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FOREWORD

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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE MERCHANT MARINE TO NATIONAL POWER

A lecture delivered by Commander George D. Synon, U. S. C. G.
at the Naval War College
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In considering the relation of the Merchant Marine to national power, it is perhaps automatic for members of the Armed Forces to regard a large fleet of commercial shipping as indispensable to the security of the United States. This premise has been fundamental to American naval strategy ever since Mahan enunciated his concept of sea power toward the end of the last century. It is today a proposition that is widely supported by many outstanding figures who write and speak publicly on this subject.

Here, at the War College, however, we must not fall into the error of accepting any dogma or doctrine simply because it has been demonstrated in the past to be sound or well-conceived. It is necessary, rather, constantly to re-appraise in the light of changing world conditions any and all of the strategic premises upon which our thinking may tend to become fixed.

Especially is this so in the case of the Merchant Marine. In the United States, private industry has been unable to operate ocean shipping on any wide scale without financial assistance from the Government. We call this subsidy; and we justify the payment of subsidy on the ground that the Merchant Marine is essential to economic prosperity and for the national defense. Consequently, the support of a large fleet of commercial shipping has come to be

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Commander Synon is a member of the Naval War College Staff.
accepted in the United States as a proper function of government. This viewpoint is vigorously and sincerely supported by the great majority of individuals and organizations connected with the maritime industry. But there are many people who believe that an expanded Merchant Marine may be contrary to the best interests of the United States at the present time. These persons are, of course, in the minority, but their arguments deserve careful scrutiny at an institution such as the War College. One of the purposes of this discussion is to present that contrary point of view. Many of you officers here may at some time in the future be called upon to make decisions touching on the Merchant Marine. You will be helped in arriving at these decisions by a knowledge not only of the many good arguments both for and against a strong U. S. Merchant Marine, but also by those which may be frankly designed to influence public opinion.

As an example of what I am talking about, let me recall to your mind the state of the American Merchant Marine prior to World War I and II. At the beginning of the first World War, we had very little ocean shipping. Other nations carried the major part of our foreign commerce. When we finally got into that War, we simply did not have the ships we needed. Our troops and the vast bulk of our munitions had to be transported overseas in the ships of our allies. In World War II, we were in somewhat better shape—particularly as to shipbuilding—but from the standpoint of available tonnage, we were as poorly prepared to wage global war in 1941 as we were in 1917.

The backers of a strong Merchant Marine policy point to these two instances of unpreparedness as over-riding reason for us to support an expanded fleet of merchant shipping in the future.

And yet, a pretty good case can be made out for the proposition that if the United States had been supporting such a merchant fleet, the Allies would probably have lost World War I and...
could not have won World War II. I shall attempt to do so a little later in this discussion.

In the meantime, however, let us take a brief glance at national power in its broadest sense, and determine, if we can, how merchant shipping, as a part of sea power, has contributed to the national greatness and prosperity of maritime states in the past. Against such a background, I shall attempt to relate merchant shipping to certain aspects of military strategy as it has historically been employed in the case of Great Britain, since that nation displays so many features that are strategically similar to our own. Then, turning to the present, we may consider a number of factors brought about as a result of World War II which, in my opinion, require a revision in our traditional concept—to some degree of sea power—but more precisely, of the function of the Merchant Marine. These factors are intimately related to the economics of world trade, without some knowledge of which it is difficult to understand the shipping situation as it exists today. And finally, a few conclusions, which may be justified by prevailing world conditions and our strategic needs for the future.

Character of National Power

The nations of the world have been broadly classified as continental and maritime powers. Many military historians agree that the character of a nation from this standpoint dictates the form of strategy that is best suited to it. The British, for example, are a maritime people, and they have, with success, pursued a maritime strategy. The Germans, on the other hand, are a continental power, and their important military successes have been on land. Mind you, this is not to say that a single nation may not combine in itself certain elements of both sea and land power. It is simply that such influences as geography, natural resources, population, and so forth, serve to direct the interests of a people
primarily toward the land, or toward the sea. If these forces are recognized and understood, it is possible, in my opinion, to measure the dependence of a state upon overseas trade, and thus to determine a maritime strategy best suited to preserve or increase the national power.

If we examine the nations of Europe and Asia and arrange them according to their historical pattern as continental or maritime powers, we will observe one significant difference between the two groups. All of the maritime powers—save Great Britain—seem at some time in their history to have risen to world leadership as sea powers, and then to have passed into decline—never to recover sea power once it has been lost. Whether Great Britain is now moving toward the fringes of that pattern, it is as yet too soon to say. But not so the continental powers. The great land powers—Russia, France, Germany—have lost and have regained the dominant position in Europe on numerous occasions. Even during periods of decline, they possess their political significance—as an example, we have the case of Spain today—as opposed to the almost complete loss of influence in world affairs suffered by the small nations that border on the sea—of whom Portugal is likewise a case in point.

The reason for this political phenomenon is, I believe, that continental powers retain the essential attributes of territory, material resources, manpower—which cannot be taken from them—whereas, a truly maritime power can compensate itself for the lack of these advantages only by remaining strong at sea, and sea power—for reasons that are not clear—does not renew itself.

It seems fair to say, then, that if the independent nations of the world who are truly maritime in character are forced away from the sea—whether by economic competition they cannot meet,
or by political or military means, their influence in world affairs and, correspondingly, their capacity to defend their independence, will be markedly reduced. This is the situation confronting the smaller maritime powers today.

**Merchant Shipping and Maritime Power**

Now, what is the connection between merchant shipping and the rise and fall of maritime states?

The Mediterranean basin is perhaps the most fruitful area for an investigation of this sort. It is the scene of the emergence of a succession of maritime powers throughout the span of recorded history. Moreover, the course of warfare in Europe has been inseparably identified with sea power in the Mediterranean. Naval strength has been exerted in these narrow waters almost invariably in either of two forms: in the protection of maritime commerce or in the employment of naval and merchant ship types for the support of land armies. It is significant that the changes in weapons and methods of warfare that have taken place since many centuries before the birth of Christ have failed to alter the fundamental strategic factors that determine military success or failure in this critical area of the world. The advantages of interior lines, mobility, and freedom of action that were enjoyed by the ancient powers who were able to control and use the sea lanes of the Mediterranean persist until this day.

In 525 B.C., Cambyses, the King of Persia, invaded and subdued Egypt. Then he looked westward, toward Carthage, and sent his army overland—across the Libyan Desert—to conquer Carthage and add that nation to his empire. But the Phoenicians—blood brothers to the Carthaginians—who controlled the sea, and whom Cambyses could neither coerce nor intimidate, refused to help him with their ships. Without a fleet for the support of
his troops, Cambyses could not surmount his supply problem across North Africa—and his army perished in the desert. Yet, in 1940, the British, under General Wavell, in one of the most remarkable military campaigns on record, moved across this same stretch of North African coast to destroy an Italian army of more than 200,000 men. But the British right flank rested firmly on the free use of sea communications for the support of Wavell’s tank columns and tactical air.

Indeed, control of the Mediterranean littoral has traditionally been achieved and maintained by those belligerents who have first made secure their communications by sea. Alexander the Great recognized as hopeless any attempt to conquer Egypt until he had first disposed of the Phoenician navy which lay astride the supply routes of his land armies. So, as a first step, Alexander, unlike Cambyses, besieged Tyre, the principal Phoenician city, and reduced it after a campaign of seven months. But by this operation, Alexander removed the threat to his rear, and he obtained the cargo shipping without which he could not move against Egypt. Napoleon, on the other hand, did not perceive that sea power in the eastern Mediterranean was indispensable to the success of his armies on land. In his campaign to gain an eastern empire, Napoleon was turned back at Acre by an inferior Turkish force supported from seaward by a small squadron of British ships under Sir Sidney Smith. During the preceding year, as you will recall, Nelson had demolished the French fleet at the Battle of the Nile, and Napoleon was without the means to sustain his communications in the face of British command of the sea. This engagement marked the collapse of his dream of an empire in the East. After his defeat before Acre, Napoleon retired on his base in Egypt—baffled by his inability to use the sea.

