

COORDINATING ROOKS AND BISHOPS:  
AN INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE JOINT ARMY AND NAVY BOARD,  
1903 - 1919

A Thesis

by

JASON ROBERT GODIN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2004

Major Subject: History

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## ABSTRACT

Coordinating Rooks and Bishops: An Institutional History of  
the Joint Army and Navy Board, 1903 - 1919.

(August 2004)

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This thesis examines the formative years of the Joint Army and Navy Board, 1903 to 1919. It serves as an institutional history, focusing on the function of the interservice coordination body. The Joint Board is examined within the context of formulating American military strategy and U.S. diplomatic affairs from its creation in July 1903 to its reconstitution in 1919.

At present no comprehensive historical study exists focusing on the Joint Board. Currently, interservice cooperation and coordination during this period receive no more than peripheral analysis in war plan studies. Thus, this work begins the first comprehensive history of the precursor to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This thesis analyzes the origins and creation of the Joint Board, the Board's basic duties and responsibilities, and Joint Board actions as they impacted U.S. diplomacy and

military strategy concerning the homeland and coast defense, the Caribbean and Cuba, the Panama Canal, as well as the Pacific and the Philippines. Within this geographical framework, this thesis explores the relation of the Joint Board to the Navy General Board and Army General Staff, the cooperation of the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy between the Spanish-American War and World War I, the impact of Joint Board actions on American civil-military relations, and the efficacy of interservice cooperation.

This thesis is based largely on unpublished as well as published primary sources, including the records of the Joint Board, Navy General Board records, Army War College Division records, and members' personal papers housed at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. In addition, secondary sources are used to place the Joint Board within the larger contextual framework of interservice cooperation, U.S. civil-military relations, and American military history during the early twentieth century.

For Meg

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As many historians know, their work first touches the hands of a select few before it finally reaches the hands of all. This process for me began with my thesis committee. First and most importantly, I wish to thank my advisor Dr. James Bradford. Your historical insights, blue editing pens, and personal encouragement have helped me so much along my journey towards being a professional historian. I look forward to continuing that journey with you.

Dr. Brian M. Linn found time during his Guggenheim Fellowship to provide me with invaluable contacts both at the Library of Congress and National Archives. I hope the source notes contained between these covers reflect the research breadth and depth you demanded and nourished. During my writing and research, Dr. H.W. Brands directed me in an independent study of a distinct American way of twentieth century wartime diplomacy. While that work helped broaden my historiographical understanding, it also reinforced for me the value of writing vividly and concisely. I give both these men the warmest of thanks.

In addition to the numerous librarians and staff at the Library of Congress and National Archives, a number of individuals deserve special recognition. Jeff Flaherty explained with remarkable calm the manuscript finding aids at the Library of Congress. At the National Archives, Tim Nennering photocopied on short notice invaluable Joint Board records that I could not read from College Station, and Richard Peuser directed me toward invaluable records on Joint Board membership.

Finally, I wish to thank my family. My parents Robert and Kathryn Godin provided - among other things - food, shelter and transportation during my two research trips to Washington, D.C. My sisters Brittany, Mary, and Hilary continue to show me the lighter side of life. To my in-laws Gregory and Barb Hite, I hope this is "doing it right." And to my wife Megan, who said "I do" last July in Minnesota and continues to sacrifice for the sake of my dream, this is dedicated to you. I love you always.

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Even in the early twenty-first century, complete cooperation and coordination between American military planners remains an unachieved goal. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), a formal consultative body accepted as the solution for integrating military services, has undergone significant structural revisions since its permanent establishment in 1947. The most recent reform - the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act - consolidated all military advising to the President solely with the JCS Chairman, suggesting service loyalties and ad hoc innovations still plague the institution.<sup>1</sup> Yet such functional issues are nothing new in American military history.

Civilian policymakers at the turn of the twentieth century created a consultative body mandated specifically to alleviate interservice acrimony encountered during the 1898 Spanish-American War. From its creation in July 1903 until its reconstitution in 1919, the Joint Army and Navy Board - more commonly called the Joint Board by its

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Style and format follow the *Journal of Military History*.

contemporaries - was the first formal attempt in American history to institutionalize cooperation and coordination between the military services. Like the JCS officers that followed them, members of the Joint Board formulated strategic recommendations for their civilian superiors through a process characterized by service parochialism and personal networking.

While the Board succeeded insofar as a forum that brought service military heads together consistently, the Joint Board was unable to establish a standard operating procedure for formulating military strategy. The early interservice consultative body dealt only with subjects sent to it by civilian policymaking authorities in the War or Navy Departments. Civilian policymakers looked for military strategy recommendations outside the Joint Board, often relying upon high-ranking individual officers and the recommendations of boards within their own services.

The intent of the author is to provide the first comprehensive institutional history of the Joint Board, specifically addressing the functional elements of the early interservice coordinating body. Using National Archives records of the Joint Board, Navy General Board, and Army War College Division, as well as the members'

personal papers housed at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., this work describes the origins and creation of the Joint Board, and analyzes the Board's basic duties and responsibilities as outlined by its civilian superiors. Secondary sources are also used to place the Joint Board and its decisions within a larger historical context of U.S. diplomatic history, previous American interservice cooperation, U.S. civil-military relations, and American military history beginning in the early twentieth century.

Following a brief overview of traditions in interservice relations during the latter half of the nineteenth century, special attention is then paid to homeland and coast defense, the Caribbean and Cuba, the Panama Canal, and finally the Pacific and the Philippines. Within such a geographical framework, it is clear that army-navy relations were predominantly harmonious when it came to the minutiae of military affairs. Joint Board members routinely reached consensus on matters dealing with the location of wireless telegraphy lines, the need for military preparedness, and military-led governments of U.S. insular possessions.

Joint Board recommendations concerning broad strategic matters, however, proved far more contentious and affirmed how narrow service interests and informal networking determined American military strategy. An analysis of meeting minutes and private correspondence reveals that the Army and Navy leaders disagreed vehemently over where to place specific insular naval stations, as well as which service should head their military governments at these locations. Individual admirals and generals instead used the Joint Board as a forum for advocating their own opinions, as well as policies already recommended by the consultative bodies within their own services. Chapters V (Defending and Managing the Isthmian Pass: The Panama Canal) and VI ("Broken Down Old Men:" The Pacific and Philippines) make these final points especially clear.

While historical attention has been given to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, at present no comprehensive study exists focusing exclusively on the Joint Board.<sup>2</sup> Currently, interservice cooperation and coordination during this period receive no more than peripheral analysis in war plan studies. The first historian to make any mention of the Joint Board was diplomatic historian Fred Greene in his January 1961 *American Historical Review* article "The

Military View of American National Policy, 1904-1940." Drawing from official Joint Board records and personal papers, Greene concluded that military planners developed war plans "in accordance with the position of the United States as they understood it."<sup>3</sup> Individual service perceptions of American foreign policy - rather than a unified army-navy opinion - shaped early twentieth-century American military strategy. Greene, however, barely mentioned the Joint Board within the article text itself, and specific references to the Board were confined to the footnotes.

A year later, military historian Louis Morton - most noted for his scholarship on World War II in the Green Book series - contributed a book chapter in 1962 on cooperation between civilian and military authorities. In *Total War and Cold War: Problems in Civilian Control of the Military*, Morton briefly traced the formative years of the Joint Board, a body which he termed the "lineal ancestor of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."<sup>4</sup> According to Morton, the coordination process "between the political and military elements involved in the formation of national policy" evolved slowly over time. The creation of the Joint Board came only after the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy first

established consultative bodies within their own services. During the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, the Joint Board "had the confidence of the President and enjoyed a large measure of prestige." Yet by April 1914 and the Woodrow Wilson presidency, the Board had become "unimportant." Due to the broad scope of the essay, Morton did not provide extensive analysis into why the Joint Board experienced such a dramatic decline in its influence.<sup>5</sup>

Morton contributed an important analysis on the Joint Board's procedures. He argued the Board was hampered by bureaucratic inertia over who was charged with deciding military strategy within the services, as well as how military policy was decided between the services. Civilian authorities clearly had an impact on the degree of coordination between the services. The index of Joint Board success or failure required an understanding of how much the civilian President as commander-in-chief acted upon the recommendations provided by the interservice body. Yet, like Greene, Morton did not fully explore in detail the impact the Joint Board had on the relationship between military officers and their civilian superiors, nor the specific factors used in calculating military strategy.

The question of why Joint Board decisions took the form they did was first addressed by Richard D. Challener. In his 1973 study titled *Admirals, Generals, and American Foreign Policy, 1898 - 1914*, Challener argued that American military planning lacked proper political guidance prior to World War I. Consequently, U.S. Army and U.S. Navy officers never understood clearly the political challenges facing their civilian superiors. According to Challener, however, the military planners could not be faulted solely for the absence of such political wisdom. During this time civilian policymakers sought to subordinate military officers, educating them to function apolitically. The failure of war plans to adequately reflect political realities thus rested largely with civilian superiors. As a result of such political isolation, personalities and informal personal networking among military officers prevailed as the dominant channel of accessing policy information.<sup>6</sup>

Challener and his conclusions on war planning remained unchallenged for roughly a quarter century until war plan studies began to place the onus primarily on military officers for the nature of war planning. Steven T. Ross argues in his 2002 work, *American War Plans, 1890 - 1939*,

that the organizational changes following the 1898 Spanish-American War proved ineffective primarily because of "unrealistic political assumptions." In analyzing the Joint Board's color-coded contingency plans, Ross concluded there was a failure "to take into account the actual national policies [of the United States] and those of designated foes." Joint Board plans were "often written in a political vacuum" because officers failed to comprehend the diplomatic situation facing their superiors.<sup>7</sup>

Like Ross, Edward S. Miller also highlighted the military aspect of interservice planning. Yet in his 1991 study on War Plan Orange, which remains the most comprehensive study of any war plan to date, he paid special attention to the system used in making American military strategy. Miller remarked that when it came to American war planning procedures in general

a laissez-faire attitude prevailed; competing ideas were encouraged and dissent was tolerated. Decisions were hammered out in clashes between army and navy, between rival naval staffs, and between individuals of aggressive or cautious bent. Informal practices were as important as bureaucratic structure.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike his predecessors, Miller recognized the significance of the two service consultative bodies, the Army General Staff and Navy General Board, in American war planning. He



argues that in addition to the sharp debates among the two service staffs, the characteristics of individual officers molded military policies - and the policy processes that went into making them - just as much as the Joint Board. Miller claimed there was a distinct "American Way of Planning" that stressed the importance of out-of-meeting interactions and the interservice alliances forged by those officers.<sup>9</sup>

In June 1955 historian Ernest R. May observed

military forces are the rooks and bishops behind the knights and pawns of diplomacy; although the rooks and bishops move less frequently, their role in the game is no less decisive. Before the executors of foreign policy can decide what the nation ought to do, they must learn from political and military experts what the nation is able to do. They must lay objectives alongside capabilities. . . .<sup>10</sup>

The Joint Board - both in theory and practice - reflected May's chessboard metaphor. Civilian "knights and pawns of diplomacy" demanded that professional military officers not only plan, but also recommended the projection of American military might as well. Yet when it ultimately came to coordinating these military "rooks and bishops," civilian authorities provided little or no political guidance. Military officers in both services were left to determine strategy based largely on their own individual perceptions

and the recommendations of their own services' consultative bodies. Ironically, when it came to defining and executing an interservice strategy between the Spanish-American War and World War I, American military strategies reflected a return to the traditional service loyalties and the ad hoc innovations practiced of the past. To fully understand such irony, one must first turn to the traditions of interservice relations in the United States prior to 1903.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Paul Y. Hammond, *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 184-5; Amy B. Zegart, *Flawed by Design: The Evolution of the CIA, JCS, and NSC* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 109-62.

<sup>2</sup> The current historiography available on the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) is both rich and extensive. The best source on the JCS and its impact on national policy are found in the *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff* series, a 6-volume institutional history published by the Office of Joint History (Wilmington: M. Glazier, 1979-1992). Also useful are Richard K. Betts, *Soldiers, Statesmen, and Cold War Crises* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), and Lawrence J. Korb, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

<sup>3</sup> Fred Greene, "The Military View of American National Policy, 1904 - 1940," *The American Historical Review* 66 (January 1961): 354-77. Direct quotation found on page 354.

<sup>4</sup> Louis Morton, "Interservice Co-operation and Political-Military Collaboration," in *Total War and Cold War: Problems in Civilian Control of the Military*, ed. Harry L. Coles (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1962), 133.

<sup>5</sup> Morton, "Interservice Co-operation," 132-6.

<sup>6</sup> Richard D. Challener, *Admirals, Generals, and American Foreign Policy, 1898 - 1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 403-5.

<sup>7</sup> Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1890 - 1939* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2002), 38, 177, 178. A listing of the various color plans listing is found primarily on page 38. Bracketed text is my own, added for clarity.

<sup>8</sup> Edward S. Miller, *War Plan ORANGE: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897 - 1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 9.

<sup>9</sup> Miller, *War Plan ORANGE*, 9-18, 77-85, 133-8, 180-8, 213-22, 267-75, 323-30.

<sup>10</sup> Ernest R. May, "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly* 70 (June 1955): 162.

## CHAPTER II

## TOWARD NEW MANAGEMENT:

## TRADITIONS IN INTERSERVICE RELATIONS, 1847-1903

Instances of cooperation and coordination between the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy predated the creation of the Joint Board by over half a century earlier. During the Mexican War (1846-1848), the services coordinated their operations to land forces, besiege, and capture the Mexican coast city of Veracruz in 1847. During the American Civil War (1861-1865) Union military and naval forces worked side-by-side in 1863 to defeat their entrenched Confederate foe at Vicksburg. Both campaigns involved generals and admirals acting amicably and in unison during amphibious operations. Yet such an ad hoc method of interservice action proved just one tradition of managing American military operations by the twentieth century.

Following the 1898 Spanish-American War, as the burden of administering a vastly expanded commercial empire increased, and service missions changed, civilian authorities also created a tradition of permanent consultative bodies. This shift toward new management occurred most noticeably within the individual services,

first with creation of the Navy General Board in 1900 and later in 1903 with the establishment of the Army General Staff. By 1903, the newly-founded Joint Board thus inherited two traditions of managing American military strategy: ad hoc innovations by individual officers and recommendations made by service consultative bodies.

At both Veracruz in 1847 and Vicksburg, Mississippi, in 1863, admirals and generals together successfully coordinated amphibious assaults and sieges against their opponent. Attacking in unison, commanding officers from both services achieved overall victory through an informal process characterized by harmony and unity.<sup>1</sup>

Yet early success in Mexico obscured two profound structural deficiencies in American military planning. For one, President James K. Polk quite literally assumed the commander-in-chief role granted him under the Constitution during the initial phases of the Veracruz campaign. The civilian President poured over theater reports personally, assuming the burdens of strategic planning without the company and guidance of any high-ranking military officers. In this regard, Polk "had every intent of being his own chief of staff and would use his cabinet members. . . as a kind of "operational plans" division."<sup>2</sup> Secretary of War

William Marcy and Secretary of the Navy John Mason found themselves performing supporting roles.

The Veracruz campaign also demonstrated how partisan political calculations hampered the efficient calculation of American military strategy. The civilian President considered military officers for the post of commanding general largely according to their political party loyalties. The Democrat Polk suspected General Scott and General Zachary Taylor - both supporters of the Whig Party - as dangerous to his political standing. Returning from the war as possible war heroes, both generals had the potential to spoil his reelection to the White House.<sup>3</sup> The potential for future commander-in-chiefs not to delegate or to decide command positions along partisan lines remained unresolved structural faults in American military strategy.

