

Chairman's Summary

Defense of the Wider Realm: the Diplomacy and Strategy of the Protection of Islands in War

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From 2007 until last year (2012), the International Forum on War History (hereafter, “Forum”) took up the theme of the Pacific War to serve as a useful companion to a work in progress by the NIDS Center for Military History provisionally titled *Pacific War History* (provisional title).

The NIDS Center for Military History is currently working on another book to be published by the end of this fiscal year called the *Falklands War History*. As last year marked the milestone year of the 30th anniversary of the start of the Falklands War, related files began to be released at the British National Archives under the 30-year rule, bringing a resurgence of worldwide interest in this war.

In the present-day Asia-Pacific region, interest in island disputes is increasing in Japan as a result of the changes that have taken place in the security environment surrounding the country—dramatic changes to say the least.

Against this background, the theme of this year’s Forum was “Defense of the Wider Realm: the Diplomacy and Strategy of the Protection of Islands in War.” The objective of the Forum was to conduct a comprehensive examination of how parties, in the face of island disputes, dealt with them diplomatically, and how they actually fought when pushed to war. The Forum covered not only the Falklands War, but also the wars in the European and Pacific theaters during World War II (WWII).

As is well-known, WWII has a variety of names in Japan, including “Pacific War,” “Great East Asia War,” and “Asia-Pacific War.” Past Forums have consistently referred to the war as the “Pacific War” for the reason of convenience: “Pacific War” is the name that is used most commonly. While for the same reason this year’s Forum uses the terms “Falklands War” and “Falkland Islands,” this, needless to say, should not be understood to mean that the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) agrees with any particular position or view.

A summary of this year’s Forum is as follows.

The Forum began with the keynote address of retired Vice Admiral Yoji Koda (former Commander in Chief of the Self-Defense Fleet, Maritime Self-Defense Force) entitled, “Island Defense and Seizure Operations, and Naval Strategic Lessons: Learned by Imperial Japan in the Pacific Theater of Operations during World War II.”

In his address, Admiral Koda analyzed the key battles of the Pacific War that were fought over islands spanning the Central Pacific to the eastern part of the Indian Ocean from the two perspectives of the attacking and defending sides. Admiral Koda described that the Japanese Navy had almost no interest in defending islands, including the mandated territory. The Japanese went into the Pacific War with insufficient research on amphibious operations (e.g., the Gallipoli Campaign), equipment, and tactics. Even after the successful attack on

Pearl Harbor, the Japanese Navy adhered to the “phased attrition” strategy employed against the United States, and did not attempt to change its method of operations, including the deployment of submarines. Admiral Koda said the Japanese Navy did not understand the true essence of island warfare until the Guadalcanal and Solomon Islands campaign. Furthermore, he said in this war, the Japanese military, while fighting ground battles with an advantage, failed to defend islands in many cases due to the loss of sea and air control. Admiral Koda contended that to successfully defend islands, it was vital to possess the capability to fight ground wars as well as maintain control over the sea and air.

In the first session, two presentations were made, focusing on diplomacy and warfare over islands in the European and Mediterranean theaters during WWII. This was followed by comments and questions regarding the presentations. The two presentations were both about aspects of the war of which very little is known in Japan. One was about humanitarian aid for islanders in the British Channel Islands that were occupied by German forces. The other dealt with the question of the strategic significance to Britain of the campaigns in Greece and Crete during the initial phase of WWII.

Prof. Phylomena H. Badsey delivered a presentation entitled, “Occupation and Humanitarian Aid—A Case Study: The Channel Islands 1944-1945.” Prof. Badsey shed light on the historical facts surrounding the Channel Islands. She explained that for about one year following the allied forces’ landings in Normandy in June 1944, the German forces that were stationed in the Channel Islands, the only British territory fully occupied by German forces during WWII, were cut off from both the allied forces and the German forces, as were the islanders. As a result, the German forces in the Channel Islands and the islanders were forced to live under a challenging environment with extreme shortages of food and other basic supplies. Prof. Badsey then discussed the ethical and moral issues of humanitarian aid provided to enemy troops that could surface under such circumstances.