The principal states that have held maritime power in the Mediterranean are Phoenicia, Carthage, the Greek States, Rome,
Venice, Genoa, and Pisa. These States all have certain characteristics in common. Taken as a whole, they may probably be said to comprise the identity of true maritime character. And it is well to bear in mind that we are examining a period of more than 2,500 years. These States were invariably small in geographic extent. They lacked natural resources and arable land. They bordered on difficult terrain—mountains and deserts, or else the territory of unfriendly peoples. The inhabitants of the maritime States were traders and craftsmen, rather than farmers or herdsmen. And these States depended on the importation by sea of foodstuffs and raw materials they were unable to produce at home. Like all other true maritime powers, they derived a large part of their national income from hauling the waterborne commerce of other nations not inclined toward the sea. But their greatest source of wealth and power grew out of their colonies, which they all sought to obtain and exploit.

The earlier maritime powers of the Atlantic share these same characteristics—Portugal and Holland, for example. Great Britain falls into a somewhat special category, but only because of her insularity, which underlines both her dependence on the sea and the natural protection that it affords her. I would exclude France and Spain from such a grouping, despite their extensive maritime history, since they are primarily continental in character. But it is proper to add to the list of early maritime states our own New England seaboard, as it existed from the beginning of the Nineteenth Century until the Civil War, as this region exhibited so many of the features of maritime character.

As you well know, pre-eminence at sea has been distinguished by the ownership of both combat and commercial fleets, but it is well to hold in mind that combat fleets have been subordinate in the order of national power to the commercial fleets.
they are designed to complement and to protect. The historian Gibbon clearly sums up this relationship in writing of Venice at the time of the Crusades: “Nor did she often forget that if armed galleys were the effect and safeguard, merchant vessels were the cause and supply of her greatness.”

The decline of sea powers cannot always be ascribed to any immediate cause. In the history of nations that have risen to maritime greatness and have lost it, there are deep and slowly moving influences which I do not intend to examine here. But in the final stages of the decay of sea power, there is one clear sign for all to see: The merchant shipping of a declining sea power disappears from the seas by reason of enemy action or withers it at home through loss of profitable trade.

The Military Strategy of Great Britain

Let us now turn to Great Britain as the classic example of national greatness resulting from sea power. An understanding of the means Britain has employed to obtain and hold world power will assist us in applying correctly our own maritime strength in support of the national policy. It is not necessary to point out to this audience the similarities between our maritime position and that of Great Britain. It is, rather, the dissimilarities that must be emphasized. Among these, the most important is our lack of dependence on the outside world for food. Of almost equal importance is the self-contained nature of our economy. This is not to infer that we do not draw from other parts of the world raw materials we do not produce in adequate quantities at home, or that the revenue we obtain from foreign trade does not form an important part of our national income. It is simply that our economy is not geared to a complex machinery of imports, exports, and all their related maritime enterprises—as is Great Britain’s. It has truly been said that England must export or die. That statement could
not apply to us whatever. And a final difference to be stressed is that the United States—in addition to being a great sea power—is also a great land power, despite Mahan's thesis that no nation could be both.

Britain has applied sea power with a skill that surpasses all the other features of her foreign policy. King George V called England's Fleet her "sure shield", as indeed it has been. Not since William the Conqueror has Britain been invaded in war, although there have been periods when invasion seemed imminent. And, strange to say, there have always been Britons who feared invasion at times such as these and have urged the erection of all sorts of complicated land defenses to meet the enemy when he first stepped on shore. When Napoleon stood on the Boulogne coast, with an army of 130,000 men and a great assembly of transport and cargo craft to ferry it across the Channel, the Admiralty itself was apprehensive the invasion would succeed. But Lord St. Vincent—under whom the immortal Nelson learned his trade—knowing full well the French would first have to dispose of the English Fleet that lay in the Channel, reassured the Admiralty in a classic remark that seems worth repeating. "I do not say the French cannot come", he said, "I only say they cannot come by sea."

The strategy by which Britain has employed naval strength to advance and protect the interests of her commercial fleets is well known. Less widely recognized, perhaps, is somewhat the reverse of this circumstance: whereby merchant shipping has been a primary influence in shaping Britain's military strategy. In every war, as you know, the readiness of a weapon for use exerts a controlling influence on the way the war is fought. In this sense, merchant shipping has served Britain as a weapon.

The British have gained their most notable military successes when they have been able to employ land armies of relat-
ively small size at critical points where control of the sea approaches could be assured. By this strategy, Britain has been able to minimize her lack of manpower and bring to bear against continental opponents inconvenient or distracting pressure on flank or rear. Such a strategy depends, of course, upon allies to engage the enemy frontally if the war is to be fought to a conclusion. But it has been the preferred policy of Britain not to engage in land warfare against a continental opponent unless assisted by a continental ally. Merchant ships have provided the means by which this eccentric form of strategy might be put to use. (And by eccentric, I mean displaced from the center, rather than queer or odd.) Relatively small forces have been landed by transport and cargo shipping at points remote from the main theater but which the enemy is compelled to defend if he is to remain secure all along his line.

This eccentric form of warfare is ideally exemplified by Wellington's campaign in the Iberian Peninsula. Most of the nations of Europe were allied with England against Napoleon, and the main theater of war was in mid-continent. Wellington used the Fleet to transport his army to Portugal, where he entered Europe, in the French rear. His army was relatively small but it imposed an annoying division of force upon the French. Wellington could not be ignored since he was stirring up so much trouble with the Spaniards. The attempt to dislodge him in a series of limited engagements was unsuccessful; and to have moved against him in force—which Napoleon would have been compelled to do—meant transferring the main theater of war. In such a case, Wellington would either have retired behind his prepared positions at Torres Vedras or re-embarked his army into his transports. Thus Napoleon was confronted with what all continental soldiers seek to avoid: a war on two fronts. When Wellington felt that he was strong enough to move toward France, he used the Fleet to transfer his base by easy stages along the Spanish coast.
line. "If anyone", Wellington said, "wishes to know the history of this war, I will tell them that it is our maritime superiority gives me the power of maintaining my army, while the enemy are unable to do so."

And yet, despite the maritime strategy that has been so well suited to British arms, there is a perverse streak in British military character which seeks the land battle of large proportions. Before the outbreak of the first World War, there was a clear schism in British military planning. The Admiralty group was all for employing the small British Expeditionary Force in the event of war in an eccentric move—an amphibious landing along the Pomeranian coast, in the German rear, or along the Belgian coast, at Ostend or Zebrugge, on the flank. By this means, it was contended, far more pressure would be taken off the French than if the British divisions were to take up a position on the left of the main French line. The opposing group in the War Office favored the employment of Britain’s military effort in direct action against the principal German armies. Sir Henry Wilson, then Director of Military Operations, and an ardent Francophile, put over his plan to get the British army of six divisions into alignment with the French as soon after the outbreak of war as possible.

Now, if the British have a defect in their military make-up, it is their dogged persistence—once they are committed to a line of action—in following it out to the bitter end. "Maintaining the objective”, they call it. The French recognize this. On one occasion, Wilson inquired of General Foch what would be the smallest number of British troops that would be of any value to France in the event of a war with Germany. “Send us one British soldier”, Foch replied, “and we shall take pains to see that he is killed!”

The result was, that instead of the modest army of six divisions with which Britain had thought to assist France, she mobil-
ized three and a half million men, of whom 700,000 were killed—a
disaster from which she has never recovered.