Following the Civil War, changes in service missions introduced additional needs for coordinating structures within the military branches themselves. Historian Walter Millis collectively termed these mission changes elements of a "managerial revolution." Policymakers concerned themselves with how best to organize and apply a nation's industrial might to best achieve national interests.<sup>4</sup> Unlike before the Civil War, Millis argued, civilian and

military authorities perceived fighting wars as the primary role of professionalized, military elites.

Historian Samuel P. Huntington elucidated Millis' managerial revolution theory further in his work *The Solider and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil Military Relations*. According to Huntington, maintaining efficacy now required that military leaders routinely plan and prepare for war during times of peace. The formulation of military strategy constituted a two-fold process. First, civilian authorities articulated national policies objectives; then, select military officers in their respective service staffs recommended strategic courses of action toward achieving such ends.<sup>5</sup>

A clear example of innovation towards this type of military management related to changes made in the primary mission of the U.S. Navy. By the early 1870s, the U.S. economy centered increasingly on overseas commerce. With the goal of continuing to achieve such wealth, senators and representatives began to raise new and fundamental questions concerning the future role of American naval forces and the need to defend national commerce. Both at the Capitol and in the Navy Department, the desirability of a navy able to project power abroad and protect American



shipping began to enter a discussion usually concerned more with coast defense. For the next twenty years, the heart of national defense once vested in forts and ironclads along the coast gradually advanced toward a "New Navy" composed of much larger battleships able to contend with opponents much further out at sea.<sup>6</sup>

The linkage between a military strategy of offensive naval force and American commerce found strong voice by the end of the nineteenth century. In his book *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660 - 1783*, published in 1890, and his later article "The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future" published in 1897, Alfred Thayer Mahan discussed the purpose, strategic objectives, and missions of modern navies. Mahan argued that throughout history the acquisition of commercial shipping constituted the very reason for having a navy. Using the successes and failures of various European nations for historical reference, he concluded that in order to gain and maintain significant national and economic strength, a nation required a navy capable of commanding the seas and projecting power in both peace and war. An essential component for commanding the sea was a chain of colonies abroad, specific points serving not only as commercial

entrepôt, but also as links of stations for fueling and repairing the steam-powered fleet.<sup>7</sup>

In "The Interest of America in Sea Power" Mahan argued for the practical applications of his theory. Instead of focusing on the protection of the coast as it had traditionally done, Mahan contended the U.S. Navy should instead advance away from continental shores, projecting its power globally and seeking a singularly decisive victory against a wartime naval foe. Meanwhile, soldiers would garrison the harbor fortifications necessary to secure protected naval bases while those few sailors not ordered out to command the sea would man torpedo boats used solely in a localized, coast defense role.<sup>8</sup> Through his pen Mahan helped secure the Navy an unprecedented position as the first line of American defenses. In addition, Mahan and his writings also introduced needs and a strategy that required greater management in both services.

The call for new administration quickly found an influential following among civilian and military circles. Admiral Henry C. Taylor, Naval War College president and eventually Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, proved a staunch adherent for cooperation between the services. A letter dated 27 April 1896 from Secretary of the Navy

William McAdoo to Taylor reveals that both desired army-navy cooperation in coast defense. That same year, Taylor sought the establishment of a centralized "Joint Board of the Army and Navy."<sup>9</sup> Although the idea failed to materialize immediately into any type of formal joint administrative organization, Taylor's ideas represented a profound ideological shift in the traditional management of military planning.

By 1898 the United States and Spain were at war. During hostilities the need arose again for soldiers and sailors to work together. Yet unlike the operations in Mexico and along the Mississippi River, interservice divisiveness characterized the Cuban campaign. Major General William R. Shafter believed that victory required - with naval assistance - first capturing the high ground around Santiago. In contrast, Rear Admiral William T. Sampson sought to attack forts guarding the Spanish squadron in Santiago harbor, in order to force a decisive battle at sea with the Spanish fleet. Both officers pursued their own strategy, and ultimately both translated into American military victory over Spain.<sup>10</sup> Yet the Cuban campaign led American civilian authorities to interest themselves not only in the strategic questions of what

positions to defend, but also the logistical concerns of how best to defend those positions with available military and naval forces. As American possessions following victory stretched from the Caribbean and Cuba across the Pacific to the Philippines, civilian policymakers concluded cooperation and coordination between the Army and Navy had to be not only found but maintained.

The process began with reform-minded individuals within the two services themselves. By 1900, searching for greater administrative efficiency, the undeterred Admiral Taylor argued for the gradual development of a navy general staff empowered to coordinate intelligence-gathering and war planning, duties up to that time assigned to the Naval War College and Office of Naval Intelligence. On 13 March, Navy Secretary McAdoo issued General Order 544 to establish the General Board of the Navy as an advisory body to the Secretary "to ensure the efficient preparation of the fleet in case of war and for the naval defense of the coast." Fleet preparation and coast defense were not the only tasks assigned to the General Board. It had numerous other tasks, among them studying the size and capabilities of foreign navies, recommending the locations as well as defense objectives for overseas bases, advising on the

desired size and disposition of the fleet, and war planning with the Naval War College.<sup>11</sup>

Recognizing who composed the naval consultative body proved especially key, as the legitimacy behind General Board recommendations stemmed in part from the reputation of its presiding officer. Members assigned to the General Board included George Dewey, Admiral of the Navy and head of the new naval consultative staff; Taylor, now leading the highly influential Bureau of Navigation; the Chief of the Office of Naval Intelligence and his assistant, as well as the Naval War College president and his assistant. In addition to being a war hero, Admiral Dewey retained a high degree of personal influence throughout the Navy and Capitol Hill following the war. Consequently, the early successes of General Board equated in part with the Admiral of the Navy's "prestige and authority."<sup>12</sup>

While Taylor called for reform in naval management, Secretary of War Elihu Root instituted similar administrative changes within the Army. The reforms began on 27 November 1901, when Root ordered the creation of the War College Board and charged it with studying military policy. The most profound army administrative change, however, occurred two years later with the 1903 General

Staff Act. Like the Admiral of the Navy in the General Board, an Army Chief of Staff headed a body of officers that not only administrated the Army, but also gathered military information and educated its officer corps on technical matters. To the War Secretary, the centralized Army General Staff acted like the brain, insofar as it planned and directed the body of the Army.<sup>13</sup>

By 1903, fueled by a mutual desire to avoid future interservice acrimony like that found during the Cuban campaign in the Spanish-American War, Secretary of War Root and Secretary of the Navy William H. Moody established the Joint Army and Navy Board through a series of identical general orders issued in late July 1903. Composed of the same eight officers assigned to the Navy General Board and Army General Staff, the Joint Board had a vague mandate. Its charter called for the body to meet "for the purpose of conferring upon, discussing, and reaching common conclusions regarding all matters calling for the cooperation of the two services."<sup>14</sup>

The repercussions from such a nebulous directive were serious. The original orders restricted all officers ordered to the Board to military advisors. With no statutory operational authority, admirals and generals had

little reason to forge a permanent interservice institution. In practice, Joint Board members found it easier to influence their civilian superiors through advising channels already in place, in this case the Navy General Board and Army General Staff. From the start, functioning outside the flawed confines of the Joint Board proved more efficient and effective approach in the formulation of American military strategy.

In the final analysis, the Joint Board from its inception inherited management traditions of individual networking among officers and recommendations made by service consultative bodies. Victories during the 1847 campaign at Veracruz and 1863 battle at Vicksburg led to an ad hoc method of interservice relations that continued into the following century. For military strategists, amicable personal relations between the admirals and generals made sense insofar as they translated into success.

In addition, from the Civil War until the dawn of the twentieth century, consultative staffs institutionalized what was once an informal process into a more formal procedure. Once individual service missions changed, relations between the services gradually evolved toward a greater degree of permanency. After poor interservice

relations marred the 1898 Spanish-American War and effective administration both within as well as between the services became a paramount goal, reformers such as Admiral Taylor and Secretary of War Root found support at the highest levels of government for creating permanent recommendation agencies like the Navy General Board in 1900 and Army General Staff in 1903. By 1903, as the reform impulse culminated with both civilian service secretaries' calling for a permanent Joint Board, U.S. military strategists were somewhat cool toward the unprecedented body, and continued traditional management practices.



## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Paul C. Clark, Jr., and Edward H. Moseley, "D-Day Veracruz, 1847 - A Grand Design," *Joint Forces Quarterly* 10 (Winter 1995 - 1996): 107-13; Charles Royster, *The Destructive War: William Tecumseh Sherman, Stonewall Jackson, and the Americans* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 110-4; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1989), 587.

<sup>2</sup> John S. D. Eisenhower, "Polk and His Generals," in *Essays on the Mexican War*, ed. Douglas W. Richmond (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1986), 42.

<sup>3</sup> Clark and Moseley, "D-Day Veracruz, 1847 - A Grand Design," 105-6; Eisenhower, "Polk and His Generals," 42; Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, rev. ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 148-9.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Millis, *Arms and Men: A Study in American Military History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 137.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 19<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 254-69.

<sup>6</sup> George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890 - 1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 9-12. For a more detailed account see also Mark Russell Shulman, *Navalism and the Emergence of American Sea Power, 1882 - 1893* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1995) and Robert Seager II, "Ten Years Before Mahan: The Unofficial Case for the New Navy, 1880 - 1890," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 40 (December 1953): 491-512.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660 - 1783* (1890; repr., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1987), 25-89.

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Thayer Mahan, "The Interest of America in Sea Power, Present and Future", listed as "Preparedness for Naval War," in *Mahan on Naval Warfare: Selections from the Writings of Rear Admiral Alfred T. Mahan*, ed. Allan Westcott, 128-34 (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 1999); J.A.S. Grenville, "Diplomacy and War Plans in the United States, 1890 - 1917," in *The War Plans of the Great Powers, 1890 - 1914*, ed. Paul M. Kennedy, 29 (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1979).

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Joseph Costello, "Planning for War: A History of the General Board of the Navy, 1900 - 1914" (Ph.D. diss., Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1968), 23, 39-40.

<sup>10</sup> Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire: The United States Army in the Spanish - American War* (1971; repr., College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 204-5, 244.

<sup>11</sup> H.C. Taylor, "Memorandum on General Staff for the U.S. Navy," *Naval Institute Proceedings* 26 (September 1900): 441-8; Costello, "Planning for War," 30-1.

<sup>12</sup> Steven T. Ross, *American War Plans, 1890 - 1939* (Portland: Frank Cass, 2002), 29; Costello, "Planning for War," 30-1. In addition to Ronald Spector's findings in *Admiral of the New Empire: The Life and Career of George Dewey* (1974; repr., Charleston: University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 122-3, Admiral Dewey's reputation is especially clear in letters written by Rear Admiral Taylor to Secretary of the Navy John D. Long. See Rear Admiral H. C. Taylor to Secretary Long, 28 March 1901 and 8 June 1901, in Gardner Weld Allen, ed., *Papers of John Davis Long, 1897 - 1904* (Norwood: Plimpton Press, 1939), 78:359, 78:368.

<sup>13</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 314-23.

<sup>14</sup> Navy Department General Order No. 136, 18 July 1903, Joint Board 301, Nonserial Documents, Roll 2, M 1421, Records of the Joint Board, 1903 - 1947, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington, D.C.; Army Headquarters

General Order No. 107, 20 July 1903, Joint Board 301, Nonserial Documents, Roll 2, M 1421, Records of the Joint Board, 1903 - 1947, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington, D.C. Admiral Dewey, Rear Admiral Taylor, Captain John E. Pillsbury, and Commander William J. Barnette represented the Navy, while Major Generals S.B.M. Young and Henry C. Corbin, and Brigadier Generals Tasker H. Bliss and Wallace F. Randolph represented the Army.

## CHAPTER III

## PROTECTING SHORELINES:

## THE HOMELAND AND COAST DEFENSE

The mission of securing American harbors and coasts from enemy attack has preoccupied military and naval strategists alike since the nation's founding. Following the War of 1812, continued fears of European naval forces assaulting important coastal cities led an 1816 board headed by French military engineer Simon Bernard to recommend Atlantic seacoast fortifications.<sup>1</sup> From northern cities such as Boston and New York southward to Charleston, South Carolina, the Army and Navy found themselves working together in the name of national security. Yet while these traditional fears and fortifications continued into the early twentieth century, the means to securing such national objectives changed in a profound way.

In the time period between the Confederate surrender at Appomattox and early years of the twentieth century, civilian authorities established several boards to assess the adequacy of American coast defenses. Interservice consultative bodies like the 1866 Harbor Defense Board, 1885 Endicott Board, and the 1904 Taft Board decided where

best to locate such naval stations. In the end, however, it was the Joint Board that determined how to protect these defensive areas.

Joint Board records reveal naval officers used the permanent interservice body as a primary channel for pursuing an unprecedented role in American coast defense strategy. While their army counterparts continued to argue for the U.S. Army's traditional mission of manning and managing fortifications, naval members of the Joint Board advanced a decisive battle strategy aimed at destroying enemy naval forces before they entered range of shore. From its inception in 1903 until World War I, the Joint Board found itself an important interservice forum that deliberated new preventative coastal measures for both the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard.

Coast defense concerns confronted by the Joint Board originated in strategic deliberations that started shortly after the Civil War. In March 1866, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles established a temporary Joint Army and Navy Board that considered, experimented with, and reported upon harbor defense measures. Commonly called the Harbor Defense Board, the body of army and navy officers functioned solely as a consultative body, reporting on

subjects submitted to it by the Navy Secretary alone. During its five-month existence, the main issue that confronted the Board was how ironclad vessels, channel obstructions, and torpedoes would be used "in existing or proposed forts and batteries."<sup>2</sup>

Actions taken by the Harbor Defense Board proved insightful for understanding methods used by the services in deciding overall military strategy. For one, the admirals and generals agreed on basic military operations. Through the findings of three subcommittees composed of one Army and one Navy officer, the Board members collectively predicated American harbor defenses on a combination of naval ironclad vessels, fortifications such as guns and batteries manned by soldiers, and coastal obstructions working in combination.<sup>3</sup> American security required a joint effort: the army manned harbor forts while the navy simultaneously defended the local harbor waters.

The Harbor Defense Board demonstrated a remarkable degree of army-navy corroboration. Military and naval officers together determined harbor defense recommendations with no reported incidents of interservice acrimony. Yet the final report highlighted two serious administrative challenges posed by the Harbor Defense Board's civilian

superior. For one, Navy Secretary Welles restrained the flow of technical information. On 9 March the civilian secretary issued orders to the Board and its subcommittees stating that they were "not to communicate with the Departments or with the Bureaus, or outside individuals, except through the Board, or in case of emergency, through the Chairman of the Board."<sup>4</sup> Board chairman Rear Admiral Charles H. Davis also impressed upon Secretary Welles the lack of necessary appropriations for experimentation.<sup>5</sup> Stripped of information and money, the army-navy body became little more than a forum for discussing the efficiency of harbor defense measures. By April 1866 the Harbor Defense Board concluded its work and dissolved.

