of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Joint Board, developed America's war plans. As the most likely enemy was Japan, the Joint Board studied the problems of war in the Pacific in considerable detail. War Plan Orange recognized the vulnerability of the Philippines. Initial versions of the plan required the army to hold Manila Bay until the navy could arrive with reinforcements, defeat the Japanese fleet, and blockade Japan. Later versions of the plan assumed that the Philippines would fall and would require liberation. War Plan Orange was constantly revised to reflect strategic and technological developments.

Until the late 1930s, War Plan Orange assumed that America and Japan clashed head-to-head with no major allies or commitments elsewhere. Nonetheless, these plans had great significance for the future conduct of the Pacific War and for the "Germany First" decision. Planners studied every possible route for a trans-Pacific advance, and examined the timetable and logistical requirements for each one.

For over thirty years, the navy consistently rejected making its major advance to the Philippines along a southern route via Samoa, the Solomon Islands, and New Guinea—

ironically, this was essentially the path MacArthur took from 1942 to 1944. The southern route was excessively lengthy—about half again as long as the direct route across the Pacific—and also lacked useful ports. In pre-war plans, this route was primarily viewed as a way to send supplies and reinforcements to the Philippines while they held out.[2] In late 1941, the Army Air Corps ferried aircraft to the Philippines via Fiji, New Caledonia, and Australia. In early 1942, Japan quickly overran the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies, closing the route. As late as May 1941, the navy's War Plans Division examined and rejected attacking Japanese possessions in the Marshall and Caroline Islands from Rabaul.[3] When Roosevelt and his chiefs decided to launch an offensive in the South Pacific after Midway, they did so in spite of a large body of knowledge and prior planning that clearly indicated the disadvantages of doing so.

Pre-war navy planners preferred the Central Pacific route from Hawaii to the Marshall and Caroline Islands. From there, the navy could liberate the Philippines or invade Formosa, the Ryukyus, or the Marianas. Yet even an advance along the "shorter" route from Hawaii to Manila—a distance fifty percent longer than from New York to Liverpool—was logistically nightmarish. Pacific atolls had protected anchorages and some flat, solid land, but few if any facilities such as docks, cranes, or depots. They represented only the *potential* to become a useful base. In practice, the military had to construct ports and airfields after capturing them. Joint planners estimated that mobilizing, advancing into the Central Pacific, capturing and developing bases, and blockading Japan into submission would take years. In

[2] Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 93, 170, 187.

[3] Ibid., 246-249.

1928, the military estimated it would take two years to begin the blockade, and possibly another year or more before Japan capitulated.[4] As Japan grew even stronger in the 1930s, the prospect of a rapid advance into the Central Pacific and imposition of an effective blockade seemed even more dubious. The final subjugation of Japan might take three to five years after hostilities began.[5]

When America faced the possibility of a two-front war, the implications of War Plan Orange were clear. An all-out offensive in the Pacific meant conceding the initiative to Germany in Europe. Germany had greater productive capacity than Japan, and greater capability to harm the British and the Soviets than Japan. If America prioritized Japan's defeat, then Germany would become enormously strong in the interim, and might even knock the British or the Soviets out of the war. On the other hand, if America went all-out against Germany, Japan could not gain any decisive advantages before America was ready to take the offensive against her.

In the late 1930s, Germany and Japan each appeared willing to challenge the international order, and seemed likely to cooperate to this end. In 1936, they signed the anti-Comintern Pact, an alliance directed against the USSR. In 1937, Japan invaded China. Germany absorbed Austria in early 1938. Britain and France abjectly accepted German dismemberment of Czechoslovakia at Munich in September 1938.

The Joint Board examined the two-front war problem after the Munich crisis. They concluded in early 1939 that in the event of simultaneous aggression in the Atlantic and the Pacific,

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[4] Ibid., 155.