The Dardanelles campaign was the only operation of major
proportions undertaken by the Allies during World War I in which
this eccentric strategy was employed. Its objective was to turn the
left flank of the Central Powers by knocking Turkey out of the war,
and thus to obtain access to eastern Europe as a means for sustain­
ing Russia. Notwithstanding its failure and the criticism which
has attended it, the Dardanelles campaign was soundly conceived.
It was a proper and logical use of the mobility afforded by trans­
port type shipping to apply land pressure at a critical point the
enemy could not readily defend. This operation failed not so much
because of the brilliant defense put up by the German, Liman von
Sanders, but primarily because the British were unable to support
two offensives at the same time. Reinforcements that might have
turned the tide at Gallipoli were withheld until after the Loos of­
fensive on the Western Front.

Can we perceive in all this a lesson for the United States?
Militarily, we possess the insular advantages of Great Britain but
we possess also her corresponding disadvantage of limited man­
power in comparison with that of our most likely continental ad­
versary. It is, of course, no part of my purpose to suggest for us
any basic plan for war, but it seems plain, if Britain is to be
taken as any sort of an example, that we cannot afford the head­
long employment of great masses of troops in land warfare against
a continental opponent. If this be so, and I think it is, then we
must—in the conservation of our national power—turn to an ec­
centric—a maritime form of strategy—and exploit the advantages
of mobility, surprise, and economy of force that are conferred by
sea power—at the heart of which is merchant type shipping.
Political and Economic Considerations

It was primary thesis of Admiral Mahan that for a nation to be a great sea power it must conform to three requirements: First, such a nation must have the means of production, and thus be stimulated to the exchange of products. Second, it must have shipping, whereby the exchange is carried on. And, third, it must own colonies, which facilitate and enlarge the operations of shipping. (Incidentally, our own lack of colonies led Mahan to question whether the United States could ever become truly great at sea.)

Prior to World War II, this concept of sea power was well supported in the history of maritime nations. You will observe, however, that it is a concept that grows out of the colonial system and the doctrine of mercantilism. In the period before World War I—in which Mahan wrote—the maritime powers were in constant struggle for individual advancement, and all of them owned colonies. Under the system of mercantilism, a nation seeks to obtain the materials needed to support its economy from within its own orbit and to export its production to others at a profit. Hence, each of the maritime states required its own fleet of merchant shipping, since none could depend upon its rivals to provide ships at a time when not to provide them would weaken the relative position of the other.

Taken on the whole, this theory of sea power was certainly justified by world conditions prevailing until World War II. But, as a result of that War, there have been profound changes in the military and economic workings of world politics which, in my opinion, cause us to revise our earlier ideas of what is, and what is not, in the national interest. The rise of international gangsterism and the totalitarian state has forced peace-loving nations to look toward collective action as the best means of preserving their individual security. In World War II, we used lend-lease to support nations
whose interests were tied up with our own. At the present time, we are endeavoring by means of E. C. A. to restore and sustain the economic structure of the free nations of Europe. We believe those nations must enjoy a reasonable degree of prosperity if they are to be strong enough to withstand penetration by forces or ideologies dangerous to ourselves. In order to do this, we are expending—and we are committed to expend—a vast portion of our national substance. Nobody knows what this program ultimately may cost. But it is a program, nonetheless, around which our entire foreign policy is centered.

This is a philosophy of world politics to which we as a nation have not heretofore subscribed. And it imposes upon us the necessity to review some of the assumptions which have been fundamental to our national thinking in the past. One of these is the assumption that the ownership of a large merchant marine is a source of national power. Standing alone, this assumption is good; but it fails to take into account other, more potent, factors upon which the national interest depends. As I see it, the question to be decided is whether national support of an expanded U. S. merchant fleet is in agreement with our larger policy of aid to Europe. If not, then we must find a policy for the Merchant Marine that tends to advance the program we are embarked upon in Europe at such great cost and risk to ourselves.

Since our immediate objectives in Europe are economic, let us give some attention to the economics of world shipping.

It so happens that most of the nations to whom we are extending assistance are maritime powers—Norway, Britain, The Netherlands, and Greece, for example. Or else they have large maritime interests, such as France and Italy. The life of these nations to great extent depends on the sea. Before World War II, they
shared—if we exclude Japan—the bulk of the carrying trade of the world. The transportation of ocean commerce is one of the principal services they sell to others. These countries haul freight cheaply and efficiently. Moreover, they must have the income they derive from this service if they are to maintain economic stability. It affords their peoples a means of livelihood and provides them with foreign exchange to buy the food and materials they cannot produce at home. Today, the shipyards of Europe are striving to replace the tonnage lost during the War, although the United States can supply enough shipping for all the world’s needs. These nations realize intuitively they cannot turn their backs on the sea.

With this background, we may return to the proposition advanced earlier in this discussion, namely, that the existence of a large U. S. Merchant Marine would have jeopardized Allied chances of winning World Wars I and II.

First, let us recognize that the total demands of world trade will support a corresponding amount of world shipping. In other words, the more trade, the more shipping in active employment. But existing tonnage in excess of these requirements will either be operated at a loss, or it will remain idle, since there will not be enough trade to go round. Thus, at any given time, there is a pool of world shipping that provides the means of ocean transportation for world commerce. If the principles of economics are allowed to operate freely, the size of this pool will be determined by the law of supply and demand. Some nations will hold more of this shipping, and others will hold less, depending upon their ability to compete in the various world trades.

This was essentially the system that prevailed prior to World War I and II. Foreigners could operate ocean shipping more cheaply than we could; consequently, they carried the greater part of our trade.
Now, what happens when you tinker with this system? What would have been the effect if, a few years prior to World War I or II, we had, by means of subsidy, put an expanded U. S. merchant fleet into the pool of world shipping? The result, as you can very well see, would have been to force certain of the other carrier nations to cut down their merchant fleets to the level the remaining trade would accommodate.

It is not hard to see which nations these would have been. They would have been those nations whose costs of operation most nearly approached our own—which means Britain, since she has less of a margin, or cushion, to absorb the pressure of uneconomic competition from us. It is, of course, quite true that Britain's worldwide interests would have preserved for her a substantial merchant fleet—still the largest in the world—but, nevertheless, competition of the magnitude we are considering here would seriously have cut into the tonnage that was available to Britain at the outbreak of both World Wars.

There is good reason to believe the German U-Boat campaigns against British shipping in both World War I and II very nearly succeeded. If the results of the first U-Boat campaign in World War I be examined—and there were two separate campaigns in that War—it will be observed that the British barely managed to survive. With a smaller merchant fleet, there seems no doubt Britain would have been starved into submission. The United States was doing its best to remain neutral—not sending its ships into the war zone, and so forth—but we had ocean freight backed up on every railroad siding as far west as Chicago. The pressure was on to do something for the Allies, and to get that freight moving.

A larger U. S. Merchant Marine would have alleviated this situation, and we would have been able to send our industrial and
agricultural production throughout the rest of the world. Likewise, a larger U.S. merchant tonnage would have increased the potential hazard to Germany if the United States were drawn into the War; and, with the correspondingly better prospects of success of its U-Boat campaign against Britain, it seems quite likely the German High Command would not have initiated the policy of indiscriminate sinking that finally did bring us into the War.

The situation was very much the same in World War II. Although Britain had a greater tonnage, she had military commitments that required merchant shipping on a far wider scale. Cargo bottoms were a critical shortage for Britain throughout the War. According to the British White Paper of November, 1944, Britain started World War II with 17,500,000 gross tons of merchant shipping under her control. By the end of 1943, she had lost the astounding total of nearly twelve million gross tons!

It is not necessary for us to dwell on the probable results of the elimination of Great Britain as an opponent to Germany in either World War I or II. And I am well aware that the circumstances which I have outlined and which might have forced her withdrawal are entirely conjectural. But my point is this—we must not accept blindly the statement that a large Merchant Marine is for the United States an unfailing source of national power.

