

The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 50
Number 2 *Summer 2020*

Article 13

5-15-2020

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Recommended Citation

Earl J. Catagnus Jr. & Jonatan P. Klug, "Integrated Campaigning in the Pacific, 1918–1948," *Parameters* 50, no. 2 (2020), doi:10.55540/0031-1723.1024.

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Integrated Campaigning in the Pacific, 1918–1948

Earl J. Catagnus Jr. and Jonathan P. Klug

ABSTRACT: Russia, China, and other nations operate in a perpetual state of competition with the United States. Recognizing this reality, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recently published the *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* and Joint Doctrine Note 1-19, *Competition Continuum*. This article places these documents within the historical context of World War II in the Pacific and argues they are a return to a traditional American approach to the employment of military force.

The *Joint Concept for Integrated Campaigning* (JCIC) and the Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 1-19, *Competition Continuum*, are a return to a more traditional American strategic approach where, in times of peace, military power was applied mostly to advance economic interests.¹ Often, promoting US economic interests required the application of military force within the so-called gray zone between war and peace, a place in which American military leaders were quite adept at operating. The Pacific region from 1918–48 provides an excellent example of this strategic environment. Military force was applied along the competition continuum within integrated campaigns. All stages of the continuum—cooperation, competition below the level of armed conflict, and armed conflict—were present, sometimes occurring simultaneously. The region was hotly contested and never fully at peace, requiring leaders to employ all elements of national power to secure American interests. Playing out across vast distances, this great-power rivalry ranged from the relatively benign to the waging of a total war and featured both the first-ever international arms reduction action and the only uses of atomic weapons.

A wide range of national security challenges face the United States—confronting near-peer adversaries, containing rogue states, and defeating nonstate, transnational terrorist and criminal organizations, posing a significant dilemma for American national security leaders.² The JCIC called for Joint Force commanders and their staffs to think, plan, and execute *integrated campaigns* where the Joint Force works in concert with the interagency, partners, and allies rather than as an independent entity only employed in direct military conflict. Building on previous assessments of the current and future operating environments, JDN 1-19 began the process to codify *Competition Continuum*, a construct

1. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *Joint Operating Environment, 2035: The Joint Force in a Contested and Disordered World* (Washington, DC: JCS, 2016); and JCS, *Competition Continuum*, Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 1-19 (Washington, DC: JCS, 2019).

2. Donald J. Trump, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017), 8–13, 45–54.

embracing the spectrum of challenges within an era of enduring global competition.

Compared to other agencies and organizations, the sheer size of the Department of Defense has the potential to make it the lead agency for most national security endeavors. Unilateral leadership, however, is not the objective of integrated campaigns. Although Joint Force capabilities are unparalleled in size and scope, the JCIC calls for Joint Force commanders to “identify physical and cognitive campaign objectives and then align resources and actions—across the range of partners—to ensure the accomplishment of these objectives.”³ They are not to exercise command or attempt to control those outside their legal jurisdictions. Instead, while campaigning through the competition continuum to secure national interests—not all military in nature—Joint Force commanders are to collaborate with civilian agencies, allies, and partners to create unity of effort.

Prior to Pearl Harbor

The historical antecedents for integrated campaigning are much older than the relatively recent Cold War period. Prior to World War II, gray zone conflict was a natural part of the operating environment, ambiguous strategic guidance and shifting policies were the norm, interagency collaboration was expected, officers routinely performed diplomatic functions to include negotiating treaties, and it was understood that economic *progress* was usually the underlying motive behind most foreign policy.

Securing the industrial base, particularly its labor force, technological innovations, and manufacturing capacity, was essential for maintaining American hegemony. At its core, this approach was conceptually Hamiltonian and reflective of Edward Meade Earle’s influential essay, “Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton, Friedrich List: The Economic Foundations of Military Power.”⁴ Hamilton viewed military power as both a byproduct and an adjunct to economic power. The pursuit of military power was not an end unto itself, but rather a means to an economic end resulting in national independence and individual freedom. Although Hamilton’s system was not adopted wholesale, the assumption that military capacity was drawn from and supported the economic needs of the people has become part of the collective American mind. This was assumption especially true when military force was applied outside the confines of war in periods of contested peace.⁵

3. JCS, *Joint Operating Environment*, 11.

4. Edward Meade Earle, “Adam Smith, Alexander Hamilton, Friedrich List: The Economic Foundations of Military Power,” in *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought From Machiavelli to Hitler*, ed. Earle, Gordon A. Craig, and Felix Gilbert, 3rd ed. (1943; repr. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 117–54.

5. Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York: MacMillan Publishing, 1980).

Throughout the middle to late 1800s, Americans sought new trading partners and relatively untouched markets.⁶ Since European empires like Britain, France, and Spain dominated trade in Africa and Central and South America, only Asia was open for economic expansion. Diplomats secured trade treaties across the Pacific and established consuls in many fledgling island nations. By the 1870s, the United States had a foothold in the Chinese market and had opened trade with Japan. The Spanish-American War made the United States a global power with colonial possessions of Guam and the Philippines to administer and defend.

Adding these new territories to other Pacific territories such as Hawaii and Wake Island provided the bases that naval officer and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan so adamantly argued the US Navy required to project power. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt declared the “Mediterranean era died with the discovery of America,” and “the Pacific era, destined to be the greatest of all, is just at its dawn.”⁷ Shortly afterward, the Russo-Japanese War broke out. It ended with Japan’s stunning victory, which established it as a regional power and set the conditions for a future war.

Following the Boxer Rebellion in 1901 in China, the US Army, Navy, and Marine Corps maintained garrisons and ships at strategic locations along critical waterways, rail lines, and internationally controlled sections of cities. Their tactical mission was to protect American lives and property, but their strategic objective was to maintain the Open Door policy in China and enhance American influence throughout the region. American commanders worked closely with and sometimes under the direct control of State Department officials.

American naval officers became naturally at ease operating within this complex environment. In a 1922 Naval War College lecture, Rear Admiral H. S. Sharp explained, “the life experience of a naval officer is a broadening one,” specifically in the “practical matter of international affairs and foreign people” where their duties, and, more importantly, individual professional responsibility, often called upon them to act as diplomats, negotiators, law and treaty enforcers, and peacekeepers.⁸

During the interwar years as their commitments abroad expanded, Army officers demonstrated equal competence in such affairs. Both naval and military officers coordinated with Christian missionary organizations to ensure the safety and, at times, the safe evacuation of far-flung missions. Freedom of navigation patrols, field maneuvers, and even the routines of military courtesy and protocol were used to

6. Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (New York: Mariner Books, 1997), 50–51, 96–97, 106–9.

7. Quoted in John Costello, *The Pacific War, 1941–1945* (New York: Quill, 1982), 3.

8. H. S. Sharp, “Naval Officer in Diplomacy” (lecture, Naval War College, Newport, RI, July 25, 1922), 2–3, Naval War College Digital Archives, <https://www.usnwcarchives.org/>.

demonstrate power and exert influence over an array of international navies and militaries.⁹

World War II

For the United States, the interwar years ended abruptly with the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor, which shocked and incensed the American people. The next day, President Roosevelt made his iconic “Day of Infamy” speech, to which Congress responded by declaring war on Imperial Japan.¹⁰ The next four years consisted of bloody warfare, but there was much more to American activities in the Pacific than just armed conflict. From a national perspective, the United States used the military instrument of national power exercised through integrated campaigning in conjunction with diplomatic, informational, and economic instruments of national power aimed at both punishing Imperial Japan and achieving a better peace. From a military perspective, fighting the Pacific War required cooperation amongst the services and with Allies, armed conflict with Imperial Japan, and even competition with Allies.¹¹

Joint Doctrine Note 1-19 includes specific definitions of three forms of cooperation: engage selectively, maintain, and advance.¹² World War II was global in nature and so was US cooperation with its Allies Great Britain and the Soviet Union. When the Germans touched off World War II with the invasion of Poland, a neutral United States sought to *engage selectively* with Great Britain through loans. The relationship was transactional in nature, as American legislation required other nations to purchase US war goods, and the United States still sought competitive advantage over the United Kingdom. Thus, the United States sought to help Britain against Nazi aggression while improving its own strategic position.

As the fortunes of Europe and the United Kingdom waned, however, the United States sought to *maintain* Great Britain as a bulwark against the Axis powers, creating the lend-lease program and then system, which increasingly helped Britain while reducing competition with Britain.¹³ After Pearl Harbor, American cooperation with its erstwhile competitors now potential Allies increased dramatically, and the United States *advanced* its relationship, becoming allied with

9. See General Charles L. Bolte interview by Maclyn Burg (oral historian), October 17, 1973, transcript, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, 16–23; and Costello, *Pacific War*, 3–54.

