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## The Plan for War in the Pacific

reviewed by Maj Robert E. Schmidle

**WAR PLAN ORANGE: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897-1945.** By Edward S. Miller. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 1991, 509 pp., \$34.95. (Member \$31.45)

The history of the 20th century is replete with examples of strategic war plans that failed because of inaccurate assumptions, faulty executions, or a combination of the two. The German Schlieffen Plan for the attack on France in 1914 and the French Plan "D" for the defense of Western Europe in 1940 are two well-known examples. War Plan Orange, the American strategy for the defeat of Japan, was, in contrast, remarkable for its visionary predictions and ultimate success. This book is an exceptionally well-researched and tightly written account of that strategy.

Mr. Miller is a retired executive with substantial planning experience in the civilian sector, and he presents a clear, professional analysis of this war plan unencumbered by historical or military biases. *War Plan Orange* is distinctive because it is based on declassified documents in the National Archives and the Naval Operational Archives.

United States war plans prior to World War II referred to potential adversaries by color. Japan was code named Orange. Accordingly, War Plan

Orange was the scheme, primarily naval, for the unilateral conquest of a belligerent Nipponese empire. The planning for this conquest began in 1897 and was continued, modified, and refined until August 1945.

There were three phases to the plan. In Phase I the Japanese would take over lightly defended U.S. territories in the western Pacific. These islands, including the Philippines, would provide the raw materials necessary to continue Japan's economic expansion. The U.S. Fleet, because of the distance of its home ports, would prove no deterrent to these Japanese attacks.

In Phase II the United States would counterattack, seizing Japanese possessions in the Central Pacific. These advanced naval and air bases would bring overwhelming U.S. military power progressively closer to mainland Japan. The planners estimated that this "stepping stone" campaign would be a war of attrition lasting 2 to 3 years. Implied in this phase was the controversial notion of an amphibious assault. The Army's lack of interest in War Plan Orange compelled the Marine Corps to develop amphibious doctrine and tactics, which were championed by a long line of Marines that included Earl H. Ellis, Robert H. Dunlap, Charles D. Barrett, and John H. Russell. The capture of heavily de-

fended islands would be essential to the success of this plan.

In Phase III the United States would blockade and lay siege to Japan. A determined aerial and naval bombardment would be sustained until its unconditional surrender. The actual conduct of the Pacific campaign, which the author examines in the concluding chapters, was remarkably similar to the forecast of Plan Orange.

*War Plan Orange* is most compelling when the author explores the planning process, which Miller refers to as "complex and sometimes unruly." Revealing previously classified information, he quietly opens the door and allows us to eavesdrop on the planning boards as they wrestle with military strategy, political contradictions, and the inevitable intrusion of personalities. The author contends that the American method of planning is unique among military organizations, and he suggests that the freewheeling, often contentious exchange of ideas that characterizes this process is responsible for its success.

There were, according to the author, two divergent ideologies at work on War Plan Orange. He calls their proponents "Thrusters" and "Cautionaries." The Thrusters were intellectual descendants of Adm Alfred Thayer Mahan; they advocated an immediate drive to the Philippines in response to Japanese aggression. The Cautionaries, portrayed as realists, favored a slower, more methodical advance across the Pacific. The interaction of these two groups, each alternately ascendant on the planning board, is the soul of this book. It is the cornerstone upon which the author has built an adroit and readable history of the personalities and events that shaped the Pacific Campaign in World War II.

*War Plan Orange* is the result of 18 years of meticulous and original research. Miller brings vitality to a subject that has often been described in dull, mechanical prose. He chronicles the development of War Plan Orange in an erudite and engaging narrative. He also includes numerous maps that greatly aid the reader in understanding the geopolitical factors that influenced this plan. Most important, however, Miller shines an unfiltered and thoroughly illuminating light on the American strategic planning process.



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