We share with Britain leadership in a world complex of sea power that rings the continents of Europe and Asia like a girdle. The members of that complex are mutually supporting. This alignment of maritime strength provides individual states in the maritime community with what is probably their most valuable single means to withstand domination by land power. A proper policy for the Merchant Marine will tend to preserve this alignment upon which the maritime position of the United States ultimately depends.
How can we go about doing this?

First, I should say we must estimate, as best we can, what will be our requirements for merchant type shipping in the event of war—not only for ourselves, but also for our prospective allies. Then we must determine how these requirements may be satisfied without adversely affecting our other vital interests not directly related to shipping.

Allied needs for merchant shipping in time of war arrange themselves naturally into two categories: the short-term needs and the long-term needs. The pool of world shipping is one of the principal sources from which this tonnage may be obtained—just as it was in the last War and the War before that. Merchant ships lose much of their nationality in time of war. Officers here can recall convoys in the last War in which the flags of half a dozen Allied nations were flown. In World War II, the merchant tonnage available to all the Allies was drawn upon as a common fund—centrally disposed of and centrally directed. We may expect some such procedure to be adopted in any future war.

If we define our short-term needs as those during the first six months of a war, it will be safe to say they can be adequately provided for from three already existing sources: (1) the tonnage controlled by our prospective allies and friendly neutrals, (2) the reserve fleets, which we must keep up-to-date and in good order, and (3) the active U. S. Merchant Marine.

I will not touch further on the first two of these sources. Nor will I discuss the merchant type tonnage available in the Military Sea Transport Service. But, as to the third of these sources of short-term shipping, it is my opinion that we can maintain under our Flag a fleet of merchant shipping which will take its proper place in the world complex of maritime power—without weakening any
of its members—and still give us a good nucleus for expansion in time of war.

Briefly stated, such a fleet may be built around three primary peacetime demands for shipping in the United States: (1) Domestic shipping. Coastal and intercoastal shipping is flat on its back. It has never returned to the level of activity it enjoyed prior to World Wars I and II. It must be restored if our maritime potential is to be maintained. I would urge the extension of subsidy or some other form of government assistance to this type of shipping if for no other reason than it is an invaluable source of seamen and of the miscellaneous smaller auxiliary craft always so badly needed upon the outbreak of war. (2) The tonnage we must operate on certain ocean routes to guarantee a continuing supply of materials we do not produce at home—manganese, bauxite, tin, and other minerals,—coffee and sugar, if you like. (3) The tanker fleet. This, gentlemen, would be a considerable merchant marine. It would by no means put us out of the shipping business, and it would avoid cutting into the economic substance of our friends in Europe.

Our long-term requirements for merchant type shipping are more difficult to estimate. They will of course, be dictated by the nature of the war on the military front and by the rate and degree of mobilization of all our other resources. Thus, it is clear we will be granted time—within limits—to produce the additional shipping we may need, as our economy and manpower are more widely mobilized. No one can say with certainty what our shipping requirements will be in the event of a long war, just as no one can say where we shall be compelled to hold and where we may be able to go forward, but it is prudent to assume that military operations widely separated on the continents of Europe and Asia will have to be supported, as will our own civilian economy and the civilian
populations of certain of our allies. This bloc of shipping may surpass in tonnage all the Allied shipping of World War II.

But whatever these requirements may be, it must be emphasized that we cannot hope to satisfy them unless we preserve the shipbuilding industry in the United States. The know-how of building ships is indispensable to sea power. It is at once an art and a science, acquired patiently and painstakingly by those who practice it. A competent force of designers and technicians upon whom the industry may expand must be maintained in peace, if the demands of war are to be met. In my opinion, a peacetime Merchant Marine of the order I have described—coupled with our naval building, the maintenance of the reserve fleets, and certainly a program of “prototype-ship” construction—will provide us with such a force and serve to keep the shipbuilding industry in a healthy condition.

Gentlemen, I have by no means given you the entire picture of the Merchant Marine. The Department of Logistics will undertake a detailed study of many aspects of this subject I have simply touched upon; and Strategy & Tactics students will be afforded a resume' of that study later in the year.

What I have tried to do here today is simply to give you an insight into the relation between merchant shipping and national power as it has existed in the past, and to provide, if possible, some basis of policy for the treatment of other, smaller, maritime powers upon whose continued well-being our own best interests depend.

With much of what I have said, you may not agree. Indeed, I should expect you to question critically many of the arguments I have put forward. But, as you spend more time here at the War College, you will find—as I have—that one of its chief objectives is to encourage you to think things out for yourself.

That is also the purpose of these remarks.
BASIC ELEMENTS OF NAVAL LOGISTICS

A lecture delivered by
Captain H. E. Eccles, U. S. N.
at the Naval War College
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Napoleon's Russian campaign is the classic example of military disaster caused by the failure properly to estimate the logistic situation. Two striking examples of military defeat caused by a breakdown or interruption of logistic support are found in the fall of the Confederacy and in Rommel's North African campaign.

In World War II we have recently seen two examples of success built on the foundation of a vast trans-oceanic logistic system, Eisenhower's European campaign and the war in the Pacific. In each case unremitting pressure was made possible by a successful logistic support system. Many more examples can be cited to show the place of logistics in warfare, but none should be necessary.

For the last hundred and fifty years there has been a steady increase in fire power of all combat units. This, of course, requires an increase in the amount of logistic support required to maintain one combat soldier or sailor in the war zone. The present acceleration of this trend emphasizes the continuing need for a greater logistic efficiency and better understanding of the problem. There are two ways in which a logistic support system can break down: one, of course, is by enemy action, and the other is by its own inefficiency. Regardless of the cause of such breakdown, the result is always the same; it is always a marked decrease in combat effectiveness.

This discussion is not concerned with the strategy and tactics required to cut an enemy's lines of transport and supply. Rather it is concerned with a discussion of logistic efficiency. In World War

Captain Eccles is a member of the Naval War College Staff.
II, in spite of much waste and inefficiency, our logistic support systems worked. This, however, should not lead us to assume that a similar method will be satisfactory in a future war.

The basic situation under which we will fight will probably be entirely different: we shall have to fight in an economy of relative scarcity as opposed to the economy of plenty in which we fought most of World War II. In case of another war the United States will have to be prepared to undertake extensive overseas operations immediately upon the outbreak of war. We will not have the time to build up behind the screen of a so called “phoney war” and strong allies before we become actively engaged in combat. Also it is quite likely that the industrial plant of the continental United States will be physically damaged by enemy action. The extent of this damage is, of course, impossible to predict but extensive damage can easily be caused by long-range air bombardment, guided missiles launched from enemy submarines, or sabotage. Finally, the improvements in modern submarines pose an increasing threat to our lines of communications to our overseas forces and may have a serious effect on our imports of strategic raw materials. Because of these conditions we must search out every means of increasing our logistic efficiency.

As we look at the history of various engineering developments we find that in each instance major advances in efficiency have been based upon an increased knowledge of theory and principle. In 1903 Wilbur and Orville Wright, while they knew very little about the theory and principle of aerodynamics, were able to build an airplane that flew. However, the progress from 1903 to 1949 in both the internal combustion engine and the airplane itself have both been based primarily on an increased knowledge of the theories and principles of engineering and aerodynamics. And so it behooves us to seek an understanding of logistic theory and principle in order that we may improve our logistic efficiency.
First comes the question of the definition of Logistics. Just what is Logistics? There are many definitions, some of them quite long and detailed. For example, there is the definition given by Doctor Duncan S. Ballantine in his book, "U. S. Naval Logistics in the Second World War":

"In its broadest definition the term logistics signifies the total process by which the resources of a nation—material and human—are mobilized and directed toward the accomplishment of military ends. Officially naval logistics has been defined as 'the supply of material and personnel, including the procurement, storage, distribution and transportation of material, and the procurement, housing, training, distribution and transportation of personnel together with the rendering of services to Naval operating forces'."