Within twenty years President Grover Cleveland appointed a Board of Fortifications on March 1885. Headed by Secretary of War William C. Endicott, the consultative body commonly called the "Endicott Board" consisted of three army officers, three navy officers, and two civilians.<sup>6</sup> In their final report, the Board members stated that American seacoast ports - especially those located along the eastern seaboard - were dangerously vulnerable to foreign naval attacks. According to the members, commercial ports, as well as the foreign and

coastal trade flowing from them, needed more modern defenses. To this end, the Board concluded ports stretching from Maine to Virginia required stronger floating batteries coupled with an offensive naval arm. The estimated total cost of modernizing the fortifications equaled roughly \$126 million dollars.<sup>7</sup>

The Endicott Board fortification recommendations remained standard coast defense policy for the next twenty years. Following the Spanish-American War, as the United States accumulated new insular possessions, effective management surfaced as a general concern for all American bases. As a result, the Navy Department issued General Order 128 in May 1903, which outlined new naval districts and regulations for governing those districts. The provisions charged the Navy Bureau of Navigation with general supervision of all naval districts. In addition, Article 26 required the naval district Commandant "enter into a hearty cooperation with officers of both Army and Navy holding neighboring commands with the object of promoting the success of such military operations as may be in progress." Consequently, the Navy Bureau of Navigation Chief as well as the Army Chief of Artillery collaborated on coast defense. As before, interservice cooperation



continued as a major element in American homeland coast defenses.<sup>8</sup>

With coast defense locations predetermined by two previous consultative bodies, the Joint Board in its early years was left with responsibilities centered on how best to protect them. Interestingly it did not execute this task alone. The Board echoed location recommendations specified by separate, smaller army-navy boards. For example, in early April 1904 Admiral Dewey informed both civilian service secretaries that the admirals and generals advised supplying four hundred submarine mines for defense. The recommendation stemmed from an identical proposal advanced by the Fort Totten Torpedo Board in New York. Just like the Torpedo Board, the Joint Board recommended two hundred mines would go to the Atlantic coast at Fort Totten, New York, and the other two hundred mines would go to the Presidio in San Francisco, California, on the Pacific coast. These mines were to be stored at the two locations ready for placement at ports along the coast in time of need.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning in autumn 1904, however, the potential for greater Joint Board influence emerged as civilian leaders began discussing changes to Endicott Board policies. On 27

October 1904 the Secretary of the Navy ordered the Joint Board to consider and recommend possible policy modifications.<sup>10</sup> The Army Chief of Artillery proposed that any future Boards include naval membership. Story concluded "the navy has nearly an equal interest with the coast artillery," for an offensive naval strategy required freedom provided by strong coast defense.<sup>11</sup>

By 1905 deliberations on coast defense entered into full swing. President Theodore Roosevelt informed the Joint Board that he believed "harbor defenses can be completed effectively and satisfactorily with a much less expenditure of money" than previously recommended by the Endicott Board. Yet rather than tasking the Joint Board with finding a cost-effective solution, the President instead called upon his Secretary of War, William H. Taft, to formulate new coast defense policies. To this end, the President charged his Cabinet secretary with recommending cheaper harbor defense measures, as well as producing a prioritized list for unfinished harbor defense projects.<sup>12</sup>

Taft presided over a board composed predominately of high-ranking Army officers. In addition to Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Adna R. Chaffee and Assistant Army Chief of Staff Major General George L. Gillespie, what

became commonly called the Taft Board also consisted of Brigadier Generals Adolphus W. Greeley (Chief Signal Officer), William Crozier (Chief of Ordnance), John P. Story (Chief of Artillery), and Alexander Mackenzie (Chief of Engineers). The Navy had only two representatives assigned to the Board, Captains Charles M. Thomas and Charles S. Sperry. Major General George W. Goethals was the Board secretary.<sup>13</sup>

Following months of deliberation and study, the consultative body issued its final report on 1 February 1906. Forecasted within its first few pages were motives for an enemy to attack American coasts. Taft Board members concluded increased national commercial wealth made the United States "even more tempting inducements to attack." Technological advances in steam propulsion granted enemy vessels a distinct time advantage. In addition, eastern seaboard cities such as Baltimore contained concentrated center of railroads - the commercial lifelines of an industrial nation.<sup>14</sup>

In contrast to the Atlantic-oriented Boards that preceded it, the Taft Board emphasized the primary importance of Pacific coast defenses. Its members highlighted especially the need to maintain the Puget Sound

station in Washington. An extensive array of railroads, the Board concluded, gave Puget Sound "the greatest strategic and commercial importance." The area also contained developing agricultural and manufacturing market. In addition to its commercial benefits, Puget Sound protected the nearby Bremerton Navy Yard, and contained the only Pacific coast dock capable of taking a battleship.<sup>15</sup>

The final report provided a new strategic blueprint for coast defense in two ways. For one, it clarified harbor defenses "can not depend on the presence of any war vessel to resist naval attack." Second, the Board concluded that future harbor defenses, while still employing submarines, nonetheless required a military force and fortifications "sufficiently strong to repel and naval attack that may reasonably be expected on its own." In both instances, the recommendations were clear: the Army and its soldiers were now the primary service responsible for American coast defense. To meet the new policy, Taft and the other members prioritized entrances to the Chesapeake Bay, Long Island Sound, and Puget Sound as ports that needed to be defended most.<sup>16</sup>

The Taft Board immediately found a receptive ear in the White House. President Roosevelt reiterated many of the body's findings in a message to Congress. He stated

the necessity for a complete and adequate system of coast defense is greater to-day than twenty years ago, for the increased wealth of the country offers more tempting inducements to attack, and a hostile fleet can reach our coast in a much shorter period of time. The fact that we now have a navy does not in any wise diminish the importance of coast defenses; on the contrary, that fact emphasizes their value and the necessity for their construction. It is an accepted naval maxim that a navy can be used to strategic advantage only when acting on the offensive, and it can be free to so operate only after our coast defense is reasonably secure and so recognized by the country. It was due to the securely defended condition of the Japanese ports that the Japanese fleet was free to seek out and watch its proper objective - the Russian fleet - without fear of interruption or recall to guard its home ports against raids by the Vladivostok squadron. This, one of the most valuable lessons of the late war in the East, is worthy of serious consideration by our country, with its extensive coast line, its many important harbors, and its many wealthy manufacturing coast cities.<sup>17</sup>

Like the Taft Board, Roosevelt emphasized strong American commercial ports and harbors would surely tantalize newer, faster enemy naval forces. The imperative for a larger, offensive-oriented U.S. Navy gained even more momentum. Building better guns and forts proved major components in any national preparation for future wars.<sup>18</sup>

Not surprisingly, navy leaders on the Joint Board - who had found themselves largely on the outside looking in

during the Taft Board deliberations - used the interservice body as a forum for suggesting alternatives that involved greater naval influence. During the months of Taft Board proceedings, the Navy General Board advocated Army control of submarine mine defenses and Navy control of water traffic.<sup>19</sup> Within the Joint Board, a committee composed of Rear Admiral Richard Wainwright and Brigadier General W. W. Wotherspoon issued a final report outlining Army and Navy responsibilities in Defensive Sea Areas (DSAs). Both commercial and military reasons influenced the choice and final placement passageways. According to the proposal, the Navy would organize a piloting and control system for vessels both entering and exiting coastal port while the Army would be given the power to halt temporarily all port traffic - except armed naval vessels - for repairing submarine defenses. President Roosevelt approved the proposed regulations in May 1906.<sup>20</sup>

All future Joint Board proposals concerning coast defenses mirrored the Taft Board recommendations. By November 1907, Brigadier Generals Arthur Murray, W.W. Wotherspoon, and Captain John E. Pillsbury of the Navy General Board issued a final report that Coos Bay, Oregon required no mine defenses. The Joint Board subcommittee

concluded the poor quality of the coal stored there, and its distant location from the bay entrance, "render the risk of its seizure very doubtful."<sup>21</sup> The Puget Sound site emphasized in 1904 remained a primary component of Pacific coast defenses.

Concerns over Pacific shoreline security and Japan continued into the following year. In February 1908, Joint Board members considered transferring coast defense materiel to the Puget Sound station in Washington. Admirals and generals ultimately advised against such an action in the short-term. Facing decreased force numbers, large materiel transfers to the Pacific were given less precedence than Atlantic and Gulf defenses. The Joint Board figured present Army defenses "will be adequate if assisted by proper vessels of the Navy." With diminished hopes of obtaining the future appropriation requests made to Congress, the Joint Board recommended the Army prepare projects and the Navy begin plans for transferring coast artillery and vessels to Puget Sound "in case of war with a foreign power based in the Pacific becomes imminent." During the next five years defense of the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard became more important as it was expanded to include a large battleship dry dock.<sup>22</sup>

No discussion on coast defense occurred during Joint Board meetings for close to a decade. This proved of little surprise, for by World War I the Joint Board found itself with little influence. The most senior Joint Board members became increasingly involved with the war effort in Europe. In addition, the junior members downgraded its importance. Board secretary Captain H.S. Knapp affirmed his belief that interservice decisions could and were being made by the newly established Chief of Naval Operations and the Army Chief of Staff consulting directly with one another rather than going through the Joint Board. While Knapp concluded the Joint Board "should obtain from subordinate officers of the Army and Navy such assistance as they may need in arriving at decisions in the matter," the fact remained the Joint Board appeared to have lost its favor.<sup>23</sup>

Policymaking at this time confirmed the lack of Joint Board participation. Indeed, from late 1917 until early 1919 the Joint Board appeared simply as a rubber stamp to coast defense recommendations acted upon by civilian superiors. The Joint Army and Navy Board on Aeronautic Cognizance informed both civilian service secretaries that responsibility for placing non-controlled mines outside



DSAs belonged to Navy, while placing non-controlled mines inside the DSAs rested with the Army. The Joint Board, with little or no discussion, informed the secretaries of its approval. Both Secretary of War Newton D. Baker and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels approved the recommendation.<sup>24</sup>

From the Civil War until World War I coastal defense constituted an important part of overall American military strategy. The large institutional changes that civilian policymakers instituted throughout these fifty years required interservice cooperation. The Harbor Defense Board proved the first notable - albeit temporary - attempt to study and recommend coast defense modifications since the 1816 Bernard Board. Over the next half century, as the adequacy of American coast defenses again came into question, presidents such as Grover Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt formed interservice consultative boards. The Endicott and Taft Boards like the Endicott Board together decided where best to locate such naval stations.

Yet in the final analysis, protecting American shorelines from attacks proved a task extending beyond the Joint Board. When it came to determining how best to protect these defensive areas, the members of the Joint

Board found themselves part of a network of numerous interservice agencies involved in the deciding coast defense. Civilian service secretaries deemed recommendations from the Fort Totten Torpedo Board and Joint Army and Navy Board on Aeronautic Cognizance Records similarly as those put forth by the Joint Board. In the end, the admirals and generals of the Joint Board simply sanctioned such advice by issuing almost verbatim recommendations.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Emanuel Raymond Lewis, *Seacoast Fortifications of the United States: An Introductory History* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 37-8; Harold and Margaret Sprout, *The Rise of American Naval Power, 1776 - 1918* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1967), 100; Robert S. Browning, III, *Two if By Sea: The Development of American Coastal Defense Policy* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), 35-6.

<sup>2</sup> For the post-Civil War Army role, see Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 313; For the post-Civil War Navy roles, see Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People's Navy: The Making of American Sea Power* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 178; Board Journal, 1-8 March 1866, Records of the Joint Army and Navy Board, Entry 367, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Record Group 45, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as "Harbor Defense Board Report." Rear Admiral Charles H. Davis chaired the Harbor Defense Board. The remaining members of the Board were Rear Admiral John A. Dahlgren and Captain James Alden of the Navy, Major General J.G. Bernard, Brigadier Generals B.J. Alexander and Z.B. Tower of the Army.

<sup>3</sup> Harbor Defense Board Report, 2 April 1866.

<sup>4</sup> Harbor Defense Board Report, 9 March 1866.

<sup>5</sup> Harbor Defense Report, 2 April 1866; Correspondence, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to Rear Admiral Charles H. Davis, 14 July 1866, copied by hand in Harbor Defense Board Report. The Secretary was responding to a correspondence addressed to him by Admiral Davis the pervious day.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Board, 5, United States Congress, House of Representatives, *Report of the Board of Fortifications or Other Defenses Appointed by the President of the United States Under the Provisions of the Act of Congress Approved March 3, 1885*, House Executive Documents 49, 49<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1886), Congressional Information Service Microfiche, Washington, D.C., Serial 2395. Hereafter cited as "Endicott Board

Report." Members of the Endicott Board included Secretary of War William C. Endicott; Brigadier General Stephen V. Benét, Army Chief of Ordnance; Brigadier General John Newton, Army Chief of Engineers; Lieutenant Colonel Henry L. Abbot, Army Corps of Engineers; Captain Charles S. Smith, Navy Ordnance Department; Commander W. T. Sampson, USN; Commander Caspar F. Goodrich, USN; Mr. Joseph Morgan, Jr. of Pennsylvania; and Mr. Erastus Corning of New York.

<sup>7</sup> Endicott Board Report, 6-9, 28. Of the top 11 "ports of importance" as determined by the Endicott Board, only San Francisco, Great Lakes region ports, and New Orleans were not on the eastern seaboard.

<sup>8</sup> Navy Department General Order No. 128, 7 May 1903, Joint Board 302, Serial 47, Roll 3, M 1421, Records of the Joint Board, 1903 - 1947, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington D.C. Joint Board records will be cited hereafter as "JB" with a general subject file number and, if necessary, followed by a hyphen, specific serial file number. Roll number and National Archives Microfilm Publication number will conclude each Joint Board records citation note; "Regulations for the Government of the Naval Districts of the United States," n.d., JB 302-47, Roll 3, M 1421. JB 302 is the general subject file on Naval Districts.

<sup>9</sup> Memoranda, Admiral George Dewey to Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, 2 April 1904, JB 308, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421. Joint Board standard operating procedure required all meeting recommendations be reported in duplicate to both civilian service secretaries. These specific memoranda will hereafter be cited as "Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV" followed by the memorandum date); Extract from the proceedings of the Torpedo Board, Fort Totten, N.Y., 22 May 1904, JB 308, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421. JB 308 is the general subject file on Advanced Bases.

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum, Secretary of the Navy to Admiral George Dewey, JB Senior Member, 27 October 1904, JB 303-25, Roll 3, M 1421. JB 303 is the general subject file on U.S. Coast and Harbor Defenses.

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum, Brigadier General J.P. Story, Chief of Artillery to Secretary of War William Howard Taft, 10 January 1905, JB 303, Nonserial Documents, Roll 3, M 1421.

<sup>12</sup> White House Memorandum, President Theodore Roosevelt, 12 January 1905, JB 303, Nonserial Documents, Roll 3, M 1421.

<sup>13</sup> Report of the Board, 1 February 1906, 9, in United States Congress, Senate, *Coast Defenses of the United States and its Insular Possessions*, Senate Document 248, 59<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1906), Congressional Information Services Microfiche, Washington, D.C., Serial 4913. Hereafter cited as "Taft Board Records."

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Board, 1 February 1906, 10-11, Taft Board Records.

<sup>15</sup> Report of the Board, 1 February 1906, 11, Taft Board Records; Memorandum, Secretary of War William H. Taft, 27 February 1906, Taft Board Records.

<sup>16</sup> Report of the Board, 1 February 1906, 15, 25, Taft Board Records.

<sup>17</sup> "Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting a Letter from the Secretary of War Together With a Report of the National Coast Defense Board Upon the Coast Defenses of the United States and Its Insular Possessions," 5 March 1906, 4, Taft Board Records.

<sup>18</sup> James L. Abrahamson, *America Arms for a New Century: The Making of a Great Military Power* (New York: The Free Press, 1981), 45.

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum for the Senior Member of the Joint Board on the Subject of the Delimitation of Defense Areas, G.B. No. 402, 21 June 1905, JB 303-25, Roll 3, M 1421.