[5] Ibid., 276-285.

the United States should stand on the defensive in the Pacific and ensure control of the Atlantic approaches to the Western Hemisphere.[6] They recommended the development of plans to cover five possible situations. Rainbow 1 involved unilateral American defense of the Western Hemisphere. Rainbow 2 assumed America cooperated with Britain and France in the Atlantic, and undertook an immediate offensive in the Pacific. Rainbow 3 assumed America by herself undertook an immediate offensive in the Pacific—essentially, this was War Plan Orange. Rainbow 4 assumed that America employed her army to defend Latin America, and stood on the defensive in the Pacific until the Axis threat in the Atlantic was defeated. In Rainbow 5, America cooperated with Britain and France in Africa and Europe until Germany was defeated, and then took the offensive in the Pacific.[7]

For a brief period after the outbreak of war in September 1939, American planners believed the Rainbow 2 scenario would prevail, in which cooperation with Britain and France would permit a more aggressive American posture in the Pacific. The collapse of France in June 1940 changed the calculus, and confronted America with the alarming prospect of an Axis-dominated Europe. Roosevelt rejected a retreat into unilateral hemispheric defense along the lines of Rainbow 1 or 4. He believed Britain would hold out, and America should assist her to do so. When the British demonstrated that they could hold out, he approved military planning for offensive war in coalition with

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[6] Louis Morton, "Germany First: The Basic Concept of Allied Strategy in World War II," in Kent Roberts Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions* (Washington: Center of Military History, 1960), 21-22.

[7] Ibid., 24.

Britain—in effect, a modified form of Rainbow 5. In the interim, his strategy was to prepare for war and keep the British afloat.

Hitler's strategy was to eliminate France and obtain a compromise peace with Britain, thus securing Germany's rear for the confrontation with Russia. However, the British obstinately rejected any compromise peace. Hitler quickly concluded that Britain placed her hopes in America and Russia. Given Germany's lack of maritime power, the preparations for an invasion of Britain were most likely a bluff. Even a desperate, high-risk invasion attempt was out of the question, however, unless the Luftwaffe could gain air superiority. After the Luftwaffe failed to do so in August and early September, Hitler postponed the invasion indefinitely on September 17.

After Germany failed to subjugate Britain with bombing or invasion, Hitler understood that the clock was ticking. He had to win the war before America was ready to intervene. Therefore, on September 27, Germany, Italy, and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact, which they hoped would deter American intervention in Eurasia. After his re-election, Roosevelt publicly described this pact as an aggressive alliance that planned to dominate the world and attack the United States.[8] Re-election gave Roosevelt greater latitude to aid Britain and act against the Axis.

The evolution of the world strategic situation naturally influenced American planning. The chief of naval operations, Admiral Harold R. Stark, submitted a memorandum to the president in early November. Stark believed that America should fight the Axis in alliance with Britain, and furthermore, that

[8] See his Fireside Chat of December 29, 1940, also known as the "Arsenal of Democracy" speech.

America and Britain should focus their offensive efforts on Germany.

Stark described five possible scenarios for the United States entering the war.[9] First, America and Japan could fight while the other powers stood aside. Second, America, Britain, and the Netherlands could fight Japan. Third, America with or without allies could fight Japan aided by Germany and Italy. Fourth,

> War with Germany and Italy in which Japan would not be initially involved, and in which we would be allied with the British. Such a war would be initiated by American decision to intervene for the purpose of preventing the disruption of the British Empire, or German capture of the British Isles.

In the fifth scenario, America stayed out of the war, built up her hemispheric defenses, and aided Britain.

Stark was skeptical of Britain's chances to defeat the Reich through bombing and blockade. Victory required invading Germany on the ground. Britain lacked the manpower to do this alone. Obviously, America had to enter the war in order for Britain to defeat Germany.

Stark believed that Britain had to "retain intact geographical positions from which successful land action can later be launched." He cited Egypt, Gibraltar, and Northwest Africa as examples of such positions. He thought the importance

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[9] The complete text of the memorandum is online at http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/psf/box4/a48b01.html.

of these positions was second only to that of Britain itself. This assessment is interesting given the opposition to Mediterranean operations in some US Army circles after the war began. Stark believed that Mediterranean operations had genuine military importance for the defeat of Germany, and were not simply a way to protect Britain's communications with the Far East or her political interests in the Mediterranean.