The JCS definition currently effective is:

"That part of the entire military activity which deals with production, procurement, storage, transportation, distribution, maintenance and evacuation of personnel, supplies and equipment; with induction, classification, assignment, welfare and separation of personnel; and with facilities required for the support of the military establishment including construction and operation thereof. It comprises both planning and implementation."

In my opinion neither of these definitions is wholly satisfactory for our purpose of developing theory and principle, and therefore I offer instead a very broad general definition which has been derived from Colonel Thorpe’s excellent little book "Pure Logistics", published in 1917:

"Strategy and Tactics provide the scheme for the conduct of military operations; Logistics provides the means therefore."

In amplification of this we may consider that the means
for the conduct of military operations are MEN, MATERIALS and SERVICES.

Within the framework of this broad definition all the other more exact and precise definitions can be included. Furthermore, this broad, simple definition has the great advantage of relating Strategy, Tactics and Logistics.

In order to understand the importance of this relationship let me digress a moment. In the study of war we are interested in reality rather than in mere words; and, while words are necessary for us to formulate and exchange ideas, yet we must never feel that words in themselves have any reality. They are merely symbols and regardless of what symbols we use to express our formulation of this complex reality that we call war, the words themselves are merely the symbols or the means of conveying these ideas. In dealing with a reality which is as complex as modern war it is understandable that what any particular individual sees will depend very largely on his point of view. That is not a new thing because all through human life various people will look at the same thing and yet will give a different interpretation of the reality that they see in that object. In some instances the differences resulting from differences in point of view will be very marked; in other cases they may be minor, but differences always exist. For example, if we consider medicine and anatomy, doctors look at the human being in different ways depending on their specialty. If, for example, we ask in succession a nerve specialist, an orthopedist, or an eye, ear, nose and throat specialist to discuss human nature, behavior and weakness, we will find that quite likely there will be three different points of view expressed. In medicine we have the advantage of many years of study in the development of a precise, scientific terminology, but even then the discussions of the same thing will vary as these three specialists focus their attention on
different aspects of the same reality. We can easily realize that their difference in point of view in no way affects the reality of human nature and behavior.

And so as we look at war we each of us may see it in a different perspective. The strategist, the geopolitician, the logistician and the economist will all tend to emphasize different but related aspects. In war we do not have a precise and exact scientific language with which to express our ideas. In war we are dealing with many intangibles, intangibles of the human mind and the human spirit, and we are not in a position where we can make precise and controlled scientific experiments to further our knowledge of war. Therefore, we must expect that our four different points of view will produce four very different discussions of war.

As we study war we find more and more that it is necessary to develop broad and comprehensive understanding. Breadth of understanding implies understanding of the other man's point of view. The fact that we may have very different points of view in our discussions of war does not in any sense imply that war itself is different or that the difference in the way two individuals express their concepts of war indicate that one is wholly correct and the other incorrect.

A useful illustration of how logistics, economics and war are related is found in a sentence from a recent Munitions Board presentation:

"The logistic process is at one and the same time the military element in the nation's economy and the economic element in its military operations."

The understanding of any complex entity or subject requires a study of its structure. I consider that Logistics has a definite structure, that a knowledge of this structure is essential to a knowledge of the nature of Logistics and its relationship to
war, and I believe that substantial agreement as to this structure will be required before we can go very far in developing sound theories and principles of Logistics. So I offer the following formulation of structure for your consideration and criticism. Logistics is composed of fundamental elements and basic aspects. I consider that the fundamental elements are: The Determination of Requirements, Procurement and Distribution; the Basic Aspects are Organization, Planning, Execution and Supervision. No matter what our task may be in Logistics we will find these elements and aspects, and these elements and aspects blend and overlap in a manner which varies greatly according to circumstances. Every logistic problem starts with the determination of requirements; the next step is the procurement of these requirements; the final step is their distribution. No matter what element we are dealing with we must organize, plan, execute and supervise.

Taking up our basic elements let us first consider requirements. The determination of requirements is considered to be part of "consumer logistics", and as such is under military control. There are many factors in the determination of requirements, but the most important in my opinion are six in number. In the first place, all logistic requirements to be realistic must stem from specific strategical and tactical plans. The questions are: What combat forces must we provide for? Where are they going to be operating? When are they going to be operating? And in what manner are they going to operate? The civilian economy is very important because our entire military machine is based on a sound civilian economy. If we permit this civilian economy to disintegrate, ultimately this disintegration will spread with disastrous effects upon the combat forces. Therefore, in determining our national requirements we must be sure to provide for all the human and material needs of our civilian economy. This, of course, makes major additions to the demands upon our overseas shipping for the importation
of strategic materials. At the same time we must never forget that we have allies who must be supported, and that there are benevolent neutrals whose benevolence it pays us to insure by continued support to their economies. We should never forget that the military government of the occupied areas makes further imperative logistic demands and we must provide for them. In World War II we did not fully understand the necessity for this; for instance, in 1943 during the Italian Campaign the American Army operating in Italy was deprived of certain shipments of ammunition because the ammunition that had been scheduled to sail was cancelled in order to provide room for wheat for the civilian population of Italy. In the latter part of the war we overcame this deficiency and planned for our military government needs, but it was most embarrassing to the combat forces to find that ammunition had to yield to civilian food.

In all estimates of requirements we must ascertain the state of our resources in personnel, material, weapons and facilities, and correlate our data to arrive at the final estimates.

It is only when we have made this complete determination of requirements and compared it with the state of our resources that we are in a position to determine the manner in which logistic considerations may limit our strategical and tactical plans.

Next in the field of fundamental elements is the question of procurement. This comes under the heading of "producer logistics" and is generally under civilian control. Military procurement is based primarily on industrial mobilization, which is the orderly coordinated mobilization of all material and human resources of the nation for the most effective conduct of war. It requires expansion and establishment of production facilities, major conversion of production facilities, a very high degree of planning, and the formula-
tion and issuance of preliminary educational contracts which extend into actual trial production. Furthermore, industrial mobilization must always include consideration of the mobilization and allocation of manpower to industry. The Industrial College of the Armed Forces is a splendid institution which is primarily concerned with the study of industrial mobilization. In all matters of procurement we must at all times be fully conscious of the implications of lead time. Lead time may be defined as "the interval between the time of the decision to provide an item to the combat forces and the time such an item is delivered to these forces in adequate quantity and in reliable operating condition for use against the enemy." The reliable operating condition means that there is an adequate supply of trained personnel both for operation and maintenance. This question of lead time enters into almost every logistic problem that can arise in war, and its understanding is a matter of the most urgent importance to all officers. Lead time may vary from a few hours in the case of certain reserve materials which are in ready supply in the combat areas, to five or ten years for new types of ships or planes or other complex equipment.

The provision of reliable operating and maintenance personnel and spare parts is a very important factor in lead time. For example, in 1945 the Navy undergoing Kamikaze attacks off Okinawa was very much interested in obtaining airborne early warning radar. The Navy Department had developed and tested an airborne early warning system and yet the department refused to send it to the forward areas. That decision was perfectly correct because had this system been sent forward it would have been no real protection; rather it would have been a delusion or false protection, because at that time we did not have the personnel or know how to maintain it in reliable operating condition.
There is a further but narrower definition of lead time which is also important, and in this meaning it indicates the length of time necessary to package, ship and deliver to the combat forces materials which are in ready supply in the zone of the interior.