<sup>20</sup> Wainwright-Wotherspoon Report, 1 November 1905, JB 303-26, Roll 3, M 1421.

<sup>21</sup> Murray-Wotherspoon-Pillsbury Committee Report, 11 November 1907, JB 303-51, Roll 3, M 1421.

<sup>22</sup> Memoranda, Dewey to SECNAV and SECWAR, 20 February 1908, JB 303-56, Roll 3, M 1421; Paolo E. Coletta and K. Jack Bauer, *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Domestic* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 511.

<sup>23</sup> Memorandum, Captain H.S. Knapp, 1 March 1916, JB 303-36, Roll 3, M 1421.

<sup>24</sup> Meeting Minutes, 10 November 1917, 25 June 1918, 4 December 1918, and 2 January 1919, JB 301, Nonserial Documents, Roll 2, M 1421; Memorandum, Joint Army and Navy Board on Aeronautic Cognizance to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy, 5 May 1917, JB 303, Nonserial Documents, Roll 3, M 1421; Meeting Minutes, 10 November 1917, 25 June 1918, 4 December 1918, 2 January 1919, Roll 2, M 1421.

CHAPTER IV  
POLICING THE AMERICAN MEDITERRANEAN:  
THE CARIBBEAN AND CUBA

The turn of the twentieth century marked a revolution in the roles assigned to American armed forces. As a result of the war with Spain, the United States acquired new possessions that stretched from the Pacific to the Caribbean. Soldiers and sailors found themselves in unprecedented roles that ranged from defending American commercial investments in China to protecting strategic interests in Panama. While operating in foreign lands and patrolling along foreign waters, both the army and navy had a need for greater interservice cooperation and coordination than ever before.

The need for harmonious army-navy relations outside the continental United States occurred ironically relatively close to its shores. In addition to protecting commercial investments during the perennial civil unrest in Latin and Central American countries - and their resulting coups d'etat - the 1904 Roosevelt Corollary demanded American policymakers remain attuned to Caribbean affairs. The continued possibilities of European nations intervening

from the Atlantic required American military authorities regard Cuba with a steady strategic eye. Ultimately both these concerns involved the Joint Board, as any American actions in the region required a viable threat of military force behind it. Thus from 1903 onward the interservice consultative body served as an institution that helped shape American military strategy in the region.

Understanding Joint Board decision-making regarding the Caribbean requires knowledge of the region's basic geography. The Caribbean region constitutes the area from the Bahamas across to Mexico, southward to the Isthmus of Panama, and eastward along the coast of South America.<sup>1</sup> The Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, as well as the littoral areas of Central America and South America make up this area.

Any map of the region immediately illustrates the strategic value of Cuba for the United States. The largest island nation in the West Indies sits astride access points to the region's two largest bodies of water. The direct route from the Atlantic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico runs along the northern coast of Cuba, while the nation's southern shores sit alongside the northeastern entrance to the Caribbean Sea. The Caribbean Sea entrance assumes even



greater commercial and strategic importance with the Panama Canal, for the isthmian pass discussed in the next chapter connects the Atlantic World to rich markets of the Pacific Rim.

The United States began hinting at achieving Caribbean hegemony during the early nineteenth century. In his Annual Message to Congress in 1823, President James Monroe tied American security interests to the Western Hemisphere at large. The President directed his new policy against traditional European powers. Claiming "that we should consider any attempt...to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety," Monroe concluded

the Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have, on great consideration and on just principles, acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.<sup>2</sup>

With such bold rhetoric Monroe thrust the United States into Caribbean affairs. The President predicated American security on protecting the independence and sovereignty rights of all Western Hemisphere nations, not just the United States. Although lacking military forces capable of

detering far-stronger imperial powers like Great Britain and France, the new policy assured New World America would concern itself with Old World European aggrandizement in the region.

In addition the Monroe Doctrine, financial capital helped maintain U.S. interest in the Caribbean. While American policymakers attached commercial significance to Caribbean as far back the nation's founding itself, agricultural and especially industrial investments in the region reached unprecedented levels by the middle of the nineteenth century. According to historian Walter LaFeber, a booming industrial revolution beginning in 1843, as well as the search for new foreign agricultural markets, fueled heavy American commercial investment in the Caribbean. As continental expansion westward ended, Cuba and its potential for rich import and export markets garnered special U.S. attention. American businessman obtained titles to many of the vast sugar plantations that covered the island nation. By the 1890s, maintaining the security of those private sugar investments proved a driving force in American Caribbean diplomacy.<sup>3</sup>

As American commercial investments grew, Monroe's concerns first hinted at seventy-five years earlier began

to appear. By the 1890s the United States government found itself confronted with British expansion into the Caribbean. American Anglophobia reached a fever pitch with the 1895 Venezuelan Crisis, in which Great Britain claimed a large portion of jungle along the disputed Venezuela-Guiana border. Secretary of State Richard Olney responded in short order, writing to London that U.S. national security was "concerned with the maintenance of the independence of every American state as against any European power." The chief American diplomat affirmed the Monroe Doctrine, arguing the United States could not tolerate European threats against the territorial sovereignty of any Caribbean nation.<sup>4</sup>

The set of diplomatic standards American diplomats applied to Old World countries in the Caribbean was far different than those imposed on itself. Just prior to entering the Spanish-American War, the U.S. denied any intention of annexing Cuba. Washington pledged itself to the principle of Cuban independence through the 1898 Teller Amendment. Yet promise never translated into reality. Following victory over Spain, the United States Army managed Cuban affairs through four military jurisdictions. Three years later, during formal debate of the 1901 Army

Appropriation Act, Senator Orville H. Platt (R-CT) proposed legislation that stated Cuba could never enter foreign treaties that "might impair her independence." In addition, the Platt Amendment authorized the United States government to intervene in Cuba for "the preservation of Cuban independence and for the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty." President William McKinley signed the legislation into law with little debate, and on 12 June 1901 Cuban leaders adopted the amendment into their constitution. With the stroke of a pen and diplomatic pressure, the United States assured for itself a role in Cuban defense.<sup>5</sup>

The threat of European intervention in the Caribbean continued into the new century. On 20 December 1902, Great Britain and Germany instituted a naval blockade of Venezuela in the name of collecting unpaid foreign loans. Caracas responded to the Anglo-German naval force by calling for U.S. arbitration of the dispute. During this second crisis in Venezuela, President Theodore Roosevelt dispatched the United States fleet - coincidentally already concentrated in the Caribbean at Culebra for a war gaming exercise - as a precautionary measure in case of failed

diplomacy. In light of this American action, London and Berlin decided ultimately not to increase their blockade force.<sup>6</sup> Luck and holding a tough naval line expanded the U.S. preponderance of power in the Caribbean.

With an official role in Cuban defense established and the perception of projecting military force affirmed, the question then became where to locate an American Caribbean naval station. In early July 1903 Secretary of War Elihu Root and Secretary of the Navy William H. Moody decided Cuba should contain the primary site. As the civilian secretaries reached this understanding, they also concluded that the Joint Board should discuss the details concerning such a base. In a memorandum dated 8 July 1903, Secretary Root stated "all questions as to fortification, or manning of fortifications, and the relations between the two arms of the service in respect thereof, will be referred to a joint committee of the army and navy for report and further consideration by the executive branch of the government."<sup>7</sup>

The new Joint Board became solely a forum for discussion on strategy and service relations. It was to have only advisory powers. Neither Secretary Root nor Secretary Moody assured access for the Joint Board members to all information required to conduct their investigations

and deliberations. Lacking access to the most current diplomatic policies and processes, the members found themselves and their decisions predicated on incomplete information. Individual perceptions of international events, and personal relationships between military officers and their civilian superiors, served as policy sources. The memorandum also restricted Joint Board tasks only to recommendations on fortifications and questions regarding interservice relations. Given these unwritten restrictions, responsibilities for broader strategic issues remained dangerously undefined.

The blurred line between civilian policymakers and military strategists regarding the Caribbean achieved clarity by year's end. As Joint Board work began in earnest, the admirals and generals together - and on their own accord - considered where in Cuba to locate the American naval station. On 28 December 1903 Admiral George Dewey, in his capacity as presiding officer, informed both civilian service secretaries to inform the President that the Board recommended Guantanamo and Bahia Honda as potential sites. The Joint Board also unanimously advised setting aside land on the surrounding hill tops for a naval wireless telegraph station. Eventually President Theodore

Roosevelt received the Joint Board memorandum from his civilian service secretaries, and approved the proposed action for fortifying the sites in relatively short order. Following the President's order on 5 January 1904, the War Department issued a general order making it official.<sup>8</sup>

Later that year, Roosevelt announced in his annual message to Congress that the United States would serve as an international policing power in the Western Hemisphere. In what became known as the Roosevelt Corollary, the President tasked the nation with serving as the guardian of all Pan-American neighbors and the protector of their sovereign rights. Henceforth any intervention in Caribbean affairs by a European power would be regarded as a security threat to the United States. The policy remained the diplomatic standard into the Woodrow Wilson presidency over eight years later.<sup>9</sup>

While well-received domestically, Roosevelt's words found an apprehensive reception among Caribbean neighbors. Addressing a gathering of Pan-American delegates at the Third International American Conference held at Rio de Janeiro in July 1906, Secretary of State Elihu Root sought to assure his audience the Roosevelt Corollary to the

Monroe Doctrine did not reflect a policy of U.S.

imperialism. He stated

we wish for no victories but those of peace; for no territory except our own; for no sovereignty except the sovereignty over ourselves. We deem the independence and equal rights of the smallest and weakest member of the family of nations entitled to as much respect as those of the greatest empire; and we deem the observance of that respect the chief guaranty of the weak against the strong. We neither claim nor desire any rights, or privileges, or power that we do not freely concede to every American republic.<sup>10</sup>

Yet those who doubted the sincerity of Root's words had their fears realized in short order.

Declaration of the Roosevelt Corollary assured that construction of a Cuban base assumed primary importance for American military strategists. In this regard funding became a primary concern. The Joint Board suggested using appropriations set aside in the War Emergency Fund, an executive spending account authorized by Congress in March 1899. Secretary of War William H. Taft quickly rejected the suggestion, commenting the law as written did not permit it.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless construction began using building funds already appropriated, and Army engineers progressed, albeit slowly, into the autumn of 1905. Brigadier General Samuel M. Mills, Army Chief of Artillery, commented to Secretary of War William H. Taft that the Navy Department



and Army Engineers Corps made "some little progress" on the armament emplacements and submarine materiel storehouses.<sup>12</sup> In any event, the naval station project continued into the following month until its completion.

During these months service strife characterized the construction. Initial land allocations led to interservice discord. On 16 November Secretary Taft remarked to the Lieutenant General Adna Chaffee, Army Chief of Staff, that a request should be made of the Secretary of Navy "to recede to the War Department the tract reserved for a harbor master." Taft considered the land an essential element for future Guantanamo Bay coast defenses. Two days later the War Department dispatched its request to the Navy Department.<sup>13</sup>

The request remained unanswered by the Navy for the next two months. Eventually, Secretary of the Navy Charles J. Bonaparte responded. The proposed land transfer, he concluded, would "be an irreparable loss to the station and to the Fleet both in peace and in time of war." Bonaparte justified his statement by arguing "no other area on the shore of the bay that presents corresponding facilities." Not surprisingly, the Secretary declined the transfer request.<sup>14</sup>

By spring 1907 the Joint Board approached the issue from a new angle, concluding the Guantanamo Naval Station required an expansion. Dewey informed Secretary of the Navy Victor H. Metcalf in March the current station needed more fresh water. The Joint Board recommended the U.S. government extend its naval station reservation limits both north and east to capture recently discovered fresh water resources. The proposal, however, faced a diplomatic roadblock as Secretary Root denied the request. Root informed the Navy Secretary that such action contrasted with Washington's position as protecting Cuba.<sup>15</sup>

Despite such opposition, the Joint Board continued its push for the expansion of Guantanamo into the following year. In a January 1908 memorandum Dewey remarked to the Secretary of the Navy that the Board members were "strongly impressed with the necessity for an advanced base in the Caribbean." The Joint Board linked Guantanamo with control of the Atlantic entrance to the Panama Canal. Concerned over the Cuban penchant for civil war and the gradual completion of the Panama Canal to the south, the Admiral of the Navy further stressed the Joint Board's support for constructing the base at Guantanamo. The admirals and generals recommended immediate construction of mine

defenses and emplacements for Army coast artillery that "would. . .be adequate to withstand any attack reasonably to be expected from an enemy not in established control of the sea."<sup>16</sup>

By 1910 the recommendations translated into official policy, for Guantanamo became the strategic pivot for American Caribbean strategy. On 31 May 1910 Admiral Dewey informed both the Secretaries of War and Navy that the Joint Board had concluded that Bahia Honda was "no longer regarded as being valuable to the United States." In a remarkable demonstration of political acumen, the Joint Board advised ceding the Bahia Honda lease "might prove a final argument to induce the Cuban Government to accede to the wishes of the United States at Guantanamo."<sup>17</sup>

Beginning that same year the U.S. found an additional incentive for solidifying an American Caribbean presence. Beginning in 1910 and for the next four years, American presidents and their policymakers concerned themselves increasingly with the political instability in Mexico. The government headed by Porfirio Díaz encountered stiff opposition in 1910. U.S. President William H. Taft publicly supported the Díaz regime, considering that during his tenure American business leaders garnered large

holdings in the Mexican railroad, mining and oil industries.<sup>18</sup> But by June 1911 Francisco Madero, a rich landowner from northern Mexico, headed what became a national revolt and removed Díaz from office.<sup>19</sup>

Madero, however, did not hold power for long. Within less than six months one of his former generals, Victoriano Huerta, turned against Madero. By 19 February 1913 Huerta ousted Madero from office, and had him captured and assassinated. At virtually the same time Huerta assumed power in Mexico, Woodrow Wilson entered the White House. Horrified by the Madero killing, the former Princeton professor refused to grant U.S. diplomatic recognition of the Huerta regime. An end to U.S. arms shipments to Mexico and an American business appeal for intervention followed, and the clouds of war loomed.<sup>20</sup>

Facing such bloody Mexican revolution, the Joint Board began contingency planning for operations against Mexico in April 1912. Known as Plan Green, the war plan called for an initial naval seizure and temporary occupation of the ports of Veracruz and Tampico on the Gulf of Mexico. Once the Navy seized or blockaded all remaining Mexican ports along the Pacific and Gulf coasts, the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Army would advance from Veracruz inland toward Mexico City. Upon

landing the 2d Field Army, composed of volunteers, would march in conjunction with the first military force. The 3d Field Army would be used as needed. To the north, additional military forces would protect the southern U.S. border unless needed for an offensive southward advance.<sup>21</sup>

By June 1912 the Joint Board emphasized keeping Guantanamo as the centerpiece of American military strategy in the Caribbean. The Joint Board concluded it a "well-situated" naval station due to its geographical proximity to both the nearly completed Panama Canal and American Gulf coast. In terms of defense fortifications, the Board concluded Guantanamo "should be sufficient to protect the repair station and the fleet auxiliaries during the temporary absence of the battle fleet." Armament recommendations reflected this strategic outlook as well, as the admirals and generals called for replacing the twelve-inch guns already on-site with fourteen-inch or sixteen-inch guns. The Board also called for strengthening harbor defenses by creating a front debouching area in range of coast guns and mortar fire.<sup>22</sup>

John Bartlow Martin commented in his 1978 work *U.S. Policy in the Caribbean* that for over two hundred years the United States "has regarded the Caribbean as an American

lake, vital to our security and generally profitable to our business interests."<sup>23</sup> In the final analysis, as the United States acquired new and far-reaching possessions following the Spanish-American War, the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy found themselves in unprecedented roles of defending American commercial investments in Cuban sugar plantations and Mexican railroads and mining. With continued adherence to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine and 1904 Roosevelt Corollary, American policymakers found themselves relying upon effective cooperation and coordination between the military services to achieve national policy goals.

