

## War on a Global Scale: Strategic Concepts

Read the selection below by General George C. Marshall, the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Armed Forces. Answer the questions that follow.

The President and the Prime Minister, with the advice of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, made the decision at this first conference in Washington, December, 1941 that our resources would be concentrated first to defeat Germany, the greater and closer enemy, and then Japan.

In April 1942, President Roosevelt directed me to proceed to London, accompanied by Mr. Harry Hopkins, for a conference with the Prime Minister, the War Cabinet, and the British Chiefs of Staff, regarding the tentative plan for the invasion of the continent in a cross-Channel operation. There a general agreement was reached that the final blow must be delivered across the English Channel and eastward through the plains of western Europe. At that time the Red Army was slowly falling back under the full fury of the German assault, and it was accepted at the London Conference that everything practicable must be done to reduce the pressure on the Soviet lest she collapse and the door be opened wide for a complete conquest of Europe and a probable juncture with the Japanese in the Indian Ocean.

After prolonged discussions, it became evident that the only operation that could be undertaken with a fair prospect of success that year was TORCH, the assault on North Africa, Landings there would be a long way from Germany, but should serve to divert at least some German pressure from the Red Army, and would materially improve the critical situation in the Middle East. It was therefore decided, with the approval of the President and the Prime Minister, to mount the North African assault at the earliest possible moment, accepting the fact that this would mean not only the abandonment of the possibility for any operation in Western Europe that year, but that the necessary build-up for the cross-Channel assault could not be completed in 1943. TORCH would bleed most of our resources in the Atlantic, and would confine us in the Pacific to the holding of the Hawaii-Midway line and the preservation of communications to Australia.

1. What decision was made at the first conference in Washington D.C.?
2. What was considered to be the final blow against Germany?
3. Why was this choice considered important for the Red Army (Soviet Union)?
4. What was Operation TORCH?

5. How would TORCH affect U.S. military operations in the Pacific?

We have since learned that the German plan at that time was to attempt the defeat of Britain by aerial bombardment and by destruction of her army and resources in the Middle east. Colonel General Jodl, Chief of the German Armed Forces Operations Staff, has disclosed that it was Hitler's plan to break through Stalingrad and Egypt, and join these two salients in the Middle East.

The heroic defense of Stalingrad and General Montgomery's crushing defeat of Rommel at El Alamein dislocated these gigantic pincers. The further development of the operations in North Africa from the east and the west, and the Soviet offensive from the Volga proved to be the turning points at which the Axis was forced on the strategic defensive.

In January 1943, the President and the Prime Minister, with the Combined Chiefs of Staff, met at Casablanca. It was then apparent that our North African operation was to be successful, even beyond original calculations. Tunisia was a lure into which the German command continued to pour great quantities of men and materiel, commitments that were certain to be disastrous for the enemy once the winter rains ceased and the low clouds over the Sicilian Strait cleared, in the face of overwhelming Allied superiority on the sea and in the air. At the conclusion of the North African campaign, enemy killed and captured numbered 349,206 Italian and German troops, and there had been captured or destroyed on land alone nearly 200,000 tons of enemy materiel.

6. How did the Germans plan to defeat the British in the Middle East?
7. What was Hitler's battle plan?
8. How many German and Italian soldiers were killed or captured in North Africa?
9. What two major defeats did the Germans face?
10. Where did the President of the United States meet the British Prime Minister?

Before the assault of Sicily was actually undertaken, the President, the Prime Minister, and the Combined Chiefs of Staff met again in Washington in May. This meeting designated the TRIDENT Conference, may prove to be one of the most historic military conclaves of this war, for here the specific strategy to which the movements of the land, sea, and air forces of the American and British Allies conformed was translated into firm commitments. There were changes in detail and technique after the TRIDENT Conference, but the Pacific strategy was sustained, and the first great objective, the defeat of the European Axis, Germany and Italy, and their satellites, was accomplished.

It was at this Conference that the combined Chiefs of Staff decided to extend Allied influence in the Mediterranean to the point where Italy would be forced to withdraw from the war. They also approved the plan of the United States Army Air Forces to strike Germany a serious blow by reducing her great oil resources at Ploesti.

At the TRIDENT Conference plans for a direct assault from the United Kingdom into Europe's classic battlegrounds were reaffirmed. Even though we were now firmly entrenched in North Africa, to have attempted to force Germany from the south across the Alpine barrier was on the face of it impracticable. In Europe's innumerable wars no vigorously opposed crossing of the Alps had ever been successfully executed. Operation OVERLORD, the new code name for the assault of France, which replaced ROUNDUP, was formally accepted and, for the purposes of planning, the spring of 1944 was designated as the target date. General Eisenhower was directed to send to the United Kingdom beginning 1 November seven seasoned divisions which were fighting in North Africa, and which would fight in Sicily, even though this meant that at the very moment he would be committing histories in a full-scale campaign in Italy, he would be obliged to release two Army Corps of seasoned troops.

11. What was the TRIDENT conference?
12. What was Operation Overlord?
13. Why was attacking Germany from Italy across the Alps considered impracticable?
14. When was the assault of France planned?
15. How would the United States reduce German oil resources?

Nor was Japan neglected at the TRIDENT Conference. It was decided to maintain an unremitting offensive pressure on the Japanese even while our forces closed in to deliver the knock-out blow to Italy and we were gathering the tremendous resources in the United Kingdom that would be necessary to force the continent. Japan would be approached both from the west and from the east. On the Asiatic mainland it was determined to build up the flow of materiel to China via the air route over the "hump" and to initiate aggressive land and air operations to reestablish surface communications with beleaguered China. In the Pacific, General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz were directed to move against the Japanese outer defenses, ejecting the enemy from the Aleutians and seizing the Marshalls, some of the Carolines, the remainder of the Solomons, the Bismarck Archipelago, and the remainder of New Guinea.

Victory in this global war depended on the successful execution of OVERLORD. That must not fail. Yet the Japanese could not be permitted meanwhile to entrench in their stolen empire, and China must not be allowed to fall victim to further Japanese assaults. Allied resources were searched through again and again, and strategy reconsidered in the light of the deficiencies. These conclusions seemed inescapable: France must be invaded in 1944, to shorten the war by facilitating the advance westward of the Soviet forces. At the same time German technological advances such as in the development of atomic explosives made it imperative that we attack before these terrible weapons could be turned against us. In addition, the pressure on the Japanese in the Pacific must not be relaxed. Communications with China must be reopened. Resources were allocated accordingly. The balance was extremely delicate but we had to go ahead.

When General Eisenhower was selected as the Supreme Allied Commander for OVERLORD after the resumption of the conference at Cairo in December, he received this directive:

"You will enter the continent of Europe and, in conjunction with the other Allied Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces."

16. What areas was the United States planning to take from the Japanese?
17. Victory in the global war depended on what?
18. Why must France be invaded in 1944?
19. Who was chosen as Allied Supreme Commander for Operation Overlord?
20. What weapon did the Allies fear the Germans would develop?