We come next to the element of distribution. Distribution is part of “consumer logistics” and it is primarily under military control. Distribution picks up where procurement leaves off and in this pick up there is a very high degree of overlap. Distribution normally extends from the depots and warehouses in the continental United States throughout the entire combat area up to the point where the bullet is placed in the gun or the beans in the mess kit of the ultimate consumer.

Transportation and distribution are almost synonymous. In this connection it is always well to remember that transportation must be responsive to the needs of the combat command. Again, lead time is important. The narrower definition of lead time given previously applies primarily to distribution.

Having discussed very briefly the fundamental elements we will now take a look at the basic aspects. First, as to organization—logistic organizations are large, complex and in many instances controversial. It is interesting to note that many of the controversies that existed in the Army in the period in which the general staff was developing had their roots in the logistic problems. Many of the arguments that are now taking place in Washington within and among the three services stem from logistic causes.

In actual size our logistic organizations are much larger than our combat organizations, and therefore no discussion of logistics can in any way be complete without consideration of organization. Organization is not a dead or static thing. Organization is a living thing, and as such it must be constantly re-examined and revised.
as circumstances dictate. In spite of the tremendous variety of
good organizations that exist there is usually found in any good
organization an adherence to sound and well understood principles.
If we are to depart from these principles (and such departure is
frequently warranted), we should do it with an awareness that we
are violating a principle rather than do it out of ignorance. Every
time you violate a principle of organization you pay a price; some­
times the payment of that price is worthwhile, but not always.

The commander of any force is always responsible for the
organization of his force and our commanders should be constant­
ly aware of the urgent necessity for maintaining our peacetime or­
ganizations in such form that there can be a swift transition from
peace to war without changing the essential structure of the organi­
zation. Peacetime logistics are relatively simple; in war they are
very complex. If for the sake of immediate economy we allow our
peacetime organizations to take a form which is unsuited for war,
when war comes, the commander himself will have to revise that
organization, and such revision will greatly intrude on the time
that he would greatly prefer to devote to strategic and tactical
problems of the most urgent nature.

When we consider the question of logistic planning we must
recognize the fundamental principle that strategic and logistical
planning are inseparable. No logistic plan has any value unless it is
based on the specific strategic plan, and no strategic plan has any
value unless it can be logistically supported.

The always present factor of lead time makes concurrent
planning mandatory. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are now so im­
pressed with the necessity for this concurrent strategic and logis­
tical planning that in their forthcoming “Joint Action Armed
Forces” they propose to say that strategic and logistical planning
must be concurrent and must precede tactical planning.
The final aspects are execution and supervision. Actually, it is hard to make an accurate distinction between these two, and therefore they will be considered together. It is well to remember that a good plan, well executed, is better than a perfect plan poorly executed. Therefore, we should not seek too much perfection in our plans, but should sometimes be prepared to say “Let well enough alone” and proceed with the execution in spite of known imperfections. In this connection let us remember the fact that a logistic plan in wartime acquires great actual physical momentum. A major operation requires the movement of hundreds of thousands of tons of material extending over many months and over many thousands of miles of land and sea. While it may be possible with good and flexible planning to change the direction or somewhat modify the timing of an offensive operation, it is very difficult to reverse its flow.

Perfection in planning can never be a substitute for imagination, initiative, judgment and determination in the execution of the plan.

Continued progress in planning and in the execution of plans will depend upon the analysis of results. In other words, logistic operations require the same careful analysis and supervision of the planned action as do purely combat operations.

Let us pass from the broad general view of Logistics to consideration of Navy Logistics. You are all familiar with the present organization of the Navy. It is excellently portrayed in the pamphlet “The United States Navy”, published by the executive office of the Secretary in 1948. If we examine the description and discussion therein we find that through the Civilian Secretaries and the Bureau system there is a high degree of civilian control of “Producer Logistics”. And we find that through the Chief of Naval
Operations, the Frontier, District and Fleet Commanders there is military control of “Consumer Logistics”.

All Naval planning stems from the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations and is in three general groups. The first stage plans consist of statements of missions and tasks. The second stage plans consist of the Basic Naval Establishment Plan, the Basic Mobilization Plans, the Basic Logistic Plan and the Strategic and Logistic Code plans. Finally, the third stage plans consist of the Supporting and Subsidiary Plans stemming from the Code Plans and the amplifying detailed plans prepared by the Commanders afloat and ashore who actually execute the plans.

This excellent planning method which evolved out of the experience of World War II provides a flexible, decentralized system which is in harmony with sound principles of organization and command.

Thus, we have a sound National Defense Organization and a sound Naval Organization and Planning system as a basic structure through which Strategy, Logistics and Tactics can be harmoniously related. There remains the ever vital task of educating our officers to understand and use the system.

This sound basic support planning system is put into actual execution through four related types of Naval operating organizations. These are: The Continental Shore Establishment, The Advanced Shore Bases, The Floating Bases and The Mobile Logistic Support Forces and Groups. It is through these organizations that the Naval Supply System distributes to the fleet the myriad of material supplies that are the lifeblood of our seagoing forces. It is through these organizations that the services and men are channeled to the fleet. These organizations are linked and fed by transportation systems both sea and air. And again for emphasis let me
remind you that transportation must be responsive to the needs of combat command.

A successful offensive requires and acquires momentum. Successful war is not a one-two punch, but rather a long succession of punches and the closer one punch follows the previous one the more the enemy is kept off balance, the less the losses of the attacker and the greater the losses of the defender. This timing is vital and is determined primarily by logistic considerations.

It is obvious that all fighting power ultimately rests upon logistic support which is derived from the land. Thus, while we recognize that ships are dependent upon the land, we must never forget that the fighting ship, more than any other military weapon, has within itself inherent mobility and a capacity for self-sustenance. Hence, many combat operations can be conducted with the initial load of supplies that the ships themselves carry. However, sustained fighting power requires sustained support. This sustained support which gives real combat mobility to our Naval forces is provided through the coordination of our Shore Establishment, Advanced and Floating Bases and our Mobile Logistic Support Forces.

The use of the Task Force Type of Organization provides us with great flexibility; therefore, forces can be constituted, assigned missions and provided with adequate attached logistic support merely by a simple dispatch.

We must never forget that the Fifth Fleet was able to fight off Okinawa for 90 days supported entirely by the Mobile Logistic Support Force, Service Squadron Six, and that it was this support that made that sustained fighting power possible.

Summing up this greatly simplified discussion of basic Naval logistics, let me re-state my structural formulation.
Strategy and Tactics provide the scheme for the conduct of military operations; Logistics provides the means therefor.

The means of war are Men, Materials and Services. The Fundamental Elements of Logistics are the Determination of Requirements, Procurement and Distribution.

The Basic Aspects are Organization, Planning, Execution and Supervision. In all cases these elements and aspects blend and overlap in a manner and degree which varies according to circumstances. When properly integrated with strategic and tactical considerations they combine to form a sound and harmonious structure of flexible, mobile, and sustained fighting power.
WHAT GOES ON HERE

An article by
Payson S. Wild, Jr.

Americans, like most human beings, recoil at the thought of war, and the idea of another war, a World War III, seems repulsive beyond description. However, here and there in our country, there are voices which are saying that we should engage in a so-called “preventive war” against Russia. Some of these voices are scarcely raised above a whisper, but the mere fact that a conflict against the Soviets is being urged at all is of considerable significance. Because this subject is so highly explosive, it might be argued that it should be kept under cover, but in a democracy such as ours, experience indicates that it is healthier to bring a discussion out into the open where it can be appraised on its merits rather than to treat it as something “hush-hush.” Therefore, let’s face up to the issues involved, however unpalatable they may be, and let’s bring the problem out into the daylight where a more careful examination is possible.