This was followed by Prof. David Horner’s presentation, “Britain and the Campaigns in Greece and Crete in 1941.” Prof. Horner discussed Britain’s strategy of standing alone against Hitler’s Germany and deciding to send forces to Greece in February 1941 at a time when Britain was far outnumbered. Prof. Horner examined the reasons for which Britain made this policy decision through the two perspectives of political interests and military capability of executing the policy decision. Prof. Horner noted that in terms of the situation of the operations in mainland Greece and Crete, the military capabilities of the British forces at the time were inadequate for achieving their strategic objectives. In the end, Britain gave priority to its political judgment out of concerns for international public opinion, particularly, U.S. public opinion.

Regarding these two presentations, Prof. Kanji Akagi asked the following questions. First, regarding Prof. Badsey’s presentation, Prof. Akagi asked about any voluntary cooperation extended by the islanders to the German forces in the German-occupied Channel Islands where there was one German soldier to three islanders. Prof. Badsey responded that there was no such voluntary cooperation. Prof. Akagi also asked about the British government’s post-WWII attitude towards the occupation of the Channel Islands and the general view held by the British people. Prof. Badsey answered that the fact of the occupation of the Channel

Islands was concealed for some time following the war, and therefore, the British people were unaware of the details.

Regarding Prof. Horner's presentation, Prof. Akagi asked whether the struggle in the Mediterranean Sea had the potency to determine the outcome of WWII in terms of the perceptions held by the British War Cabinet, which decided to intervene in Greece during the campaign against Italy in Libya. In response to this question, Prof. Horner said although from a purely strategic level Britain likely was able to dedicate itself to the offensive on the European continent without becoming embroiled in the warfare in the Eastern Mediterranean, strategies are not necessarily pure. For example, the struggle in the Mediterranean Sea had much significance, notably, the fulfilment of Britain's commitment to engagement in Greece, prevention of a situation in the Eastern Mediterranean of a partial siege by the Axis countries, and the need to demonstrate to the world that Britain was continuing the war in the Mediterranean.

In the special address, Prof. Azar Gat delivered a presentation entitled, "Containment and Cold War before the Nuclear Age: Liddell Hart and Allied Strategy in 1937-1941." Prof. Gat elucidated that it was Basil H. Liddell Hart who very systematically explained in the 1930s the concepts of isolation, appeasement, containment, and cold war, concepts which underlay Western democracies' defense policies and grand strategies during the period of 1937-1941, which led to a crisis. Prof. Gat expressed the view that the United States, which attempted to contain Japan in the Pacific during the same period, promoted a similar policy.

In the second session, two presentations were made, focusing on diplomacy and warfare over islands in the Asia-Pacific theater during WWII. This was followed by comments and questions regarding the presentations.

Prof. Frank G. Hoffman, Senior Research Fellow, made a presentation entitled, "America Adapting: Submarine Warfare and Pacific Islands." Prof. Hoffman discussed that because the role of submarines remained limited in the U.S. Navy where Mahan's teachings were widely adopted, the Navy lacked the doctrine, tactics, and weapons necessary for the proactive operation of submarines. U.S. submarines were forced to carry out operations without the preparedness to achieve the attrition of merchantmen through unrestricted submarine warfare, as was ordered following the attack on Pearl Harbor. The submarines subsequently failed, learned, and adapted. Prof. Hoffman noted the importance of securing islands that can block sea lines of communication, which were carried out during this adaptation process, and on the significance that coordinated submarine operations had on the economy of the enemy country in this process. Prof. Hoffman concluded that the ability to learn of the U.S. submarines of 75 years ago, which created feedback loops and experimented, are still important today for the peace and victory of the United States.