10. Costello, *Pacific War*, 149–50; and Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle against the Sun: The American War with Japan* (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 6–7.

11. JCS, *Competition Continuum*, v–vii; Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000); Costello, *Pacific War*; and Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*.

12. JCS, *Competition Continuum*, 6.

13. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1956), 399–400, 457–59; Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom (1940–1945)* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970), 24–25; Murray and Millett, *War to Be Won*, 136, 164–68, 243, 251, 269; and I. C. B. Dear, ed., *The Oxford Companion to World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 787, 790, 677–83.

Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Nationalist China, and the Soviet Union.¹⁴

The Allies' war with Japan was total in nature, and JDN 1-19 defines four activities conducted in armed conflict useful to help understand this war: *defeat*, *deny*, *degrade*, and *disrupt*.¹⁵ After Pearl Harbor, the United States made several efforts to deny the Japanese from achieving their strategic objectives. First, American and Philippine forces defended the Philippine Islands as long as they could, denying the Japanese a quick victory and the ability to use those forces elsewhere. Similarly, the United States and other Allies used naval forces in an effort to deny the Japanese a quick victory in the Java Sea, which while it failed, it nonetheless served to slow the Japanese. Meanwhile, the United States increased its efforts to support the Nationalist Chinese against Japan, denying the Japanese victory in China and thereby tying up a large part of the Japanese Army fighting the Nationalist Chinese and Communist Chinese.¹⁶

Almost immediately after Pearl Harbor, the US military also began efforts to disrupt the Japanese. The Doolittle Raid was one of the first and most important of these efforts. This small raid had negligible tactical impact but had strategic-level disruptive effects. The Japanese military felt dishonored by the attack on the Japanese home islands—a demonstration of the military's potential vulnerability. Furthermore, there was a perception of a threat to the Japanese emperor, however remote in reality. The Japanese military reacted to the raid with the attack on the Aleutian Islands and Midway Island, which was ultimately disastrous. Carrier strikes, Marine Raider Battalion operations, and some submarine efforts were other examples of operational-level disruption efforts.¹⁷

The United States used three key efforts to degrade Imperial Japan's ability and will to wage war. The first two—a submarine campaign that quietly eviscerated the Japanese merchant marine and an extensive mining effort, which reached a crescendo in 1945 with the introduction of B-29 Superfortress bombers—resulted in shortages of raw materials that led to cascading effects upon Japanese industry and military operations. Additionally, the mining effort limited and degraded both operations and training programs, especially for aircraft pilots. The third effort, a strategic bombing campaign, devastated the Japanese ability to wage war in terms of war industry, infrastructure, and military capabilities. But the will of the Japanese remained strong enough to fight on until the deployment by the United States of two atomic bombs and the Soviet entry in the Pacific War.¹⁸

14. Murray and Millet, *War to Be Won*, 165, 197–99, 228, 232, 292, 388, 450, 472, 485, 488, 532, 534–36, 561; and Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 324–27.

15. JCS, *Competition Continuum*, 5.

16. Costello, *Pacific War*, 99–108, 171–72, 206–10, 236–44; Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 55–59, 133–34, 143–47, 466–68, 545–46; and Murray and Millet, *War to Be Won*, 181–88, 220–22.

17. Costello, *Pacific War*, 219, 448–53; Murray and Millet, *War to Be Won*, 190–91, 347, 365; and Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 154–55, 271–72.

18. Costello, *Pacific War*, 233–36, 245, 453–55; Murray and Millet, *War to Be Won*, 223–27, 503–7, 516–25; and Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 478–94, 503–6, 525–30, 554–58.

The Allies had three theaters of war in which to defeat Imperial Japan. In a sense, the oldest was the China-Burma-India Theater (CBI) where Imperial Japan fought for years before Pearl Harbor. The Allied command structure in this theater was complicated on paper and even more so in reality—Chiang Kai-shek was in command in China and American General Joseph W. Stillwell served as his deputy. The British also had major subordinate commanders, most notably Admiral Louis Mountbatten, 1st Earl Mountbatten, the nominal CBI theater commander. The two newer theaters were the Southwest Pacific Area, under the command of US Army General Douglas MacArthur and the Pacific Ocean Areas under the command of US Navy Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.