In the Pacific, Stark noted that War Plan Orange envisaged a drive through the Central Pacific to recapture the Philippines, after which America would starve Japan into submission. This would take several years and require America to mobilize prodigious forces. Stark observed that a Pacific offensive demanded enormous amounts of shipping to project power over vast distances. This would necessarily drain American seapower from the Atlantic and reduce the aid that America could provide to Britain. This was a prescient warning. In late 1942, the American offensive in the Solomon Islands diverted American seapower from Operation Torch and reduced American shipments to Britain and the USSR.

Stark also observed that even a "limited offensive" in the Pacific would inevitably need reinforcements. If an American force was in jeopardy, the public would demand a strong effort to save it. A limited effort would thus tend to become unlimited, with a corresponding reduction in strength available in the Atlantic. This was exactly what happened in late 1942, when the strenuous efforts to support the marines on Guadalcanal reduced American naval strength in the Atlantic.

Stark presented four options. Firstly, America could focus on hemisphere defense. Secondly, America could prepare for an all-out offensive against Japan while remaining on the defensive

in the Atlantic. Thirdly, America could divide her efforts and provide the "strongest possible military assistance" to the British in Europe and to Britain, Holland, and China in the Far East. Fourthly, America could prepare for "an eventual strong offensive in the Atlantic as an ally of the British" while remaining on the defensive in the Pacific. He recommended the fourth alternative. As his recommendation was in paragraph D, and the letter D was "dog" in the pre-war navy phonetic alphabet, the memorandum became known as the "Plan Dog memorandum."

Stark's logic was simple. An offensive against Japan would take too long, and meanwhile Britain might collapse. If America concentrated against Germany, she could exert her "full national offensive strength . . . in a single direction" in alliance with the British.

In the event the United States entered the war, Stark believed that America would have to send "large air and land forces to Europe or Africa, or both" to participate in a "full scale land offensive" against Germany. Until then, the US should increase her military strength, avoid war with Japan, and try to prevent Japan from attacking Britain or the Netherlands East Indies.

The Plan Dog Memorandum is often cited as the basis for American strategy in World War II, and in particular for the "Germany First" approach.[10] Seldom noted is a critical difference between the Plan Dog assumptions and the reality of 1942-45. Stark assumed that the United States and Britain faced the Axis alone, without the Soviet Union in the Allied coalition. He did not

[10] Louis Morton calls Stark's memorandum "the most important single document in the development of World War II strategy." Morton, "Germany First," 35.

even mention the Soviets. Stark can be excused for this oversight, for he completed his memorandum before Hitler signed the directive ordering the Wehrmacht to prepare to attack the USSR.

The German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 invalidated Stark's assumption that America should remain on the "strict defensive" in the Pacific and avoid war with Japan. The possibility of a Japanese attack on Soviet Siberia induced Roosevelt to accept war with Japan in late 1941. Among the reasons he approved offensive action in the Pacific in early 1942 were his continued fears of a Japanese attack on Siberia, as well as a Japanese thrust into the Indian Ocean to interdict the Persian Gulf lend-lease route.

Roosevelt received the Plan Dog memorandum along with General Marshall's favorable comments in November 1940. Roosevelt did not formally approve the memorandum, but accepted Stark's recommendation for "secret staff talks" with America's potential allies.

Before these staff talks began, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, and Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox submitted a joint memorandum to the president. They recommended rapidly increasing military and naval strength while avoiding war with Japan. If forced into war with Japan, the United States should restrict Pacific operations to conserve forces "for a major offensive in the Atlantic." America should only participate in a coalition effort after reaching a clear understanding with her partners regarding objectives, forces, the conduct of operations, and command arrangements.[11] This was sound thinking. Nonetheless, from 1942 to 1944 the United

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[11] Mark Skinner Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1950), 122-123.

States did not, in fact, restrict Pacific operations in order to concentrate forces for offensives in Europe.