Why Some People Favor a “Preventive War”

The premise of those who favor our making war against the Soviet Union in the near future is a very simple one, namely, that war between the United States and Russia is inevitable anyway, so why shouldn’t we fight when the odds seem favorable to us? Proponents of a “preventive war” on our part maintain that the Communists, and this includes the Soviet leaders, believe that a war to the finish between communism and capitalism must come sometime and that according to the philosophy of communism, the in-

Professor Wild is Professor of Government and Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Harvard University. This article is a reprint of Prof. Wild’s article as it appeared in the June 1949 issue of Woman’s Day. Prof. Wild served for many years as Associate for International Law at the Naval War College.
terests of a Communist state and those of a non-Communist power are irreconcilable. Therefore, since peaceful coexistence between Russia and the United States is impossible from the point of view of the Kremlin itself, it behooves us, says the “preventive war” school, to prepare now for the showdown and to attack when it suits us and not the Communists.

Those who would have us launch the war first thus cite the Communist texts on the inevitability of war between the rival ideologies and also the statements of Russian officials to the effect that capitalism is an enemy which must be vanquished by force. The violent anti-American tone of the Russian press and radio, the war-like speeches of the high Soviet command and the constant stream of denunciations of the West pouring from behind the Iron Curtain all indicate, it is alleged, that the Soviet Union is convinced that the “cold war” must get really “hot” in the future. Analyzing Soviet psychology and reasoning, “preventive war” supporters declare that the basic strategy of communism never changes and that this strategy is based on the assumption that capitalist nations and the capitalist class must in time be liquidated by violence and war. That, it is maintained, is the ultimate goal of Russian Communist thinking.

Furthermore, say such supporters, we should not be deceived by day-to-day changes or modifications in Communist tactics. When it seems advisable or convenient, the Russian government may talk peace or make concessions and Stalin may utter soothing words or agree to treaties which contain appealing phrases but all this, it is asserted, is just a matter of expediency and temporary adjustment which does not alter the hard core of Communist strategy built on the doctrine of an ultimate war to the finish.

The Russians, therefore, will not hesitate to attack us, say the “preventive war” people, when they feel that they are ready. And when will they be ready? Here’s where the atomic bomb comes
into the argument. Back in 1945, just after Hiroshima, the scientists estimated that it would take the Russians from three to five years to produce an atomic bomb of their own. Nearly four years have passed since then and time is growing short, if the estimates are correct. Nowadays, some atomic experts say it may be 1952 or 1953 before the Russians can produce the bomb with any degree of success, but what will happen when the American monopoly comes to an end? At that point, say those favoring a "preventive war," our present advantage stemming from our sole possession of the bomb will be gone and we shall be at the mercy of the ruthless disciples of Marx and his class-war school who will not hesitate to obliterate our cities when they deem themselves ready.

Therefore, it is argued, why should we not attack fairly soon before the Russians get the bomb and prevent them from waging war on us at a later time? That's why there is talk of a "preventive war," a war to forestall a later Soviet onslaught which, it is declared, is bound to come at some point. This argument is buttressed by references to the Russian stand on the international control of atomic energy in the United Nations. If, it is asked, the Soviet Union genuinely desired peace, why didn't she subscribe to the plan for placing all fissionable material under the direction of an international agency, as proposed by the United States and all the non-Communist members of the United Nations, thus removing atomic energy from the authority of any national government? Soviet opposition to international control and Soviet insistence on freedom to manage atomic energy plants on her own, proves, it is claimed, that Russia wants to stock-pile bombs for her own purposes, which include a war against us when she thinks the time is ripe.

Believers in a "preventive war" go on to describe what they think the situation will be like once the Russians acquire the bomb. They predict that it will be a time of almost unbearable tension. We shall be living in a war atmosphere, they say, with the threat of
terrible destruction hanging over us. Because there seems to be no adequate defense against an atomic bomb attack, the advantage lies with the attacker who will endeavor to destroy or paralyze his foe before the latter has a chance to retaliate or rally for a comeback. Unlike 1917 or 1941, we shall not have time, it is said, to mobilize in a relatively leisurely fashion. To forestall the dreadful consequences of being attacked in an atomic war, each side will be under an almost overwhelming temptation to make a surprise attack first, it is declared, and with the Russians in possession of the bomb, we shall be at the mercy of the Russian Communists unless we destroy them first.

The logic of the “preventive war” school is thus clear: the Communists will make war on us sometime, believing as they do that such a war is inevitable, and are holding off until they acquire the atomic bomb and find the moment auspicious for their purposes. If that is the case, then why shouldn’t we move up the time for the war while we alone have the bomb and in the name of our own self-defense strike while we have superiority instead of remaining passive while they prepare to hit us at their convenience?

It is argued, however, that the United States, as a democracy with a Constitution which requires a vote in Congress before we can legally make war, is not the kind of nation which can wage a “preventive war,” that is, a war in which we suddenly attack on our own initiative. To this the “preventive war” people reply that (1) the President and the military establishment should go ahead anyway and take quick military action without a delayed build-up in public opinion and in Congress, explaining the reasons later, and (2) the Russians are taking advantage of our good nature and our democratic ways. They know, it is claimed, that despite their belief in an inevitable armed clash, we are not the sort of country which will unleash an unprovoked attack. Our very virtues are our undoing, it is asserted; therefore, in dealing with a dictator-
ship which can operate with speed and which can go to war without consulting the people of Russia, we should, it is urged, be prepared to move swiftly ourselves and thus surprise the Soviet rulers who are counting on our hatred of war and our reluctance to attack first as a means for allowing them to “blitz” us at a time of their choosing.

What Opponents of a “Preventive War” Say

The arguments against the “preventive war” philosophy fall into at least three main categories. One stresses the difficulties of a “preventive war” purely from the military point of view, a second challenges the assumption that war is inevitable and a third maintains that military force by itself cannot eradicate the menace of communism. Involved in the second and third arguments is really a fourth, namely, the point of view of morality which questions the right to bring on deliberately the horrors, death and destruction of war on the grounds of a hypothesis, the hypothesis or assumption that war is inevitable when that hypothesis cannot really be proved.

Taking up the military problem first, critics of the “preventive war” idea assert that its advocates seem to assume that defeating Soviet Russia would involve merely tossing some atomic bombs on Russian cities and that after that, the Soviet Union would cry quits and sue for peace. The attitude that victory over Russia could be gained in this fairly easy and relatively effortless fashion is seriously questioned, however, by many experts, both military and civilian, who have studied the problem. In the first place, these experts say that Russia is so vast and the dispersion of industry and resources is on such an enormous scale that atomic bombing of certain cities would be insufficient for a knockout blow. Furthermore, it is claimed, at the first sign of attack the Russian army would sweep over Western Europe and ensconce itself in virtually every corner of that continent. Would we then drop atomic bombs on Paris,
Brussels, Rome and other cities inhabited by peoples friendly to us in order to disrupt Russian military establishments? That would be a tough question to decide.

Above all, say the experts, the war could not be won by bombs alone. In the last analysis, it is troops which would have to support air attack and carry the day by actually defeating the armed forces of the enemy. Therefore, so goes the argument, we should have to be prepared to transport armies overseas, land them in Europe, and smash the Soviet military machine in direct combat. In other words, if the Soviets occupied Europe, we would have to have another “D-Day” all over again and would have to challenge a powerful foe well entrenched behind the Atlantic sea wall. Even if resistance in the West prevented the Russians from smashing immediately to the ocean, huge American reinforcements would have to be ready for fighting in Europe. The experiences of both Napoleon and Hitler in trying to conquer Russia are cited as evidence of the extreme difficulty which might be encountered if an attempt were made to invade Russia itself, a land which stretches thousands of miles from Poland across Siberia to the Pacific.