Next, LTC Tatsushi Saito, Research Fellow, delivered a presentation entitled, "Battle for Guadalcanal: As Viewed from the Perspective of the Concentration of Forces," focusing on the Guadalcanal Campaign, which was identified as a repository of combat lessons. The two keywords of his presentation were "perimeter" and "race to concentrate force." In his presentation, LTC Saito analyzed the operations related to the battle for Guadalcanal, mainly from the perspective of the transport of heavy military equipment (artillery and armored units)

to the island conducted by Japanese forces. Furthermore, LTC Saito presented the reasons for defeat. LTC Saito said the reasons for Japan's defeat included Japan's lack of understanding of the importance of areas which were vital for blocking the enemy's expansion of his perimeter, as well as the Combined Fleet's lack of interest in protection for convoys.

Regarding the two presentations, Prof. Ryoichi Tobe asked the following questions. The first of his questions to Prof. Hoffman concerned the relevance of submarine warfare to island warfare, the theme of this Forum. Prof. Hoffman responded that relevance is found tactically in defending islands and strategically in maintaining peace among the islands in the Pacific—more specifically, in naval blockade and in the prevention of the occupation of islands by a naval power. The second question to Prof. Hoffman regarded why U.S. submarines were able to adapt to the actual war that was different in character from the anticipated war they had planned for prior to the war. Prof. Hoffman noted that the U.S. Navy was slow to adapt against the backdrop of the dogmatization of Mahan's ideas. On this premise, Prof. Hoffman said the speeding up of learning requires an organizational culture (e.g., ability to think and speak critically), the presence of a learning team (operation research team), and a learning and promotion mechanism (feedback loop).

To LTC Saito, Prof. Tobe asked about what consideration had been given to the relationship between establishing and holding an island position and the concentration of heavy military forces in the amphibious operation on Guadalcanal in the Japanese Army's preparations for amphibious operations prior to the war. Prof. Tobe also asked whether the Japanese Army and Navy adapted (innovated) to island warfare by drawing on the experience and lessons from Guadalcanal. LTC Saito responded that the term "amphibious operation" did not exist in the vocabulary of the Japanese Army and Navy. The Japanese military conducted such operations under the concept of "landing operations" and later attempted to adapt to island warfare. LTC Saito suggested that nevertheless it might have been the case that, overwhelmed by the realities of fighting in a geographically vast theaters, the Japanese military lapsed into passivity and could not find energy to address it. LTC Saito added that the amphibious operation for the U.S. forces might still have been in its development stages.

In the third session, three presentations were made, focusing on diplomacy and warfare over the Falkland Islands. This was followed by comments and questions regarding the presentations.

Prof. Stephen Badsey made a presentation entitled, "The Logistics of the British Recovery of the Falkland Islands 1982." The Falklands War was a war in which Britain had to project and sustain forces across a distance of as many as 12,000 km, with no prior planning. Prof. Badsey explained that logistics, the most important element in military strategy, worked because of British diplomacy as well as creative and improvised measures taken on-site. In particular, in regard to diplomacy, Prof. Badsey said Britain's ability to secure political support from major countries and to have them take a neutral position in favor of Britain contributed to the ability to avoid life or death complications in the execution of its operations. Prof. Badsey concluded that Britain's logistics efforts in the Falklands War were a considerable success when compared to Argentina's.

Dr. Ken Kotani, NIDS Senior Fellow, made a presentation entitled, "Political and

Diplomatic Lessons of the Falklands War.” According to Dr. Kotani, any assertion that Thatcher knew little about diplomacy or security is incorrect, as is made evident from the latest available historical materials regarding the extent to which the Thatcher administration was aware of the situation prior to the war. In terms of the Thatcher administration’s diplomatic measures, Britain’s efforts to convince others of its legitimacy within the United Nations and to maintain robust relations with America contributed greatly to Britain’s subsequent prosecution of the war. Dr. Kotani also noted that the establishment of a War Cabinet played a significant role in Britain’s conduct of war. Dr. Kotani raised a number of characteristics of the War Cabinet, including the fact that the War Cabinet was a decision-making body that highly reflected Thatcher’s preferences; the Chancellor of the Exchequer was not a member of the War Cabinet; and the head of the military, the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, attended the meetings of the War Cabinet. Lastly, regarding implications for Japan, Dr. Kotani said there was much Japan can learn from Britain – namely, on the diplomatic front, Dr. Kotani said Japan should continuously consider the extent to which it would be able to obtain other countries’ support. On the crisis management front, Dr. Kotani said Japan should take stock of Britain’s institutionalization of the War Cabinet arrangement into the National Security Council (NSC) and systematization of crisis management.