On January 16, 1941, the president met with Hull, Stimson, Knox, Admiral Stark, and General Marshall. Roosevelt believed there was at least a twenty percent chance of "sudden and simultaneous action on the part of Germany and Japan against the United States." He thought America would more likely have at least eight months to build her strength while aiding the British. His general direction was to "stand on the defensive in the Pacific with the fleet based on Hawaii." The navy would not reinforce the Philippines and should prepare to convoy shipping to Britain. Aid to Britain would continue even if the Axis attacked America. The army would not undertake aggressive action before it was ready but might need to support Latin American governments against Nazi fifth column activities.[12] In short, the president continued to follow the prudent strategy he had devised in the summer of 1940—keep Britain afloat, continue industrial mobilization, and guard against the Axis attacking before America was ready.

American, British, and Canadian staff officers met in Washington from January to March 1941. The Americans, British, Dutch and Australians conferred in Singapore from February to April. The lead American representative in Washington was a recently retired general, Stanley Embick, who advised General Marshall on strategic issues. With him were some then relatively obscure staff officers who served with distinction during the war and reached four-star rank: from the army, Leonard Gerow and Joseph T. McNarney, and from the navy, Richmond Kelly Turner, Alan G. Kirk, and DeWitt Clinton Ramsey. Two other participants

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[12] Ibid., 124-125.

had less successful careers. General Sherman Miles, the army intelligence chief, was shunted aside after Pearl Harbor, and Admiral Robert Ghormley, the assistant chief of naval operations, was relieved of command in October 1942 for insufficiently aggressive performance in the South Pacific. The most notable British participant was the airpower theorist and future chief of the air staff, Air Vice-Marshal John Slessor.

The mere fact of these staff talks, let alone their content and conclusions, is impossible to reconcile with an American intent to stay out of the war while aiding Britain, as some have argued Roosevelt wished to do in early 1941.[13] It is true that Roosevelt publicly promised Britain aid, but did not make even a secret commitment to enter the war. However, aiding Britain was necessary in the year before Pearl Harbor, whereas promising to enter the war was not necessary from Roosevelt's perspective.

Roosevelt could not avoid making a public commitment to aid Britain, given Britain's urgent needs. He made this commitment in his December 29, 1940, "arsenal of democracy" speech, and formalized it when he signed the lend-lease bill into law in March 1941. Significantly, the lend-lease act did not name Britain specifically, and an amendment was defeated that would have limited lend-lease to Britain unless Congress added other countries by name. Instead, Roosevelt was empowered to aid "any country whose defense the president deems vital to the defense of the United States." He defeated another amendment that would have excluded the Soviet Union from receiving lend-lease. This indicates that he regarded a German attack on the Soviets, and a requirement to aid the USSR, as quite likely.

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[13] For example, Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 36.

On the other hand, there was no need—and considerable political danger—in promising to send an American army to Europe before that army was mobilized and ready to fight. Thus, Roosevelt avoided any such definite commitment in early 1941, even secretly within the administration or in talks with the British. The discussions remained deliberately hypothetical—*if* America was forced into the war, then she would send forces to Europe.

Before and during the Anglo-American staff talks in early 1941, London and Washington received indications that Hitler would attack Russia. Hitler signed the Barbarossa Directive on December 18, 1940. As early as January 1941, Roosevelt received intelligence about German plans and preparations from anti-Nazi sources in Berlin, as well as European diplomats and the American embassies in Europe.[14] American military attachés counted trains moving east, and from this estimated the number of German divisions facing the Soviets.[15] This information was credible enough that in March, American diplomats repeatedly warned the Soviets that Germany would soon attack the USSR.[16] As noted above, the president also ensured that the Soviets were eligible to receive lend-lease aid when they were attacked.

The British received similar indications of German intent. The British ambassador to Moscow, Stafford Cripps, announced at a press conference in Ankara on February 28 that Germany would attack Russia before the end of June. Anthony Eden and

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[14] Waldo Heinrichs, *Threshold of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 20-24 and 224n11.

[15] Ibid., 61.