In addition to protecting commercial investments, two diplomatic crises in Venezuela and a revolution in Mexico led to strategic considerations involving the Joint Board as well. The British attempt in 1895 to claim land from Venezuela, as well as the Anglo-German naval blockade seven years later, fueled perceptions among American leaders that European nations sought to intervene politically from the across the Atlantic Ocean. In the end, the Joint Board helped civilian policymakers chose Cuba as the lynchpin of American Caribbean defenses, and served as the policeman in the American Mediterranean.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> John Bartlow Martin, *U.S. Policy in the Caribbean* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), 1.
- <sup>2</sup> James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message, 2 December 1823, in *The State of the Union Messages of the Presidents, 1790-1966*, ed. Fred L. Israel (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1967), 1:212-13.
- <sup>3</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860 - 1898*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1-61.
- <sup>4</sup> David Healy, *Drive to Hegemony: The United States in the Caribbean, 1898 - 1917* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 32-5.
- <sup>5</sup> Dana G. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900-1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 25-6; Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean: The Panama Canal, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Latin American Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 516-20; Lester D. Langley, *The Banana Wars: United States Intervention in the Caribbean, 1898 - 1934*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 18-9.
- <sup>6</sup> Seward W. Livermore, "Theodore Roosevelt, the American Navy, and the Venezuelan Crisis of 1902-1903," *The American Historical Review* 51 (April 1946): 452-71; Healy, *Drive to Hegemony*, 100-3.
- <sup>7</sup> "Memorandum of understanding between the War and the Navy Department regarding naval stations in Cuba," 8 July 1903, Joint Board 306, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421, Records of the Joint Board, 1903 - 1947, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives, Washington, D.C. Joint Board records will be cited hereafter as "JB" with a general subject file number and, if necessary, followed by a hyphen, specific serial file number. Roll number and National Archives Microfilm Publication number will conclude each Joint Board records citation note. JB 306 is the general subject file on Guantanamo.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to the Secretary of War, 28 December 1903, JB 306, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421; Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to the Secretary of the Navy, 28 December 1903, JB 306, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421. Joint Board standard operating procedure required all meeting recommendations be reported in duplicate to both civilian service secretaries. These memoranda will hereafter be cited as "Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV" followed by the memorandum date; Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to the Secretary of War, 28 December 1903, JB 306-7, Roll 6, M1421; Endorsement, President of the United States, 5 January 1904, JB 306-7, Roll 6, M 1421; War Department General Order No. 14, 21 January 1904, JB 306-7, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>9</sup> Martin, *U.S. Policy in the Caribbean*, 18; Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean*, 410-12; Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> J. Lloyd Mecham, *The United States and Inter-American Security, 1889-1960* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), 64.

<sup>11</sup> Memoranda, Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV, 24 December 1904, JB 306-20, Roll 6, M 1421; Memorandum, Secretary of War to the Admiral of the Navy, 28 December 1904, No. 11045-166, JB 306-20, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>12</sup> Memorandum, Brigadier General Samuel M. Mills, Chief of Artillery to the Secretary of War, 30 October 1905, JB 306, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>13</sup> Memorandum, Secretary of War William H. Taft to the Army Chief of Staff, 16 November 1905, JB 306, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421; Memorandum, Acting Secretary of War Robert Shaw Oliver to the Secretary of the Navy, 18 November 1905, JB 306, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum, Secretary of the Navy to the Secretary of War, 18 January 1906, JB 306, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421.



<sup>15</sup> Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to the Secretary of the Navy, 25 March 1907, JB 306-44, Roll 6, M 1421; Memorandum, Secretary of State Elihu Root to the Secretary of the Navy, 6 April 1907, JB 306-44, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>16</sup> Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to the Secretary of the Navy, 29 January 1908, JB 306-52, Roll 6, M 1421; Memorandum, Dewey to SECNAV and SECWAR, 19 February 1908, JB 303-54, Roll 3, M 1421. JB 303 is the general subject file on U.S. Coast and Harbor Defenses.

<sup>17</sup> Memoranda, Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV, 31 May 1910, JB 306-66, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>18</sup> George W. Grayson, *The United States and Mexico: Patterns of Influence* (New York: Praeger, 1984), 18; Langley, *The Banana Wars*, 78. Grayson comments railroad mileage during the Díaz regime increased from 417 miles in 1877 to 15,325 miles by 1911, while Langley states American businesses owned seventy-five percent of Mexican mines and fifty percent of the country's oil fields.

<sup>19</sup> Steven Jon Schmidt, "United States Navy Basic Plan Green-One: An Analysis of the U.S. Navy's Strategic War Plan Against Mexico" (M.A. thesis, Texas A&M University, 1992), 4-6.

<sup>20</sup> Schmidt, "United States Navy Basic Plan Green-One," 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> Meeting Minutes, 15 April 1912, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421. JB 301 is the general subject file on the Joint Board, and contains all meeting minutes. For a more in-depth analysis of the naval element of War Plan Green at this time, see also Schmidt, "United States Navy Basic Plan Green-One," 30-37.

<sup>22</sup> Memoranda, Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV, 4 June 1912, JB 306-84, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>23</sup> Martin, *U.S. Policy in the Caribbean*, xi.

CHAPTER V  
DEFENDING AND MANAGING THE ISTHMIAN PASS:  
THE PANAMA CANAL

As the eyes of Joint Board members gazed toward the Caribbean, they focused particular attention on the narrow isthmus separating North and South America. Prior to the creation of the Board, European powers such as Great Britain, France, and Germany jockeyed to secure construction rights to a short, safe water route between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. As for the United States, continued adherence to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, combined with a series of bilateral treaties beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, ensured a principal position in any diplomatic discussions concerning Central American canal construction. By 1903, as U.S. diplomats secured authority to construct a waterway across Panama, determining how best to defend and manage this new isthmian pass from foreign powers became a primary consideration for the admirals and generals of the Joint Board.

Like in the Caribbean and Cuba, the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 underpinned American diplomacy when it came to securing a Central American canal. The United States

viewed any European attempts to intervene and control the affairs of Latin American nations throughout the Western Hemisphere as an inherent threat to U.S. national security. Yet as a relatively weak military power, diplomacy served for the next twenty five years as the only viable instrument for addressing security concerns in the Caribbean and Central America.

The first U.S. foreign policy advance toward securing a voice in the management of what became the Panama Canal began a quarter of a century after pronouncement of the Monroe Doctrine. Signed by the United States and Great Britain on 19 April 1850, the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty stipulated that neither nation would exclusively control any trans-oceanic canal built in the region. The treaty marked a clear diplomatic victory for the United States. Signing the agreement affirmed the Monroe Doctrine, an action that recognized the importance of the United States as a Western Hemisphere power. By signing the accord Great Britain, at that point possessor of the most far-reaching maritime empire, assured that any future diplomatic considerations for a Latin American canal would include U.S. participation. The treaty provisions and the

resulting diplomatic environment remained in effect for close to fifty years.<sup>1</sup>

By the turn of the century, the diplomatic climate changed as the official U.S. position regarding isthmian passage possession expanded. As the commercial and strategic value of a canal became clear, Washington demanded exclusive rights to owning and controlling any future waterway. In February 1900 U.S. Secretary of State John Hay approached British Foreign Minister Sir Julian Pauncefote with the first of two treaties outlining new stipulations regarding any future canal. Commonly known as Hay-Pauncefote Treaty I, it called for the United States to have exclusive jurisdiction over any future isthmian pass. While popularly supported in principle, the final treaty in fact met strong political opposition in the U.S. Senate, whose members refused to ratify the treaty because it did not contain provisions allowing the U.S. to fortify the canal. The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty restrictions - and unwanted British involvement in any future canal construction - remained.<sup>2</sup>

Such diplomatic setbacks proved short-lived. By November 1901, the United States and Great Britain returned to the negotiation table to discuss new terms. Struggling

in South Africa with the Boer War and facing the prospect of a major Russian advance into Asia, British diplomats gradually agreed to the proposals American diplomats had outlined in the first Hay-Pauncefote Treaty talks. The Hay-Pauncefote Treaty II nullified provisions of the long-standing Clayton-Bulwer Treaty, and guaranteed all canal protection and traffic rights to the United States. A product of British diplomatic necessity, Hay-Pauncefote Treaty II represented "the conscious British recognition of the eventual United States supremacy in the Western Hemisphere."<sup>3</sup> By the end of 1901, the United States had achieved recognition as the primary administrator of any Latin American isthmian pass.

With the issue of sole jurisdiction over canal administration settled, attention next turned to the question of where to locate a future canal. An 1899 Isthmian Canal Commission appointed by President William McKinley set the parameters of the discussion, deliberated between sites in Nicaragua and Panama, and in the end recommended in its 16 November 1901 final report that Nicaragua, rather than Panama, provided the best site. The Commission concluded that while a Nicaraguan canal cost more than a Panamanian canal, the former had fewer

entangling treaty stipulations with other neighboring nations, and avoided potential diplomatic dealings with Colombia.<sup>4</sup> By early 1902 a sharp White House-Senate debate added to the discussions. Beginning 29 March and continuing for nineteen days, Democrats in the Senate pushed for a Nicaraguan route while their Republican opponents in the minority called for a Panamanian passageway. Ultimately the Panama position prevailed as evidence surfaced in June of recent heavy volcanic activity along the proposed Nicaraguan route. In the end, President Theodore Roosevelt signed into law the Spooner Act on 28 June 1902. The legislation authorized the President to spend forty million dollars to purchase the French property rights in the area, negotiate with Colombia, and build a canal in Panama.<sup>5</sup>

Civil war in neighboring Colombia also added a sense of urgency to the deliberation. Torn by such internal strife, Colombia found itself in a precarious bargaining position. U.S. policymakers recognized this weakened state and capitalized quickly on the opportunity. The Colombian government appealed on 11 September 1902 to U.S. officials to mediate a settlement of its civil war. Eight days later the United States seized control of the Panama Railroad.

The American-dominated talks culminated with the Hay-Herrán Treaty signed 22 January 1903 and later ratified by the Senate on 17 March 1903. Agreement terms stipulated Colombia authorized the French Compagnie Nouvelle to sell all rights and concessions to the United States. Bogotá also conceded to Washington exclusive construction and protection rights for a canal and an up to fifteen-mile wide canal zone. In addition, Hay-Herrán granted a one hundred year grant which could be renewed unilaterally by the United States, and authorized the United States "in cases of unforeseen or imminent danger" to unilaterally intervene in Colombian affairs in the name of canal defense. Not surprisingly, the treaty attracted vehement opposition among Colombian officials.<sup>6</sup>

With title in hand, the United States sought to further strengthen its diplomatic position. On 6 November 1903 the United States government recognized Panamanian independence. Twelve days later the United States made the recognition official by signing the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty. In addition to recognizing Panamanian independence, the treaty affirmed U.S. canal building rights in the region.<sup>7</sup> Through skilled and opportunistic diplomacy, the United States now held a dominant position

for constructing an isthmian waterway in newly-founded Panama.

While American civilian authorities perhaps felt comforted with their diplomatic successes, military strategists back in the United States acted with urgency. Together high-ranking officers from both services planned possible military contingencies for the region. Five weeks after signing the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, the Joint Board recommended a military response should war erupt between Panama and Colombia. Writing to both civilian service secretaries in his capacity as Presiding Officer, Admiral George Dewey advised that in the event of war the United States should occupy - by force if necessary - the railroad and canal, as well as mining storage facilities in the Yavisa region of Panama. Dewey closed his report by stating that the Board recommended immediate occupation of Yavisa.<sup>8</sup> While war never materialized, the Joint Board contingency planning demonstrated a consultative body attuned to the immediate diplomatic conditions facing its civilian superiors.

Such immediate action, however, never translated into long-term practice. Surprisingly, not until six months later did the first hint of substantive war planning



concerning Latin America appear. A return to action occurred during the second week of June 1904, when the Joint Board advised that both the Army General Staff and Navy General Board should begin study how the United States could most effectively "intervene in the affairs of an independent country in the West Indies or on the mainland of Central or South America" should it become necessary under the terms of the Monroe Doctrine.<sup>9</sup>

For almost the next two years the admirals and generals remained quiet regarding the Panama Canal. Finally, in April 1906, Dewey reported to Secretary of War William H. Taft and Secretary of the Navy Charles J. Bonaparte that the Joint Board resolved that both ends of the Panama Canal should be fortified.<sup>10</sup> As the canal neared completion, defending the Panama Canal became a primary concern for both civilian policymakers and military strategists.

For the next four years how to protect the isthmian pass remained unsettled. Resolution arrived in May 1910 when the Joint Board considered and approved the sea coast armament recommendations as outlined by the Panama Fortification Board. Created in October 1909, the Panama Fortification Board consisted of six Army officers and two

Navy officers appointed by their respective civilian service secretaries. Major General Leonard Wood, Army Chief of Staff, presided over the Board. All the remaining military officers who served on the Panama Fortification Board, with the exception of Brigadier General W.H. Bixby, also served concurrently on the Joint Board.<sup>11</sup>

Reporting their findings directly to Secretary of War Jacob M. Dickinson, the Army and Navy members of the Fortification Board found in April 1910 that both sides of the canal contained "comparatively strong natural positions. . .for defense against land operations of an enemy force." The Board recommended that the War Department garrison twelve coast artillery companies, four infantry regiments, one field artillery battalion, as well as one cavalry squadron as peacetime Canal Zone sea coast armament defenses, with wartime reinforcements dispatched according to expected enemy deployments. It estimated the peacetime cost of such a garrison would be \$14 million a year.<sup>12</sup>

Ultimately military leaders found the combination of nature, coastal fortifications, and Army troops an incomplete defense in case of an enemy invasion from the west. According to the Committee on Land Defenses, a

subcommittee of the Panama Fortification Board, a large enemy force could land successfully on either the Atlantic or Pacific sides of the Canal Zone, but that topographical conditions would make operations after such an amphibious landing extremely difficult on the Atlantic side. The most important conditions were the heavy rainfall and jungle terrain, which together made an enemy assault on that side "extremely unfavorable." Yet given the right conditions, the Committee concluded that the area around the Pacific end of the canal could be penetrated by an enemy amphibious force and the opening of the canal seized.<sup>13</sup>

While the vulnerability of the Panama Canal to enemy attack was recognized, nothing was done to improve defenses for over two years. Not until March 1913 did Army leaders again address the problem of defending the canal. According to a report by the Army War College, the size of the garrison stationed in Panama for defense of the canal should be determined by calculating the number of troops needed "to resist attack of a force which could be landed from a fleet such as one of the great powers might be expected to have at sea." The Joint Board reacted to this report by suggesting blandly that it was "most desirable" to conduct joint army-navy maneuvers "in order that, if

they exist, and defects in the scheme of fortification and defense of the Isthmus may be rectified with the least delay."<sup>14</sup>

Two months later the Joint Board identified Japan as the great power referred to in veiled terms by the Army War College Division. The interservice consultative staff, however, never recommended any substantive change in defensive measures to protect the canal from a Japanese attack. According to the 5 May 1913 meeting minutes, the admirals and generals referred to "the possibility of a Japanese attack on the Western termini of the Panama Canal, and possible means of meeting such an attack," but again recommended no measures to meet such a threat.<sup>15</sup> Such concern over the Japanese certainly made sense, considering the resounding 1905 Japanese naval defeat of the Russian navy at Tsushima and the war scare stemming from the 1906 San Francisco School Board policy segregating Japanese and Chinese children in public schools.<sup>16</sup> Yet in the end the Joint Board as a forum failed to resolve the shortcomings of the Panama Canal defenses.