Then, say the “preventive war” opponents, suppose Russia is vanquished, suppose that even air attacks brought about Soviet peace overtures, we would still have to send a huge army of occupation to insure Russian compliance with our peace terms. Equipping and maintaining the large armies needed both for war and for occupation would, it is claimed, strain the American economy to the utmost. Our way of life would be transformed; we would have to become, state some experts, a military nation, with our manpower and industry geared to the needs of a titanic military establishment. Our relaxed, democratic ways, our production of civilian goods, our peacetime pursuits would all disappear under the harsh necessity
of supporting naval, ground and air forces capable of subduing a powerful enemy and of holding him down afterward.

A “preventive war,” therefore, is not something to be entered upon lightly. Those who have misgivings about such an enterprise emphasize the tremendous problems involved and stress what such a war would do to our democracy. They declare that a war against Russia could not possibly be worth the carnage, devastation and ruinous economic burdens entailed and suggest that it would be such a disaster in so many ways that it should be thought of only as a last resort when absolutely no other alternative giving us a chance for survival seemed at hand.

Is War Inevitable?

Next, fault is found with the assumption that war with the Soviet Union is inevitable. Those not in sympathy with the “preventive war” point of view sometimes concede that war is possible and that Communist ideology stresses the inevitability of a showdown fight between communism and rival ideologies. They may admit also that Russian behavior since 1945 has appeared to be belligerent and non-cooperative. However, the opposition believes that there is a chance, and not a slender one at that, that the Soviet system can be halted without a war. It is pointed out that the Kremlin leaders have pushed ahead whenever the going looked easy, as in Eastern Europe, but that they have hesitated and acted cautiously when confronted by formidable power. This line of reasoning maintains that the Communist bosses are realists and, unlike Hitler, are rational; that is, they will not go adventuring if the odds look so great against them that they might lose. Therefore, it is contended that if the United States and like-minded nations build up a power coalition which out-balances the U. S. S. R., the Russians will be deterred from attacking, should they be so minded, and will refrain from pressing matters to the breaking
point. Furthermore, there are some who believe that the U. S. S. R. has no aggressive designs whatsoever and that Russian moves since 1945 have been primarily defensive anyway.

The concept of a power alignment offsetting Russian power as a means of inducing the Soviets to refrain from warlike actions, if they have any such intentions, underlies the whole American policy of “containment” as expressed in the Truman doctrine, aid to Greece and Turkey and the Atlantic Pact. The hope is that the prospect of being confronted by superior force will remove any temptation on the part of the Communists to engage in an all-out war. Reinforcing this view is the claim that the Communists themselves are in no hurry, believing as they do that time is on their side and that no exact timetable of conquest on Hitler’s model is necessary, and that if we can hold firm indefinitely, they can be contained indefinitely. Thus, in time, they will come to accept the fact, it is said, that they must adjust to a situation in which a larger measure of cooperation is the only alternative to a hopeless war. Isn’t it better, ask the “preventive war” critics, to proceed on these lines and to take the chance of averting war in this fashion, than to provoke hostilities deliberately and bathe the world in blood on the basis of an unproved assumption that such a holocaust must come anyway?

What happens when the Russians get the bomb? Here again the opponents of a “preventive war” admit that there will be severe tension and considerable danger. But, it is said, we have such a head start and will have so many more bombs available than they at any given point, that they will not be assured of any easy success should they decide to unleash a surprise attack. Provided we disperse our atomic resources so that we could survive an initial blow with considerable stores of bombs left for a counterattack, the Russians would have to reckon with a retaliatory onslaught, the
thought of which, it is asserted, ought to operate as a fairly effective deterrent. Thus, if we build up power on our side, and prepare sensibly for a possible surprise blow against us, we should, it is argued, be able to convince the Russians that war would be too dangerous for them. In time, then, they would have to settle down and recognize that the goal of world communism was impossible of achievement without risks which would appear overwhelming. Above all, say those opposed to a "preventive war," by avoiding hysteria and provocative measures which could goad Russia into belligerent countermoves and by keeping the diplomatic situation fluid, with room for negotiation, we can, with careful leadership, arrive at a stable relationship.

A "Preventive War" and Communism

A third major argument against a "preventive war" is that even if it were successful in destroying Russian military power, it would not eliminate communism. In fact, some declare, such an attack by us would stimulate its growth. The contention is that communism is an idea which appeals to people who are in distress and who are dissatisfied with existing conditions, and which thrives on disorder and chaos. Therefore, the claim is, unless we help to improve the lot of millions throughout the globe who see in communism a chance to alter a state of affairs which they consider unsatisfactory, we shall not win them as converts to our cause.

Difficult as it is for us to realize, communism as an idea, it is pointed out, has an appeal for the impoverished and the dispossessed who long to improve their status. The reality of communism in Russia and in the satellite states is one thing but to people in Asia, Africa and the Near East who hear only the Communist promises of education, of more material goods, of medical care and of "freedom" for the masses, the dream of communism has a drawing power which, it is maintained, can be counteracted
best by our showing that our way offers at least as much and a lot more. Those who do not countenance the thought of a “preventive war” insist, therefore, that a military conquest of Russia would not eradicate the roots of communism which flourish in discontent and misery. We would still, after victory, have to take care of the populations who have proved susceptible to communist propaganda. And a war, it is stated, would increase the unrest and reduce the standards of living making more friends for communism than ever.

We and the Communists are struggling to capture men’s minds. Military means alone, say the foes of a “preventive war,” do not win out in this psychological struggle: you can’t spread democracy by bayonets and machine guns. If we attacked Russia first, wouldn’t we, it is asked, play right into the hands of the Communists who would say, “See, we told you those capitalists were warmongers who don’t care about human welfare and who don’t shrink at wholesale slaughter”? How would we look to the rest of the world?

Alternatives to War

Ideas and ideals have tremendous power in themselves, and military force by itself is sterile, as Hitler’s efforts to win conquered populations by repression alone has shown. Hence, say those condemning a “preventive war,” it is up to us to prove that democracy is better and has more to offer materially and morally than communism, and we can’t do that solely by a display of armed might. Creating a defensive military alignment to hem in Soviet expansionism may be a necessary step but, it is alleged, this is largely a negative measure which must be coupled with a positive policy of outbidding the Communists in terms of benefits and ideological appeal. Communist ideology will be beaten, therefore, not by force but by a better ideological and material offensive on our part, it is claimed.
At this point, "preventive war" opponents call attention to the fact that we Americans are really revolutionaries in the modern world. Peoples everywhere have been stirred by our accomplishments. They want what we have to offer and can produce. American movies and the gadgets such as cigarette lighters, wrist watches, fountain pens and knives carried by our GI's to all corners of the earth have, for example, created a demand for such items by populations everywhere. These peoples are not content with their present material standards and are demanding and pressing for a share of the wonders which the United States has on display. The United States has created a global ferment and the Communists in many instances have capitalized on this unrest by promising to fill such wants. But Soviet production is now unequal to the task. An imaginative America, it is declared, can take the initiative from communism by sharing our "know how" and turning our technical skill in the direction of assisting others to participate more fully in the benefits to be derived from our type of enterprise under democratic auspices.

Instead of waging war to beat communism, it is argued that we can come out on top, through skillful diplomacy and by adding a program of economic and social welfare to our defensive military arrangements. In this fashion, say the exponents of this position, we may avoid the horrors of war, and assume an unassailable type of leadership in world affairs which will win us firm friends and pull the props out from Communist arguments. To attack Russia first would mean, according to this thesis, that we would sacrifice our moral hold on men's minds and would enable the Communists to call us selfish imperialists bent on global supremacy for the sake of profits and power. In line with this argument, Mr. David E. Lilienthal, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, said recently, "There are those among us who have been bewitched by the atomic bomb. . . . But it is important for us to recognize that
neither the atomic bomb nor any form of power ... constitutes the true source of American strength ... That source is our ethical and moral standards of precepts and our democratic faith in man. This faith is the chief armament of our democracy. It is the most potent weapon ever devised.”