[16] Foreign Relations of the United States, *Diplomatic Papers 1941, Volume I, General, The Soviet Union* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1958), 712, 714, 723.

Stafford Cripps warned the Soviet government of impending German aggression in February and March.[17] Churchill sent a direct warning to Stalin in April.[18]

Despite this intelligence, the participants in the Anglo-American staff talks in early 1941 did not take the prospect of a Russo-German war into account. This omission was significant, and certainly deliberate, because the American representatives in the talks included General Sherman Miles, the head of the army's military intelligence division, and Admiral Richmond K. Turner, who dominated US naval intelligence.[19] Ironically enough, another participant, then-Captain Alan G. Kirk, became the US ambassador to the Soviet Union in 1949 after serving as the director of naval intelligence and commanding US naval forces during the Normandy invasion.

Only three months after the ABC (American-British-Canadian) talks concluded, Germany began Operation Barbarossa, and the need to keep the Soviets in the war became paramount. The British and Americans were then forced to reconsider the ABC agreements on the allocation of American aid and to re-evaluate their policy in the Pacific. True, Soviet participation in the war was only a future possibility in early 1941, not yet a fact. Yet the whole point of the ABC conference was to

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[17] David E. Murphy, *What Stalin Knew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 148.

[18] F. H. Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Vol. I (London: HMSO, 1979), 441-444.

[19] Turner was formally the Director of War Plans, but in practice controlled the collection, analysis, evaluation, and dissemination of naval intelligence. He had access to the MAGIC intercepts of Japanese diplomatic communications. Gordon W. Prange, Donald M. Goldstein, and Katherine V. Dillon, *Pearl Harbor: The Verdict of History* (New York: Penguin, 1991), 285-197.

discuss future possibilities that were not yet facts, such as American participation in the war.

Of course, in January 1941, the participants in the ABC talks could not know whether the Soviets would submit to a German ultimatum rather than fight, collapse under the German attack, or sue for peace after the attack. Nor had Roosevelt or Churchill made any decisions about how to respond to Barbarossa. The issue of Soviet participation in the war was probably left off the table at the ABC talks for these reasons.

The ABC agreement noted that the purpose of the conference was to determine the strategy, methods, forces, and command arrangements by which America and Britain could defeat Germany "should the United States be compelled to resort to war." [20] The Allies also had to guard against the possibility of war with Japan. [21] Their basic objective was to ensure the security of the United States, the British Isles, the Western Hemisphere, the British Commonwealth, and the sea communications between them.

As their offensive policies, the Allies agreed to apply economic pressure on the Axis, conduct a "sustained air offensive against German military power," eliminate Italy as an Axis partner, employ joint forces in "raids and minor offensives against Axis military strength," and support neutrals and resistance movements. Finally, the Allies would build up "the

[20] The ABC agreement is printed in *Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, Part 15, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), 1485-1550.

[21] The Allies were called "the Associated Powers" in the ABC agreement to avoid the appearance that America had concluded an alliance with Britain. I call them "the Allies" for brevity and because the ABC agreement was a de facto military alliance.

necessary forces for an eventual offensive against Germany" and capture "positions from which to launch the eventual offensive." The agreement clearly stated the principle of Germany First:

> Since Germany is the predominant member of the Axis Powers, the Atlantic and European area is considered to be the decisive theatre. The principal United States military effort will be exerted in that theatre, and operations of United States forces in other theatres will be conducted in such a manner as to facilitate that effort.

In the Pacific, the Allies planned to deploy their forces to "guard against eventual Japanese intervention," in which case "the military strategy in the Far East will be defensive." They would use naval forces offensively to weaken Japan economically, to capture positions in the Caroline and Marshall Islands, and to divert Japanese attention from Malaysia. Defensively, the Allies would hold the "Malay barrier" (Malaysia, Singapore, and the Dutch East Indies) and the Philippines.