A major source of this failure may stem in fact simply from neglect. In rare amended minutes, it is clear that both the admirals and generals in the Joint Board concerned

themselves more with questions on who should govern the Panama Canal Zone, as well as how it should be governed. During the 9 October 1913 meeting, Admiral Dewey commented the law stated "that war being imminent, the Government should be in the hands of the Army." Brigadier General William Crozier responded "the President...goes farther, in that it is always to be under the Army." Captain H.S. Knapp, Joint Board recorder, cited in his notes the subject was "discussed at length a general consensus of opinion seemed to be that the government should always be a military one." The discussion ended with Admiral Dewey insisting simply there be "no civilian control."<sup>17</sup>

The Joint Board extended its discussions into the following month before reaching consensus. During this time the General Board recommended a single U.S. military service administer all government matters within the Canal Zone. The Governor would be an Army officer charged directly with command of troops and fortifications. The Director of Operations and Maintenance of the Canal, the second-highest government official behind the Governor, however, would be a Navy officer responsible for all Navy-related personnel and materiel in the Zone. Two assistants under the command of the Director of Operations and

Maintenance - either an officer from the Army Engineering Corps or Navy Civil Engineering Corps - would control the Panama Canal waterway, while the other officer headed the railway. When Captain Knapp read the 1 November 1913 endorsement to the Joint Board as a whole, Admiral Dewey referred the matter to a subcommittee composed of Knapp and Brigadier General W.W. Wotherspoon.<sup>18</sup>

This "all-military" option encountered stiff civilian opposition. According to Colonel George W. Goethals, Chairman of the Isthmian Canal Commission, Congress as a whole believed commercial interests dictated the need for an isthmian canal long before any demands of military strategy. Senators and representatives thus advocated strongly against a pure military jurisdiction in the Canal Zone. Goethals stated that the Commission believed "that the President [should] not [be] limited in his selection to either of the military branches of the service, but that he could select a civilian" to serve as chief administrator for the Canal Zone.<sup>19</sup>

Debate over managing the isthmian pass continued into the following year. By January 1914 the Joint Board still did not reach a collective recommendation. The Wotherspoon-Knapp subcommittee had yet to submit its final

report. Nevertheless, influential generals continued to voice their opinions outside of the Joint Board. The Army War College Division became one forum of such Army response. The Army agreed with the Navy insofar as Canal administration and operations were primarily military affairs that required military consideration alone. The Army War College President concluded the Army Corps of Engineers should maintain and operate the Canal. Should the Governor leave, die, or be disabled, the next highest Army officer should assume the functions of the office. Under the Army plan, the Navy would be relegated to a lesser supporting role.<sup>20</sup>

Army Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood stated his opinion in that the Panama Canal "partakes of the character of a well-guarded and secure defile connecting our Atlantic seacoast and interests in the Caribbean Sea with our Pacific seacoast and possessions in the Pacific Ocean."<sup>21</sup> The Panama Canal embodied a military necessity as much as a commerce maritime highway. Defending and managing the whole commercial American Empire required strongly protecting and militarily administering one of its most vital parts - the isthmian pass.

As the debate over civilian versus military management of Panama drug on, the shadow of warring Europe began to influence discussions. In June 1914 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee opened hearings on how the U.S. should react to the possibility of a German-run Nicaraguan Canal. Nicaraguan ambassador General Emiliano Chamorro testified that Germany was willing to pay more than three million dollars for a canal route. On 5 August 1914, as World War I began in Europe, U.S. and Nicaraguan diplomats signed the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty. Under its provisions, Nicaragua allowed the United States a ninety-nine year period in which to establish a naval base on the Gulf of Fonseca, thus negating any possible rival waterway to the Panama Canal.<sup>22</sup>

The last notable Joint Board action regarding the Panama Canal concerned an Atlantic submarine base. In late July 1916, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels informed the Joint Board that the Navy's General Board had recommended that a submarine base be stationed in the Panama Canal Zone. The Navy consultative body called for a primary submarine base with a twenty-boat capacity on the Atlantic side at Coco Solo Point, and an auxiliary base with a ten-boat capacity on the Pacific side at Balboa



Harbor.<sup>23</sup> The Joint Board concurred with the naval position, recognizing submarines as "an essential element of the defense of the Canal Zone, including the Canal itself." The admirals and generals together found submarines a formidable obstacle necessary in the face of any future enemy amphibious assaults. By 1917 civilian policymakers heeded the military advice and constructed a peninsular submarine base at the recommended site.<sup>24</sup>

Contingency planning following the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty suggested a highly-responsive Joint Board, a consultative body attuned to the diplomatic environment facing American diplomats. Almost immediately, the admirals and generals provided their civilian superiors with a military option should war occur between Colombia and the newly-independent Panama. Yet in the end, such war planning initiative gave way to a period of neglect. A dismal state of affairs followed, and proved symptomatic of future Joint Board actions.

In the final analysis, the Joint Board failed to agree on concrete plans on how to manage and defend the Panama Canal Zone. As Secretaries of State John M. Clayton, John Hay, and William Jennings Bryan successfully garnered diplomatic rights for the United States to construct a

waterway across Latin America, the admirals and generals fumbled the two most basic tasks assigned to them. When it came to determining how best to defend the Panama Canal from foreign powers, the Board tabled discussion on the subject for four years. Not until the spring of 1910, and the final report of the Panama Fortification Board manned by its own members, did the Joint Board begin serious discussion on Panama Canal Zone defenses. Even then, however, the interservice consultative body failed to shed light on the susceptibility of the natural and artificial defenses to foreign amphibious assault until two and a half years later. Luckily for the Joint Board, no enemy launched an attack on the Panama Canal during World War I, and a Japanese challenge to U.S. interests in the eastern Pacific never translated into a real threat.

The Board failed equally in dealing with management of the Canal Zone. Strict adherence to a military-only Canal Zone government antagonized Congress. Civil-military relations - and Joint Board inaction on the subject - reached a point where the Army War College President and Army Chief of Staff responded to civilian criticism outside the interservice forum. With such strained civil-military

relations and narrowed service interests we now turn westward and across the Pacific.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Mary Wilhelmine Williams, *Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy, 1815 - 1915* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965), 67-109.

<sup>2</sup> Dana G. Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900 - 1921* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 5; Richard H. Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean: The Panama Canal, the Monroe Doctrine, and the Latin American Context* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 169-70; Williams, *Anglo-American Isthmian Diplomacy, 1815 - 1915*, 304.

<sup>3</sup> J.A.S. Grenville, "Great Britain and the Isthmian Canal, 1898 - 1901," *The American Historical Review* 61 (October 1965): 52. The direct quotation may be found on page 48.

<sup>4</sup> United States Congress, Senate, *Report of the Isthmian Canal Commission, 1899 - 1901*, Senate Document 222, 58<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), Congressional Information Services Microfiche, Serial 4609-1. Rear Admiral John G. Walker presided over the Isthmian Canal Commission. The final report estimated the cost of a Nicaraguan Canal at \$189, 864, 062, in contrast to the Panama Canal project estimated at \$144, 233, 858.

<sup>5</sup> Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean*, 186 - 197.

<sup>6</sup> Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean*, 219.

<sup>7</sup> Munro, *Intervention and Dollar Diplomacy in the Caribbean, 1900 - 1921*, 55; for a more comprehensive account of the Colombian-American diplomacy surrounding the Hay-Bunau-Varilla Treaty, see Collin, *Theodore Roosevelt's Caribbean*, 269-305.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey, JB Senior Member to the Secretary of War, 23 December 1903, Joint Board 325, Serial 6, Roll 9, M 1421, Records of the Joint Board, 1903 - 1947, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington. D.C;

Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey, JB Senior Member to the Secretary of the Navy, 23 December 1903, Joint Board 325, Serial 6, Roll 9, M 1421, Records of the Joint Board, 1903 - 1947, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington, D.C. Joint Board standard operating procedure required all meeting recommendations be reported in duplicate to both civilian service secretaries. These memoranda will hereafter be cited as "Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV" followed by the memorandum date.

In addition, Joint Board records will be cited hereafter as "JB" with a general subject file number and, if necessary, followed by a hyphen, specific serial file number. Roll number and National Archives Microfilm Publication number will conclude each Joint Board records citation note. JB 325 is the general subject file on War Plans.

<sup>9</sup> Meeting Minutes, 10 June 1904, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421; Memoranda, Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV, 24 June 1904, JB 325-16, Roll 9, M 1421. JB 301 is the general subject file on the Joint Board.

<sup>10</sup> Meeting Minutes, 2 April 1906, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421; Memoranda, Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV, 2 April 1906, JB 326-1, Serial 36, Roll 12, M 1421. JB 326-1 is the general subject file on the Panama Canal, and will hereafter be cited as "JB Panama Canal File" followed by the serial file number.

<sup>11</sup> "Report of the Panama Fortification Board," Captain Stanley D. Embick, Recorder to the Secretary of War, 12 August 1910, JB Panama Canal File, Serial 73, Roll 12, M 1421. In addition to General Wood, Brigadier Generals William Crozier (Chief of Ordnance), Arthur Murray (Chief of Coast Artillery), W.H. Bixby (Chief of Engineers), as well as Brigadier General W.W. Wotherspoon and Major W.G. Haan composed the Army members of the Board, while Captain H.S. Knapp and Commander W.J. Maxwell were the Navy members.

<sup>12</sup> Meeting Minutes, 25 April 1910 and 31 May 1910, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421; Memorandum, Captain Stanley D. Embick,

Recorder, Panama Fortification Board to the Adjutant General, 23 April 1910, JB Panama Canal File, Serial 73, Roll 12, M 1421; "Report of the Panama Fortification Board," Captain Stanley D. Embick, Recorder to the Secretary of War, 12 August 1910, JB Panama Canal File, Serial 73, Roll 12, M 1421.

<sup>13</sup> "Report of Committee on Land Defenses," in Report of the Panama Fortification Board, Captain Stanley D. Embick, Recorder to the Secretary of War, 12 August 1910, JB Panama Canal File, Serial 73.

<sup>14</sup> Memorandum, Brigadier General William Crozier, Chief of War College Division to Major General Leonard Wood, Army Chief of Staff, 25 March 1913, JB Panama Canal File, Roll 12, M 1421; Memoranda, Dewey to SECWAR and SECNAV, 6 May 1913, JB Panama Canal File, Serial 7, Roll 12, M 1421.

<sup>15</sup> Meeting Minutes, 5 May 1913, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>16</sup> Joint Board concern over a rising Japan will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

<sup>17</sup> Meeting Minutes, 9 October 1913 (amended), Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>18</sup> General Board Endorsement No. 426-1 Extract, 1 November 1913, JB Panama Canal File, Serial 10, Roll 12, M 1421; Meeting Minutes, 13 November 1913, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum, George W. Goethals, Chairman, Isthmian Canal Commission to Major General Leonard Wood, Army Chief of Staff, 15 November 1913, JB Panama Canal Files, Serial 10, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>20</sup> Memorandum, Army War College President to Army Chief of Staff, 13 January 1914, WCD 6178-62, JB Panama Canal Files, Serial 10, Roll 12, M 1421.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum, Major General Leonard Wood, Army Chief of Staff to the Secretary of War, 17 January 1914, JB Panama Canal File, Serial 10, Roll 12, M 1421.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas A. Bailey, "Interest in a Nicaragua Canal, 1903 - 1931," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 16 (February 1936): 4-6.

<sup>23</sup> Memorandum, Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels to the Joint Board President, 20 July 1916, 21498/101:1, JB Panama Canal Files, Serial 47, Roll 12, M 1421.

<sup>24</sup> Memorandum, Joint Board Senior Member to SECWAR and SECNAV, 14 November 1916, JB Panama Canal File, Serial 47, Roll 12, M 1421; Paolo E. Colletta and K. Jack Bauer, eds., *United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Overseas* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 80.

## CHAPTER VI

## "BROKEN DOWN OLD MEN:"

## THE PACIFIC AND THE PHILIPPINES

Following victory in the 1898 Spanish-American War and 1902 Philippine War, American admirals and generals found themselves in an unprecedented position as protectors of a new and far-reaching Pacific empire. U.S. possessions stretched further westward to include Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines.<sup>1</sup> Such responsibilities, like those found at home, in the Caribbean, as well as the Panama Canal, demanded U.S. military services work together.

Examination of official records reveals Joint Board admirals and generals from 1903 until World War I spent most of their meetings struggling to find a unified Pacific strategy. Both Army and Navy officers found these meetings opportune times to extend service disagreements, especially over where to locate the main Philippine naval station. While such interservice bickering incurred a personal admonishment from two different presidents, the military authorities stubbornly persisted to the point of making a failed attempt to expand on their own their original consultative mandate. In the end, catering to service



interests, as well as endeavoring to expand its role beyond simply military advising, cost the Joint Board its overall influence by straining relations beyond repair with the President.

American interest in the Pacific dated well before the creation of the Joint Board. American merchants recognized the economic potential of Asian commercial markets as early as the 1780s. By the mid-nineteenth century, civilian decision-makers had begun to employ the U.S. Navy not only to protect American merchant trading in the area, but to expand commercial opportunities in the region.<sup>2</sup>

The shift from sail to steam power in the middle and late nineteenth century gave rise to the need for coaling stations along Pacific trade routes if the Navy was to provide adequate protection for America's expanding commerce in the region. Naval officers often served in diplomatic roles, most notably in China and with Commodore Matthew C. Perry's "opening" of Japan in 1854. The United States government leased land for a coaling depot from the Japanese at Yokohama in 1864. In 1878 the U.S. acquired Pago Pago in Samoa, and in the Pearl Harbor treaty of 1887 the United States obtained exclusive base rights at Honolulu.<sup>3</sup> The Open Door Notes from 1899 to 1900 further

increased an American commercial commitment in the Far East by arguing for equal access for all nations to Chinese markets.

By the twentieth century the United States had invested heavily in the Pacific. The 1899 Paris Peace Treaty ending the Spanish-American War granted the Philippine Islands and Guam to the United States. Immediately the Pacific archipelago garnered particular attention, while Guam received lesser concentration.<sup>4</sup> Secretary of the Navy William Henry Moody commented that American occupation of the Philippines would create order, rule of law, respect for individual rights, education, self-government, civilization, and "everything which makes life worth living to an American."<sup>5</sup> Such American moral resolve quickly translated into military action that involved the Army. The President ordered the U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> Army Corps to capture Manila from the Spanish. Later, from 1899 to 1902, American military forces pacified the Philippines while Manila served as the principal site for Army headquarters on the island.<sup>6</sup>

An inlet thirty-seven miles northwest of Manila Bay, in contrast, found favor with Admiral George Dewey, popular war hero known for his U.S. Asiatic Squadron victory at the

Battle of Manila Bay and Navy General Board President beginning in 1900. The value of the narrow ingress at Subic Bay\* for possible fleet protection in case of enemy naval attack proved appealing. As a result, fortification construction began at Olongapo at the edge of the bay following the Philippine War.<sup>7</sup> By June 1903 - a month before the creation of the Joint Board - Dewey proclaimed "who holds Subig Bay holds Manila; who holds Manila holds Luzon; and who holds Luzon holds the Philippines."<sup>8</sup> With Dewey in favor of Subig Bay, the location of a Philippine naval station as the Navy's position had been settled upon prior to the creation of the Joint Board.