The two American theater commanders worked to defeat Imperial Japan by forcing its unconditional surrender and changing its militaristic nature while CBI remained a supporting theater.¹⁹ In 1942, MacArthur's forces stemmed the Japanese tide on New Guinea and then went on the offensive, which picked up speed and momentum as he fought to retake the Philippines in 1944 and 1945. Meanwhile, Nimitz's forces took and held Guadalcanal and later began the Central Pacific drive in 1943 that would, like MacArthur's forces, increase the pace of its offensive in 1944 and 1945.

Just as US cooperation with its Allies changed over the course of the war, so did US competition with its Allies. The JDN 1-19 includes specific definitions of three activities in competition below armed conflict: *enhance*, *manage*, and *delay*. For example, America enhanced its position at Britain's expense as Great Britain took wartime loans and gave up influence and bases in the Western Hemisphere.²⁰ In the immediate aftermath of the Japanese 1941 attacks, the Allies fought desperately to stem the Japanese onslaught, which involved all Allies stepping up their cooperation.

Despite this need for short-term cooperation to defeat the common foe of Imperial Japan, some competition remained, and the United States changed its competitive activities to focus on managing Great Britain. As the Pacific War continued and the prospects of victory increased, America and her Allies increased their competition for postwar political and strategic advantage, especially as the war neared its conclusion. Given the growing signs of war weariness in the American people, the United States attempted to delay the Soviet Union over eastern Europe and China.²¹

Beyond World War II

The unexpected speed of the Japanese surrender after the atomic bombs were dropped in August 1945 caused immediate and massive

19. Costello, *Pacific War*, 225–26, 255–56, 388–89, 579–86, 607; Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 144–47, 545–46; and Murray and Millet, *War to Be Won*, 151, 157–64, 191, 197–98, 218, 227–32, 338, 349, 485, 509, 521.

20. Dear, *Oxford Companion*, 297–98, 787, 790, 677–83.

21. Costello, *Pacific War*, 536–38; Murray and Millet, *War to Be Won*, 521–22; and Spector, *Eagle against the Sun*, 324–79.

redeployments of troops to occupation duties throughout Asia. Overnight, senior leaders made a conscious, deliberate, yet ultimately swift strategic shift from fighting an unlimited global war to competing against the ideology of communism and the state and nonstate actors who embraced it. Although unsuccessful for many reasons, Operation Beleaguer, the occupation of North China until 1947, combined force deployments and Nationalist Chinese training programs in support of diplomatic efforts to stem the onslaught of Chinese communism.

The 40 years of Japanese occupation left Korea in a vacuum, and the US Army filled this void. The Korean Military Advisory Group was hugely successful in South Korea, building partner capacity and creating space for Syngman Rhee's government to wage an effective counterinsurgency campaign. The famed historian Allan R. Millett, an expert on the Korean War, went so far as proclaiming this success was what led to Kim Il-Sung's decision to invade the south in June 1950.²²

Conclusion

American cooperation, competition, and conflict in the twentieth century in the Pacific demonstrate the JCIC and JDN 1-19 have deep historical roots. Traditionally, the underlying reason America exercised its military strength short of war was to bolster the other elements of national power, chiefly economic power. Military force was adjunct and even subordinated to diplomatic and economic action. Naval and military commanders inherently understood this and waged integrated campaigns to secure national interests in concert with other government agencies, Allies, and partners.

Before 1941, naval and military commanders simultaneously executed campaigns of cooperation and competition throughout the contested Pacific region. They did this all while working for, with, and through various agencies like the State Department as well as communicating and coordinating with private entities such as news reporters and Christian missionaries. During World War II, they created campaign plans that were sent to the Joint Chiefs of Staff for approval, integrated into a global strategy, and executed across three different theaters of operations. After the war, these same commanders confronted great power adversaries, administered occupied governments, and competed throughout the region below the level of armed conflict.

As a result of its growth and prestige as the Cold War progressed, the US military became overly focused on purely military matters. Senior military and political leaders perceived effective strategy was the ability to enhance capabilities to deter war. If war did come, then a successful strategy was winning enough battles to win that war. When the Soviet Union fell, this condition only worsened. The current *National Security Strategy* and *National Defense Strategy* make this strategic focus anathema.

22. Robert K. Sawyer, *Military Advisors in Korea: KMAC in Peace and War*, Center for Military History (CMH) Pub. 30-3 (Washington, DC: CMH, 1962); and Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1945-1950: A House Burning* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

The JCIC and JDN 1-19 provide a blueprint for military leaders to return to a more traditional American strategic approach to employing military force in times of peace.

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