Despite the emphasis on Germany, the Allies did not plan to ignore Italy completely. They agreed to seek the "early elimination of Italy as an active partner in the Axis." They intended to "maintain the present British and Allied Military position in and near the Mediterranean basins, and to prevent the spread of Axis control in North Africa." The United States did not propose to employ forces in the Mediterranean "in the initial stages." Still, Britain alone could hardly carry out the "offensive operations against the Axis powers on the Continent of Europe" planned in the Mediterranean.

These statements about the Mediterranean are interesting from the standpoint of future disputes over proper

strategy. At this stage, at least, the Americans did not argue that concentration in Britain for an immediate cross-Channel assault was the only sound strategy. The notion that the British somehow swindled the Americans into conducting the campaigns in North Africa and Italy in 1942-1943 is thus false, as is the idea that the "direct approach" always dominated American military thinking. In fact, the Americans agreed in the ABC talks to maintain the Allied position in the Mediterranean and to eliminate Italy. Subsequent objections to such operations represented backtracking on this prior agreement. While the ABC agreement was not binding, the Americans did forcefully reject some British ideas, such as American participation in the defense of Singapore. If the Americans truly believed that Mediterranean operations were a serious strategic error, they certainly would have said so during the ABC talks.

The ADB (American-Dutch-British) staff conversations in Singapore assumed a state of war with the Axis (Germany, Italy, and Japan).[22] Even though the purpose was to coordinate a defense against Japan, the strategic premise remained Germany First: "Our object is to defeat Germany and her allies, and hence in the Far East to maintain the position of the Associated Powers against Japanese attack, in order to sustain a long-term economic pressure against Japan until we are in a position to take the offensive."

The primary Allied tasks were to hold Singapore and Luzon and to maintain sea communications until the British Far Eastern fleet arrived. Forces in the Pacific and Far East had to be

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[22] The Report is termed ADB although Australian and New Zealand representatives participated. Text of the report is ibid., 1551-1584.

"reduced to a minimum so as not to impair our main effort in the decisive theatre."

The ADB report considered that the US Pacific Fleet could be used offensively to divert Japanese attention from attacks in the south—as the US fleet was indeed used in the first half of 1942, despite the losses at Pearl Harbor. Of interest is the proposal to "organize air operations against Japanese occupied territory and against Japan herself" using bases on Luzon. The value of Luzon as an offensive base indicated that the island's defenses needed strengthening, and "every effort should be made to maintain a bombing force in the island in addition to building up a similar force in China." The United States began strengthening Luzon in the summer, and deployed bombers there from September to December 1941.

The US sent bombers to the Philippines in late 1941 in order to deter Japan from attacking Russia. However, the ADB report mentioned Russia only to say that despite the Russo-Japanese Non-Aggression Pact, the Soviet threat would require Japan to maintain "considerable forces in the North." The prospect of a Japanese attack on the USSR in conjunction with a German attack was not examined. Precisely this development had enormous implications for the Allied position in the Pacific only a few months after the ADB talks.

On the basis of the ABC agreement, the army and navy updated "Joint Army and Navy Basic War Plan Rainbow No. 5" in April.[23] The strategic assumptions, concepts, and missions elaborated in Rainbow 5 were essentially identical to those of the ABC agreement. In fact, Rainbow 5 stated that "the Associated

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[23] Rainbow 5 is found in *Hearings Before the Joint Committee on the Investigation of the Pearl Harbor Attack*, Part 33, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1946), 926-985.

Powers will conduct the war in accord with ABC-1." Again, as Germany was the predominant member of the Axis, the United States would make her main military effort against Germany while remaining on the defensive against Japan. Like the ABC agreement, Rainbow 5 did not take the prospect of Operation Barbarossa or alliance with the USSR into account, even though the German buildup in Eastern Europe was even more obvious when this Joint War Plan was written than it was during the ABC talks.

Rainbow 5 stated that "building up large land and air forces for major offensives against the Axis Powers will be the primary immediate effort of the United States Army." Furthermore, "the initial tasks of the United States land and air forces will be limited to such operations as will not materially delay this effort"—a proviso that was cast aside in 1942. The army began studying the deployment of US forces to the United Kingdom, including their command, strength, and location. The plan assumed that the shipping of troops to England and other overseas locations would begin "on September 1, 1941"—perhaps without a declaration of war or hostile German acts—with ten divisions prepared to embark six months after the order to execute Rainbow 5. All this further indicated that the military buildup already under way was not intended merely for hemispheric defense.