The Navy's focus on Subig Bay became quite clear within the first few Joint Board meetings. The Board considered its defense for almost three weeks in December 1903, ultimately recommending the civilian service secretaries seek from Congress immediate appropriations for its fortification.<sup>9</sup> The Admiral of the Navy translated his maxim into reality, taking full advantage of his capacity as Senior Member of the Joint Board to support

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\*U.S. military strategists commonly spelled Subic Bay as "Subig Bay" during this time. The author will use the second spelling throughout the rest of this work.

congressional appropriations for site defense. Dewey wrote memoranda to both Secretaries Moody and Root urging Subig Bay as the site for a large Philippine naval station. Dewey called for "heavier ordnance, siege guns, mortars, mines, and vessels" at Subig Bay as increased defensive measures. Failing to adequately fortify the area, Dewey warned, could lead to disastrous consequences for the nation.<sup>10</sup>

In light of these personal recommendations by the Admiral, Army authorities began to use the Joint Board as a forum for expressing their concerns about defending Subig Bay. In a memorandum dated 26 May 1904 to both civilian service secretaries, Dewey advocated that all available appropriations concerning the Philippines should be spent at Subig Bay.<sup>11</sup> The Army Chief of Staff, in contrast, emphasized greater attention should be paid to Manila Bay. Drawing from the recommendations of his Assistant Chief of Staff for adequate occupational defenses, Lieutenant General Adna R. Chaffee advised the value of Manila Bay defenses be proportional to the value attached to Subig Bay by the Navy.<sup>12</sup>

Such a division occurred at the most inopportune time diplomatically. Over the next two years, beginning with

the crushing Japanese naval victory over the Russians at Tsushima in 1905 and continuing with a 1906 San Francisco School Board referendum that segregated Chinese and Japanese in public schools, relations between the United States and Japan strained to the point where many Americans leaders perceived war as imminent.<sup>13</sup> Japan now became a newfound source of strategic concern for the United States. A rising naval power, compounded with its close geographical proximity to the Philippines, affirmed the fear of U.S. military authorities that "the threat to the Philippines was no longer from a European power."<sup>14</sup>

Yet even given the ominous diplomatic climate facing the nation, Admiral Dewey remained undeterred in his push for a Subig Bay naval base. The senior member of the Joint Board turned to individual connections for support. On 26 October 1906 Admiral Dewey wrote a lengthy letter to Rear Admiral Willard H. Brownson, Commander-in-Chief, Asiatic Fleet. In the letter he confided to Brownson that

upon arriving at Manila (Cavite) you will encounter the Olongapo-Cavite question, to which [Admiral Henry C.] Taylor and I, the General Board, the War College, and all your predecessors as Commander-in-Chief [Asiatic Fleet], have given so much thought, and in which all have emphatically declared in favor of Olongapo as being, both from strategical and practical reasons, infinitely superior to Cavite as the situation for our naval base in the East. You will

find in Manila a strong army sentiment, and civil sentiment as well, decidedly opposed to the Olongapo idea and enthusiastically in favor of retaining Cavite as it now is; and of all the advocates of this plan, General Wood, usually so clear-headed upon most matters, is the most ardent. He and his followers reason that Manila is the Philippines and can only be protected by fortifications at Corregidor and a fleet in Manila Bay. Such fallacious reasoning hardly needs controversion. You will see that there is much to be done at Olongapo, and I hope [you] will frequently give me your ideas upon the subject and your criticisms of any existing plans for its development. In this respect you can be of great service to us and I hope you will not hesitate to express your opinions.<sup>15</sup>

For Dewey, the Army generally and Major General Leonard Wood particularly continued as the largest obstacles. The letters' content illustrated the fact that service interests outweighed the pursuit of harmonious interservice relations. In addition, Admiral Dewey never at any point in his correspondence answered the criticisms of Subig Bay voiced by his army opponents. More than any other institution deciding American military strategy, Admiral Dewey considered the Navy's sister service an unacceptable hindrance toward a Subig Bay stronghold.

U.S.-Japanese tensions never resulted in open hostilities until Pearl Harbor and World War II (1941 - 1945). These earlier events, however, exposed President Theodore Roosevelt to Joint Board indecisiveness when it

came to a collaborative military strategy in the Pacific. Roosevelt ordered that until the Joint Board concluded decisively whether to base U.S. defenses at Manila or Subig Bay, fortification construction at Subig Bay would be suspended.<sup>16</sup>

The presidential directive only strengthened Army resolve on the Philippine naval station location issue. Army Chief of Staff Major General J. Franklin Bell employed arguments by Major General Wood, the general on site at Manila and charged with commanding the Philippines Division, to justify his Manila Bay position.<sup>17</sup> During November 1907 Wood cabled his superiors in Washington that Subig Bay was "entirely impracticable with means on hand here or liable to be on hand" insofar as it was costly to man and "most vulnerable to land attack on at least three main lines."<sup>18</sup> The General stressed the "impracticality. . .with means at our disposal, or likely to be at our disposal," demonstrating an analysis predicated on a keen awareness of congressional funding restraints.

Wood continued to hold the same line of argumentation into December. In a correspondence with the Adjutant General later read by Bell, Wood argued that between eighty and one hundred twenty-five thousand troops would be needed

to defend Subig Bay adequately. Manila Bay, concluded Wood, would be "cheaper, easier, more secure, and of infinitely more military and political importance than Subig Bay."<sup>19</sup>

The words of the commanding general in the Philippines quickly found an influential voice on the Joint Board. At the 29 January 1908 meeting, General Bell exclaimed before the whole Board that "no matter how much more further study may be put upon the subject. . .the conditions surrounding Subig Bay are such that no land fortifications of any kind whatever can be erected covering the bay which will enable to Army to hold it against a serious land attack." The Army Chief of Staff further concluded that fortification appropriations expected from Congress would not suffice.<sup>20</sup> Bell, like Wood, emphasized a lack of legislative appropriations as well as the susceptibility of Subig Bay to land attack. More importantly, however, this incident marked the first time the Army Chief of Staff openly questioned to the Board the Army's ability to protect Subig Bay from enemy invasion. The burden of defense now shifted heavily toward the Navy and its fleet.

Naval members opposed strongly any prospect of consolidating the political administration and military



protection of the Philippines at Manila. For one, the wide ingress to Manila Bay made American forces susceptible to enemy fleet attack. Basing the fleet at Manila also required an American wartime fleet travel a further distance to engage the enemy forces at open sea. In addition, should all military affairs be concentrated at Manila, enemy ships could simply stifle the whole island through a blockade.

By February 1908 informal discussion guided the formation of military strategy. The Army shifted its focus on the Philippine fortification issue by speaking directly with the President. General Bell surprised President Roosevelt on the seventh by stating that inadequacies existed in all Pacific seacoast defenses, and that the protection of the American western coastline now required a powerful fleet.<sup>21</sup> The Joint Board meeting on the eighteenth found its naval members seeking to gain from the change of events. Naval members presented recommendations for an even larger fleet, one great enough for a two-ocean navy. The admirals closed their argument by arguing that "securing the command of the sea" assured strong coast defense and protection of the homeland.<sup>22</sup>

President Roosevelt reacted firmly to these events. Getting immediately to the point, the President chided the Joint Board in a memorandum to Secretary of William H. Taft.

I call the attention of the Joint Board to the grave harm done by the army and navy by such vacillation and one-sided consideration as has been shown in the treatment by the army and navy experts of the Philippine problem; that is, of the question whether Manila Bay or Subig Bay should be fortified.<sup>23</sup>

Roosevelt demanded answers. He asked "what circumstances occurred to bring about not merely the change in, but the absolute reversal of" the Joint Board on the subject? The President closed by stating it was "evident that there is some defect in [the Joint Board's] method [of operation] which ought to be removed."<sup>24</sup>

The presidential admonishment fell on deaf ears. In duplicate memoranda dated 5 March 1908 addressed to Secretary of the Navy Victor H. Metcalf and Secretary of War Taft, Admiral Dewey responded to the presidential scolding by simply justifying past Joint Board actions. According to Dewey, when it came to defending the Philippines the Navy "acted alone from 1900 until December 1903," at which point the creation of the Joint Board allowed for the first time a joint committee to officially

submit a report calling for Subig Bay as the primary location for the naval base.<sup>25</sup>

Dewey went on to argue lessons learned from the overwhelming Japanese naval victories during the Russo-Japanese War (1904 - 1905) fundamentally challenged traditional U.S. Pacific military strategy as well. The Japanese attack on Port Arthur on 8-9 February 1904 and the later naval battle at Tsushima illustrated the advantage of heavy artillery.<sup>26</sup> The Joint Board Senior Member stated that until that point military planners never fully appreciated the value of using heavy ordnance. He assured his civilian superiors, however, that by 1906 the Joint Board used heavy weapons as an index for selecting and constructing naval stations.<sup>27</sup> Finally, diplomacy factored into American strategic calculus to that point. Dewey argued the war altered U.S.-Japanese relations "from that of marked friendship to one which indicated possible open hostility."<sup>28</sup>

The Dewey memoranda suggested that up to that point flawed Joint Board recommendations stemmed simply from never fully appreciated stronger guns and strained relations. Yet Dewey failed to address additional points that are of strategic interest. For one, Dewey did not

inform his civilian authorities that the Army and Navy members of the Joint Board never unanimously backed the fortification of Subig Bay. Recall Dewey, as the Joint Board's most senior member, had access to unparalleled advising channels with civilian service secretaries through official Joint Board correspondence. With such an ad hoc innovation in place, the Admiral had ample opportunities to conceal any hints of disunity between the admirals and generals.

Second, the memoranda conveyed no idea that the Navy had shifted its emphasize on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, as the primary Pacific defensive position by 1908-1909. In February 1908 Dewey posited Pearl Harbor as "the most important position for a naval base," maintaining that its capture would give the enemy a "position from which to launch attacks upon our Pacific Coast States and territory, and to control the Pacific exit of the Panama Canal."<sup>29</sup> Pearl Harbor and Hawaii, not Subig Bay and the Philippines, served as the epicenter of U.S. Pacific military strategy.

Reading the text also yields no appreciation of the expense of the heavy guns needed for adequate defense. Admiral Dewey never clarified how costly such defensive measures were, nor how provisions could restrict military

authorities to fortify only one of the two bays. Tight purse strings translated into tough choices for the Joint Board. In the end, the Dewey memoranda wrongly suggested the slow application of newly-learned strategic lessons and a dynamic diplomatic environment alone divided Joint Board opinion.

Even while recognizing the changed strategic landscape in the Pacific, that naval members of the Board still pressed the case for Subig Bay into autumn 1909. Rear Admiral Royal R. Ingersoll and Captain S.A. Staunton pushed for the northernmost inlet. Both Joint Board members reported stationing forces at Manila would cost too much. In addition, docking the fleet at Manila Bay would subject it to "serious disablement by typhoons" and create a ripe strategic target for enemy invasion by making Manila the centralized political capital, commercial center, and main naval station.<sup>30</sup>

The Army members demonstrated the same stubbornness, still preferring Manila Bay. Acting Governor General of the Philippines W. Cameron Forbes stated a preference for Corregidor, the largest island at the mouth of the bay. "We would be absolutely certain that [Manila] would be the last place to fall in time of war," stated Forbes.

"Corregidor is in a sense impregnable."<sup>31</sup> Such logic found favor with the Joint Board generals. General Wood, now a Joint Board member himself, recorded in his diary that after speaking with Generals Tasker H. Bliss and Arthur Murray, he agreed "we should center everything as far as possible on Corregidor."<sup>32</sup>

By early November 1909 the Joint Board finally reached some degree of resolution insofar as Philippine defense responsibilities were concerned. At the 8 November meeting, Army members collectively lodged a statement. "In the event of war...the Army will be entirely relieved from the responsibility for defense of the Olongapo station attack from the land side." Not surprising given their main strategic focus had by now moved east to Hawaii, the naval members agreed.<sup>33</sup> Such consensus, however, had profound repercussions for U.S. Pacific military strategy. Unlike in 1908, the burden of defending the Philippines now in fact shifted to a potential naval force. Army forces now had to hold out until the fleet's arrival.

Such a strategy continued into the following decade. By 1913 U.S.-Japanese relations again reached a fevered pitch when the California state legislature passed land holding laws that discriminated against Orientals.<sup>34</sup> During

the 15 May 1913 meeting, the Joint Board members voted unanimously to recommend moving the cruisers *Saratoga*, *Cincinnati*, *Albany*, *Rainbow*, and *Helena* immediately from the Yangtze River in China. The Board justified the move to Manila both for fleet protection - Pearl Harbor and the main U.S. naval forces were over 4800 miles away - and as reinforcements for the Army forces located in the Philippines.<sup>35</sup> General Wood commented on the recent strategic environment angrily in his diary.

A situation absolutely inexcusable; the matter has been pointed out times without end and has been a subject of controversy for years. The same situation existed to a lesser extent in 1907, and but a limited amount of capacity can explain the senseless separation of these shops and supplies from the place where they have to be rendezvoused in time of war.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the suggestion of moving the ships, the admirals and generals decided they had authority "to initiate, as well as to act on subjects referred to it."<sup>37</sup> Originally empowered solely to advise their civilian superiors, the eight military men together attempted to give the Joint Board an unprecedented independent authority to act. This action taken by the Joint Board questioned its most basic functions. The Board suggested divorcing its members from civilian control by expanding its consultative powers into operational authority.

By this time Woodrow Wilson occupied the White House. Wilson, together with high-ranking officials like Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, believed strongly in civilian supremacy in military affairs. Hints of such conviction first surfaced during a Cabinet meeting early in Wilson's first term in office. As Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston recorded in his memoirs, during discussion of the recommended ship movements the Secretary of State "got red in the face and was very emphatic," retorting angrily "army and navy officers could not be trusted to say what we should do or not do, till we actually got to war." Wilson responded that while the Joint Board "has presented the military aspect of the situation as it sees it and it may be right," the President viewed the civilian Cabinet as a forum for "considering this matter with another light, on the diplomatic side" in order to determine policy.<sup>38</sup>

The attempt by the Joint Board to expand its authority ended any influence with the President. On Saturday 17 May 1913 Navy Secretary Josephus Daniels immediately went to the White House and informed President Wilson of new developments pertaining to the Joint Board. Earlier that morning Admiral Bradley A. Fiske, a naval member of the



Joint Board, appealed to the Secretary to follow the Board's advice concerning the deployment of ships. Daniels rejected the military counsel. According Daniels, shortly after Fiske's departure a reporter from a large newspaper entered his office and "asked if I had approved the action of the Joint Board of taking all ships on the Pacific Coast and sending [them] to Hawaii or Manila." After having Daniels recount events, Wilson responded by stating that following his decision the Joint Board "had no right to be trying to force a different course" and concluded by warning Daniels that "if this should occur again, there will be no General or Joint Boards. They will be abolished."<sup>39</sup>

This presidential anger never really subsided, and from that point until 1919 the influence of the Joint Board declined. In what would be one of his last memorandum as senior member of the Joint Board, Dewey affirmed to Secretary Daniels that effective May 1914 "no more meetings of the Joint Board were to be held" by verbal orders of the President.<sup>40</sup>

By 1917 the Joint Board fell into bureaucratic neglect. Even though officially both the War and Navy Secretaries submitted subjects for recommendation, unfilled

membership vacancies left the Joint Board unable to consider them in quick enough time.<sup>41</sup> Age and duty also took its toll on the Board. Admiral Dewey suffered a debilitating stroke. Additionally, the land war in Europe garnered the time and attention of officers like Army Chief of Staff General Peyton C. March.

