

UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II

The War Department

CHIEF OF STAFF:
PREWAR PLANS AND
PREPARATIONS

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powers, and (b) a simultaneous attempt to expand Japanese influence in the Philippines."²⁶ The studies were to assume that Germany, Italy, and Japan would be joined by alliance, and that non-Fascist European nations would remain neutral so long as their own colonies in the Western Hemisphere were unmolested.

The explorations by Army and Navy planners began promptly. By January 1939 Col. (later Brig. Gen.) Frank S. Clark and others had completed a draft which, as stipulated by the instructions, recognized the alignment of America's eventual enemies, and likewise expressed doubt of active British support until British trade or territory should be affected. This early draft by Army members also denied, rather surprisingly, that loss of Guam or the Philippines involved anything which America now recognized officially as vital American interests:

If the American government and people had so considered, they would never have consented in the Washington Conference to put the security of those possessions in pawn to the mere good faith of Japan, which even in 1922 was not on an irreproachable plane. If they had so considered, the Japanese denunciation of the Washington treaties would have instantly been followed by the impregnable fortification and garrisoning of the Philippines and Guam. If they had so considered, the Philippine Independence Act would never have been passed. . . . Whether right or wrong, they have successively undermined the possibility of successful defense by the Army and Navy of these possessions.²⁷

But the draft recognized also that even though defense of the western Pacific would prove impossible, there might be a public demand that it be attempted. The inability to defend both oceans simultaneously was stated, and—impressively enough when one considers the traditional emphasis on Pacific defenses—the Army's first draft recognized that the nation's greater interest was in the Atlantic and Caribbean.²⁸ It is of interest to note in the approved study several bold harbingers of what would be firmly stated as a national policy a great deal later:

In the event of such a concerted aggression there can be no doubt that the vital interests of the United States would require offensive measures in the Atlantic against Germany and Italy to preserve the vital security of the Caribbean and the Panama Canal. If this is done it will be necessary to assume a defensive attitude in the Eastern Pacific. . . .

Active aggression by Germany and Italy would appear to be possible only if the United States naval forces are inextricably committed to operations in the Western Pacific. . . .

²⁶ Memo, Secy JB for Joint Planning Committee, 12 Nov 38, sub: Study of Joint Action in Event of Violation of Monroe Doctrine by Fascist Powers, JB 325, ser 634.

²⁷ Exploratory Studies in Accordance with JB 325, ser 634, initialed by Col. Clark, Sec. IV, pp. 3-4. The exact authorship of this study, one of several bearing the identical title, but with varying contents (this one is distinguished by the FSC initials), has not been determined, but markings indicate its origin in WPD prior to 25 January 1939.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Sec. VI, pp. 9-10, and Sec. VII, pp. 9 and 22.

maintaining there forces insufficient to provide a respectable defense. In 1933 when General Embick, then a brigadier, was commanding the harbor defenses of Manila Bay, he wrote his protests against serious reliance upon the Orange Plan of that day, because of twenty-five years' "progressive weakening of our military position in the Philippine islands." He proceeded:

As a result the Philippine Islands have become a military liability of a constantly increasing gravity. To carry out the present Orange Plan—with its provisions for the early dispatch of our fleet to Philippine waters—would be literally an act of madness. No milder term can be employed if facts are squarely to be faced. In the event of an Orange War the best that could be hoped for would be that wise counsels would prevail, that our people would acquiesce in the temporary loss of the Philippines, and that the dispatch of our battle fleet to the Far East would be delayed for two or three years needed for its augmentation.

He urged a re-examination of military policy with respect to the islands and recommended, in light of the feeble defenses then available, the withdrawal of military and naval establishments to a peacetime strategic frontier of Alaska-Oahu-Panama, in its purpose strikingly suggestive of the withdrawal to the 180° meridian which WPD itself advocated seven years later. In his indorsement of General Embick's study, Maj. Gen. E. E. Booth, then commanding general in the Philippines, added his own warning against the vulnerability of a weak garrison in the islands.⁹ The following year brought about a statement of policy that recognized the relationship of defense to availability of funds, and not much more:

Depending on the availability of funds, the War Department desires to keep up existing strength, both in personnel and materiel, in the Philippines, and in particular to provide adequate protection for the harbor defenses of Manila Bay, but to go to no further expense for permanent improvements unless thereby ultimate saving will result.

This dubious declaration, approved by General MacArthur who then was Chief of Staff, was repeated verbatim in 1936 in a WPD declaration, again in 1939 in that year's revision of the Philippine Defense Project, again in 1940 in a WPD summary for the Chief of Staff and, in abbreviated form, in a WPD recapitulation of U. S. policy between 1922 and 1940.¹⁰ The 1939 protest of WPD against incon-

⁹ Memo, Gen Embick for CG Phil Dept, 19 Apr 33, sub: Military Policy of U. S., and 1st ind by Gen Booth, 25 Apr 33, both in WPD 3251-15.

¹⁰ (1) Memo, ACoS WPD for CoS, appd by CoS, 5 Apr 34, WPD 3251. (2) Memo, Lt Col J. H. Cunningham for Col Walter Krueger, WPD, 14 Jul 36, sub: Phil Def Policy, WPD 3251-17. (3) Memo, ACoS WPD for CoS, 21 Aug 39, sub: Mil Policy in the Philippines, WPD 4192, accompanied by an undated memo on this subject bearing corrections signed "G. C. M." (4) Memo, ACoS WPD for CoS, 10 Oct 40, sub: War Dept Policy on Defense of the Phil Isl, WPD 3251-37. (5) Memo, WPD for CoS, 14 Aug 41, sub: Reinforcement of the Phil, WPD 3251-55.