Rainbow 5 quoted the ABC agreement with respect to the Mediterranean: "It will be of great importance to maintain the present British and Allied Military position in and near the Mediterranean basins, and to prevent the spread of Axis control in North Africa." Rainbow 5 envisaged American naval forces at Gibraltar conducting offensive operations in the Mediterranean

under British direction. The inclusion of this verbiage in Rainbow 5 is even more significant than its inclusion in ABC, because Rainbow 5 was an internal American war plan. If American planners regarded the Mediterranean as a dispersion of effort that served only British political purposes, then one would expect Rainbow 5 to exclude any mention of Mediterranean operations.

The army did not, in April 1941, propose even a tentative plan for the employment of the large land and air forces being created for offensive operations against the Axis. Actual employment would depend on the situation that existed when the United States entered the war. As one army planner noted in May 1941, no plan for employment was devised because "a plan must be formulated upon a situation and no prediction of the situation which will exist when such a plan can be implemented should be made."[24]

The Joint Board approved the ABC agreement and Rainbow 5 in May. The secretaries of war and the navy quickly concurred. The president read, but did not formally approve, the ABC agreement and Rainbow 5 in early June. Secretary Stimson and General Marshall decided that since the president had not disapproved Rainbow 5, the army could prepare to implement it. Thus, Marshall directed the army to plan and prepare to send army forces to Iceland and the United Kingdom, to the Caribbean bases, and to the Alaska-Hawaii-Panama triangle.[25]

In conclusion, in the year after France collapsed, the United States commenced planning and mobilizing for war. When the British demonstrated that they could hold out, America began planning for coalition war in alliance with Britain.

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[24] Ibid., 46.

[25] Ibid., 46-47.

The Americans and British agreed to make their main effort in Europe, to prevent the Axis from controlling North Africa, and to build up the forces with which to eliminate Italy and to conduct large-scale ground and air offensives against Germany. In the Pacific, the Americans and the British decided to remain on the defensive, using the minimum necessary forces to hold key positions against Japanese attack.

Many historians insist that the pre-war decision to defeat Germany first was pursued unwaveringly after the war. For example, army historian Louis Morton claims,

> Though the war when it came opened with an attack in the Pacific, the President and his military advisers made it clear at the outset in the first of the wartime conferences with the British held at Washington in December 1941-January 1942 (ARCADIA) that they would stand by their decision to defeat Germany first. Not once during the course of the war was this decision successfully challenged.[26]

The decision was indeed validated at the Arcadia conference. The American and British chiefs of staff agreed that Germany was the dominant member of the Axis alliance, her defeat was the key to victory, and only the minimum necessary defensive forces should be allocated to other theaters.[27] Nor was the decision formally superseded during the war. Nonetheless, the actual deployment of American forces in 1942 and 1943 contradicted the pre-war agreements with the British, and contravened the Arcadia agreement that only the minimum necessary forces would be sent to the Pacific. As late as

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[26] Morton, "Germany First," 47.

[27] Foreign Relations of the United States, *The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington, DC: GPO,1968), 214.

December 1943, there were approximately equal numbers of personnel deployed against Japan as against Germany (1.8 million in each theater), including 849,000 army and marine ground troops in 16 divisions in the Pacific versus 982,000 army ground troops in 17 divisions in Europe. Airpower was also roughly equally allocated, with 8,807 aircraft in Europe versus 7,857 in the Pacific.[28] Thus, in practice, Germany First was put on hold for two years after Pearl Harbor. The reasons for this diversion of American forces to the Pacific are discussed elsewhere.[29]

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[28] Maurice Matloff, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1959), 398.

[29] James D. Perry, "Guadalcanal, Torch, and the Second Front," *Journal of Strategy and Politics* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 100-151.