In his diary General Wood appraised an instance of the Joint Board deciding U.S. military strategy in the Pacific.

The situation brought about by broken down old men handling the matter is not only ridiculous but highly dangerous. They are simply milling around without any definite policy concerning anything.<sup>42</sup>

A look at Joint Board minutes and files concerning the Pacific and the Philippines reveal roots of such a breakdown. To be sure, Army-Navy debates over where to place the Philippine naval station had negative repercussions for the Joint Board during the presidencies of Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Woodrow Wilson. The continued advocacy of naval members from 1903 until 1909 - most strongly by Admiral George Dewey, as well as members like Admiral Royal Ingersoll and Captain Sidney A. Staunton - for Subig Bay, while Army members pushed for fortifying Manila Bay, angered the former Assistant Secretary of the Navy to the point of personally

admonishing the interservice body. Yet Roosevelt did not permit such anger to blind him from their future recommendations.

What ultimately destroyed Joint Board influence was its failed attempt in 1914 to extend its original duties and responsibilities from consultative powers into operational authority. Important superiors such as President Woodrow Wilson and Navy Secretary Daniels perceived the action as a bold stroke against their cherished ideal of civilian supremacy in military affairs. Consequently, the first permanent interservice consultative body had by World War I became a committee of inactivity. By 1919, the Joint Board decayed into a group of "broken down old men" who had lost their most valuable asset: the ear of their commander-in-chief.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> For an understanding of the American empire in the Pacific, see Brian McAllister Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902 - 1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>2</sup> William R. Braisted, "The Philippine Naval Base Problem, 1898 - 1909," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 41 (June 1954): 21.

<sup>3</sup> David F. Long, *Gold Braid and Foreign Relations: Diplomatic Activities of U.S. Naval Officers, 1798 - 1883* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988), 207-35; John H. Schroeder, *Shaping a Maritime Empire: The Commercial and Diplomatic Role of the American Navy, 1829 - 1861* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985), 146-57; Seward W. Livermore, "American Naval-Base Policy in the Far East, 1850 - 1914," *The Pacific Historical Review* 13 (June 1944): 114-5.

<sup>4</sup> Fiscal Year Governor Reports, 1901 - 1905, Roll 1, M 181, Annual Reports of the Governors of Guam, 1901 - 1941, National Archives Microfilm Publications, Washington, D.C. It is imperative to note that American military leaders did consider Guam an important strategic point in the Pacific until World War I, but did not designate it an area of primary strategic importance like the Philippines. On 30 June 1905 Commander G.L. Dyer reported to the Assistant Secretary of the Navy that Guam's location and topography made it an area of "great and recognized strategical value." The Navy agreed, but Guam fiscal year governor reports from 1906-1919 reveal appropriation requests never reached desired levels.

<sup>5</sup> "Address of Hon. William H. Moody Before the Michigan Club, at Detroit, Saturday, May 31, 1902," Box 1, William Henry Moody Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>6</sup> Linn, *Guardians of Empire*, 9-22. For a more extensive study, see Linn's more recent study titled *The Philippine*

*War, 1899 - 1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> A good map illustrating the geographical features of Manila and Subig Bays may be found in Louis Morton, "Military and Naval Preparations for the Defense of the Philippines during the War Scare of 1907," *Military Affairs* 13 (Summer 1949): 98.

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey to Secretary of the Navy William H. Moody, 15 June 1903. Cited in Daniel Joseph Costello, "Planning for War: A History of the General Board of the Navy, 1900 - 1914," (Ph.D. diss., Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1968), 206; Edward S. Miller, *War Plan ORANGE: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897 - 1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 66.

<sup>9</sup> Meeting Minutes, 9 December 1903, 15 December 1903, 22 December 1903, Joint Board 301, Roll 1, M 1421, Records of the Joint Board, 1903 - 1947, National Archives Microfilm Publications, National Archives, Washington, D.C. (Joint Board records will be cited hereafter as "JB" with a general subject file number and, if necessary, followed by a hyphen, specific serial file number. Roll number and National Archives Microfilm Publication number will conclude each Joint Board records citation note). JB 301 is the general subject file on the Joint Board, and contains all meeting minutes. These three meeting were the third, fourth, and fifth meetings convened by the Joint Board.

<sup>10</sup> Memoranda, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to Secretary of War Elihu Root and Secretary of the Navy William H. Moody, 19 December 1903, JB 305-4, Roll 6, M 1421. JB 305 is the general subject file on the Philippines. Joint Board standard operating procedure dictated all memorandum from the interservice body be made in duplicate so that both civilian service secretaries may be properly appraised.

<sup>11</sup> Memoranda, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to the Acting Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of

War William H. Taft, 26 May 1904, JB 305-14, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>12</sup> Memorandum, Assistant Army Chief of Staff, n.d., JB 305-14, Roll 6, M 1421. Although the document is not dated, handwritten at the bottom of the page by Army Chief of Staff Chaffee is "May 11 1904 Referred to Joint Board recommend Chaffey C of S."

<sup>13</sup> Morton, "Military and Naval Preparations for the Defense of the Philippines during the War Scare of 1907," 95.

<sup>14</sup> George W. Baer, *One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U.S. Navy, 1890 - 1990* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 44.

<sup>15</sup> Correspondence, Admiral George Dewey to "My dear Brownson," 26 October 1906, Box 21, Folder 5, George Dewey Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Bracketed text my own, added for clarity. The remaining punctuation is Dewey's own. Hereafter cited as "Dewey Papers."

<sup>16</sup> War Department Memorandum, 26 October 1907, JB 305, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421. It is unclear who initiated the document, although it is quite clear President Roosevelt endorsed the memorandum at bottom. The President ordered the suspension of all fortification construction at Subig Bay except "those necessary to make it a harbor refuge for our vessels and prevent its use as an advanced naval base by the enemy."

<sup>17</sup> Braisted, "The Philippine Naval Base Problem, 1898 - 1909," 34.

<sup>18</sup> Cable, Major General Leonard Wood, Commanding General, Philippines Division to General F.C. Ainsworth, Adjutant General, 1 November 1907, JB 305, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>19</sup> Memorandum, Major General Leonard Wood, Commanding General, Philippines Division to General F.C. Ainsworth,

Adjutant General, 23 December 1907, in Morton, "Military and Naval Preparations for the Defense of the Philippines during the War Scare of 1907," 101-4.

<sup>20</sup> Meeting Minutes, 29 January 1908, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum, Major General J.P. Bell, Army Chief of Staff to President Theodore Roosevelt, 7 February 1908, Reel 80, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Presidential Papers Microfilm, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>22</sup> Meeting Minutes, 19 February 1908, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>23</sup> Memorandum, President Theodore Roosevelt to Secretary of War William H. Taft, 11 February 1908, JB 305-59, Roll 6, M 1421. Members of the Joint Board also debated on the specific subject of Subig Bay versus Manila Bay as a suitable site for a naval base in JB 305-53, although no records on the subject were filed.

<sup>24</sup> Memorandum, President Theodore Roosevelt to Secretary of War William H. Taft, 11 February 1908, JB 305-59, Roll 6, M 1421. Bracketed text my own and added for clarity.

<sup>25</sup> Memoranda, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to Secretary of the Navy Victor H. Metcalf and Secretary of War William H. Taft, 5 March 1908, JB 305-59, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>26</sup> Lawrence Sondhaus, *Navies of Europe, 1815 - 2002* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2002), 126-31.

<sup>27</sup> Memoranda, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to Secretary of the Navy Victor H. Metcalf and Secretary of War William H. Taft, 5 March 1908, JB 305-59, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>28</sup> Memoranda, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to Secretary of the Navy Victor H. Metcalf and Secretary of War William H. Taft, 5 March 1908, JB 305-59, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>29</sup> Memoranda, Admiral George Dewey, Joint Board Senior Member to Secretary of War William H. Taft and Secretary of the Navy Victor H. Metcalf, 19 February 1908, JB 303-54, Roll 3, M 1421. JB 303 is the general subject file on U.S. Coast and Harbor Defenses.

<sup>30</sup> Ingersoll - Staunton Report, 9 October 1909, JB 305, Nonserial Documents, Roll 6, M 1421. The Report appeared before the Board during the 19 October 1909 meeting. See also Meeting Minutes, 19 October 1909, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>31</sup> Memorandum, W. Cameron Forbes, Acting Governor General, Philippines to Brigadier General Clarence R. Edwards, Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs, 8 September 1909, in Meeting Minutes, 19 October 1909, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421. Governor General Forbes also issued similar conclusions to Secretary of the Navy George von L. Meyer. See Memorandum, W. Cameron Forbes to Secretary of the Navy, 2 August 1909, JB 305-63, Roll 6, M 1421.

<sup>32</sup> Diary Entry, 6 November 1909, Box 4, Leonard Wood Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Cited hereafter as "Leonard Wood Diary."

<sup>33</sup> Meeting Minutes, 8 November 1909, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>34</sup> Miller, *War Plan ORANGE*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> Meeting Minutes, 8 November 1909, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>36</sup> Diary Entry, 16 May 1913, Box 7, Leonard Wood Diary.

<sup>37</sup> Meeting Minutes, 15 May 1913, JB 301, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>38</sup> David F. Houston, *Eight Years with Wilson's Cabinet, 1913 - 1920* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1926), 1:66. The Cabinet meeting was held at the White House on 16 May 1913.



<sup>39</sup> Diary Entry, 17 May 1913, in *The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels, 1913 - 1921*, ed. E. David Cronin (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), 67-8. Bracketed text my own and added for clarity.

<sup>40</sup> Memorandum, Admiral George Dewey to Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels, 25 January 1915, JB 301, Nonserial Documents, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>41</sup> Memorandum, Lieutenant Commander F.L. Sandoz, Joint Board Recorder to Admiral William S. Benson, Joint Board Senior Member, 20 June 1917, JB 301, Nonserial Documents, Roll 1, M 1421.

<sup>42</sup> Diary Entry, 20 April 1914, Box 8, Leonard Wood Diary.

## CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSION

"It is a fundamental principle," wrote Acting Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt to Secretary of State Robert Lansing on 1 May 1919, "that the foreign policy of our government is in the hands of the State Department. "It is also an accepted fact," Roosevelt continued, "that the foreign policy of a government depends for its acceptance by other nations upon the naval and military force that is behind it."<sup>1</sup> In an effort to mend civil-military wounds between American policymakers and military strategists, the future president submitted with his memorandum an organizational chart prepared by the Naval War College. Together the documents outlined a new "Joint Plan Making Body" composed of State Department, Army General Staff, as well as Navy General Board representatives. Ultimately the plan never translated into practice. The Secretary of State never acknowledged the memorandum, appearing never even to have opened it in the first place.<sup>2</sup>

Lansing's inaction ironically proved symptomatic of the state of interservice cooperation and collaboration in

the United States from 1903 until 1919. Prior to its creation in July 1903, the Joint Board continued earlier traditions of formulating military strategy through ad hoc innovations and recommendations made by consultative staffs within each respective service. The successes of the 1847 Veracruz assault and 1863 Vicksburg campaign illustrated that sometimes such informality worked. As a consequence, amicable personal relations between the admirals and generals became institutional practice.

Yet the Santiago campaign in Cuba during the 1898 Spanish-American War introduced the need for a greater degree of institutional permanency in the formation of American military strategy, and exposed the fragility of a system based solely on strategizing impromptu. As General William R. Shafter and Admiral William T. Sampson demonstrated in pursuing divergent courses of action for seizing the Cuban city, interservice acrimony stemmed from the very same level that had traditionally brought interservice harmony. As predicating interservice cooperation solely on how well generals and admirals related with one another proved a risky venture by the turn of the twentieth century, the services created consultative

staffs such as the Navy General Board and Army General Staff within their own services.

As the United States acquired new and far-reaching possessions following the Spanish-American War in 1898, civilian policymakers in Washington assigned American military forces to unprecedented roles. Over a sixteen year period the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy found themselves formulating strategies together when it came to the protection of American shores through coast defense, the enforcement of the Caribbean in regional defense of American commercial investments, the defense and management of the Panama Canal, and the deliberation on the fundamentals of American military strategy in the Pacific.

Consequently, the Joint Board's initial structural design continued this interservice management. With its creation, the Joint Board provided effective functions when it came to the general formation of American military strategy. For over ten years, the Joint Board brought together highly professional senior military and naval officers. The Navy Department's Mills Building became home to unprecedented gatherings of Army General Staff officers and Navy General Board members who collaborated on recommending important military actions. Thanks to the

reform efforts of Admiral Henry C. Taylor and Secretary of War Elihu Root, what had once been a personal process for their predecessors now achieved a high degree of institutional and - at least in theory - interservice permanency.

During its early years the Joint Board also functioned well when it came to the minutiae of military affairs. The admirals and generals reached consensus on matters dealing with the location of wireless telegraphy lines at Guantanamo naval station in Cuba. Joint Board members also agreed consistently on the desire for military-led governments at U.S. insular possessions. Recommendations for military management of installations designed for protection of the Panama Canal and Philippine naval stations at Manila and Subig Bays reflected an incredibly high degree of interservice accord.

Yet despite such cooperative efforts, civilian policymakers never granted the Joint Board any decision-making authority. Consequently, when it came to the execution of American military strategy, the interservice agency had a far more tainted track record. Protecting American shorelines from enemy attack proved a task beyond Joint Board advising channels. When it came to determining

how best to protect these defensive areas, the admirals and generals instead found themselves deliberating outside the Joint Board. Civilian policymakers listened with the same degree of attentiveness to coast defense recommendations put forth by smaller interservice agencies like the Fort Totten Torpedo Board and Joint Army and Navy Board on Aeronautic Cognizance similarly as to those advanced by the Joint Board. In the end, all the Joint Board did was simply agree with the smaller bodies, and issue almost verbatim recommendations.

In the final analysis, however, the fumbling of grand strategy issues in the period immediately prior to World War I tarnished the Board's historical legacy most of all. While perhaps agreeing on the need for military management of insular governments, army and navy leaders disagreed vehemently over where to place specific insular naval stations. The Pacific naval base controversy, where naval members including Joint Board president Admiral Dewey, pushed for Subig Bay while army members led by Major General Leonard Wood advocated strongly for fortifying Manila Bay, angered President Theodore Roosevelt to the point of personally admonishing the interservice group to make up its collective mind. In the end, such interservice

acrimony contributed to the Joint Board's decline in influence. Yet Roosevelt did not allow such irritation with the Board to blind him to its value or to discount its future recommendations. As a result the Joint Board, though initially off to a somewhat rocky start, survived and had the opportunity to serve later presidents.

Instead of heeding the words of their commander-in-chief, however, the admirals and generals ignored such past encounters and ultimately pushed civilian tolerance of the Joint Board too far. The failed attempt in 1914 by members of the Board to extend their original powers from consultative into operational authority sealed its decline. President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels - both noted for their distrust of the military - perceived such actions as moves against civilian supremacy in military affairs. By World War I, the first attempt in American history at a permanent interservice consultative body, an institution that had once found favor in the White House, had lost its important presidential audience. The challenge of coordinating rooks and bishops continued.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum, Acting Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Secretary of State, 1 May 1919, cited in Ernest R. May, "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States," *Political Science Quarterly* 70 (June 1955): 167.

<sup>2</sup>Memorandum, Acting Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Secretary of State, 1 May 1919, as cited in May, "The Development of Political-Military Consultation in the United States," 168. May remarked "when I found the original of Roosevelt's letter in the State Department archives, the blueprint was stapled to it, closed, and, as far as I could tell, the staple had never been removed, the blueprint never unfolded."



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