Lt. Col. Jun Yanagisawa delivered a presentation entitled, “Military Implications of the Falklands War: From Japan’s Point of View.” Lt. Col. Yanagisawa first presented the key aspects of the Falklands War, namely, that this was a war which involved fighting by two Western countries on land, at sea, in the air and underwater and in which Western naval warships were exposed for the first time to prolonged attacks from multiple jet aircraft. Taking these aspects into account, Lt. Col. Yanagisawa compared and analyzed the British and Argentinian forces from a strategic perspective as regards preparations for war and securing alliance partners; a tactical perspective as regards air superiority, command of the sea, concentration of firepower and mobility during the ground war, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and the perspective of joint operations. On this basis, Lt. Col. Yanagisawa explained that the Falklands War has many implications in terms of the organization, equipment, and training of the Self-Defense Forces of Japan, an island country. At the same time, he said unless subsequent advances in weapons, among other factors, are fully taken into consideration, Japan would face the same fate as France, which was the loser in the blitzkrieg operation of 1940 during WWII.

In regard to the three presentations, Prof. Yuichi Hosoya made the following comments. Regarding Prof. Badsey’s presentation, Prof. Hosoya said he was surprised by the markedly high quality of British logistics, and that Japan has a strong tendency to give low priority to logistics. Regarding Dr. Kotani’s presentation, Prof. Hosoya said the most important point was Dr. Kotani’s observation, based on the latest available historical materials, that Thatcher committed no error in failing to predict predicting Argentina’s invasion. Concerning Lt. Col. Yanagisawa’s presentation, Prof. Hosoya said he had provided an analysis that could only be provided by an SDF officer who had actually thought about strategies and tactics, and that his recommendations regarding future equipment were intriguing. Furthermore, Prof. Hosoya noted that in the conduct of war, especially in battles over islands, countries must refrain from

potentially misleading hesitations which could send a wrong message to the opponent.

Based on the discussions throughout the Forum, this topic of diplomacy and warfare over islands may be summarized as follows. First, regarding diplomacy, island disputes—contrary to attacks on the mainland—are of little interest to those which are not parties to the dispute. These disputes are, in other words, no more than trivial matters. It is therefore important that countries assert their positions carefully to the international community. How countries portray themselves as “victims” of invasion is critical, which is to say, uncompromisingly making claims and taking actions can turn out to have the opposite effect.

In particular, when it comes to issues like these that are low on the priority list of allies, obtaining the understanding and garnering the support of allies become essential.

Regarding warfare, firstly, although only the importance of sea and air control tend to be underscored, the key factor which determines victory or defeat is how smoothly the integrated operations of the ground, naval, and air forces, including the capabilities of the ground forces that ultimately take control in ground battles, proceed. This is what Paul Kennedy refers to as “orchestration,” identifying it as the most important element of amphibious operations (*Engineers of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned The Tide in the Second World War*, 2013).

Secondly, if the islands are far away than the mainland, the quality of logistics becomes critical. Conversely, the operation of submarines that interrupt logistics will be key.

Third is the issue of surprise attack. Islands have been subject to shock tactics by special forces in the Mediterranean Sea during WWII. In the Pacific, islands have been subject to frequent shock tactics, including the surprise landing on Makin Island and other islands by the U.S. forces, which had a level of success. This is demonstrative of the effectiveness of shock tactics against islands. In order to deter them, optimal monitoring and surveillance and intelligence gathering must be carried out.

In any event, in order to deter wars over islands and deal with disputes appropriately, it is further incumbent that countries prepare more carefully than for ordinary warfare, exercise strong leadership, and have a crisis management system to support this leadership.