

Arguing over Empire

*American Interservice and Interdepartmental Rivalry over Micronesia, 1943–1947**

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BETWEEN 1943 AND 1947 MICRONESIA WAS AT THE CENTRE OF AN INTENSE RIVALRY between the War, Navy, State, and Interior Departments. This rivalry revolved around conflicting ideas about the post-war administration of these strategically located islands. An investigation of this dispute reveals that Micronesia was a microcosm¹ of larger issues in American defence and foreign policy making during the Truman Administration. Although the focus of this article will be the Army–Navy rivalry over the post-war administration of the islands, the inter-service controversy also provides a vehicle for analysing the role of the pertinent civilian departments in trusteeship matters.

The literature on bureaucratic rivalry during the Truman Administration is extensive yet limited to the role of the military services. Very little of it analyses the role of key civilian departments like State and Interior in post-war interservice and interdepartmental disputes.² Similarly, the growing body of writing on the post-1945 role of the United States in Micronesia is also limited when it comes to a bureaucratic analysis of policy making. Although there are official and semi-official accounts from the 1940s,³ geopolitical studies from the 1950s and early 1960s,⁴ and more critical accounts from the 1960s to the present,⁵ very

* I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Prof. Richard Abbott of Eastern Michigan University, and Michael Unsworth, History Bibliographer at Michigan State University.

¹ For original use of this term, see Roger Gale, 'Micronesia: A Case Study of American Foreign Policy', PhD thesis, University of California at Berkeley (Berkeley 1977).

² The literature on interservice rivalry during the origins of the Cold War is much too voluminous to document here. The following are a few examples: Vincent Davis, *Postwar Defense Policy and the U.S. Navy, 1943–1946* (Chapel Hill 1966); Paolo E. Coletta, *The United States Navy and Defense Unification, 1947–1953* (Newark 1981); Harry R. Barowski, *The Hollow Threat: Strategic Air Power and Containment Before Korea* (Westport, Conn. 1982); Michael S. Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War: United States Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941–1945* (New Haven, Conn. 1977); Gordon W. Keiser, *The US Marine Corps and Defense Unification, 1944–47: The Politics of Survival* (Washington, DC 1982); Michael A. Palmer, *Origins of the Maritime Strategy: The Development of American Naval Strategy, 1945–1955* (Annapolis 1988); and Dean C. Allard, 'Interservice differences in the United States, 1945–1950: a naval perspective', *Airpower Journal*, 3 (1989), 71–85.

³ These include Vice Admiral W. H. P. Blandy, 'Operation Crossroads: the story of the air and underwater tests of the atom bomb at Bikini', *Army Ordnance*, 31 (1947), 341–3; William A. Shurcliff, *Bombs at Bikini: The Official Report of Operation Crossroads* (New York 1947); and Lieut. Comdr T. O. Clark, 'The administration of the former Japanese Mandated Islands', *USNIP*, 72 (1946), 511–5, among others.

⁴ See Earl S. Pomeroy, *Pacific Outpost: American Strategy in Guam and Micronesia* (Stanford 1951); John W. Coulter, *The Pacific Island Dependencies of the United States* (New York 1957); Herold J. Wiens, *Pacific Island Bastions of the United States* (New York 1962).

⁵ See Paul Carano and Pedro C. Sanchez, *A Complete History of Guam* (Rutland, Vt 1964); Stanley A. DeSmith, *Microstates and Micronesia: Problems of America's Pacific Islands and Other Minute Territories* (New York 1970); Catherine Lutz (ed.), *Micronesia As Strategic Colony: The Impact of U.S. Policy On Micronesian Health and Culture* (Cambridge, Mass. 1984); Robert C. Kiste, 'Termination of the U.S. Trusteeship in Micronesia', *Journal of Pacific History*, 21 (1986), 127–38; Timothy P. Maga, *Defending Paradise: The United States and Guam, 1898–1950* (New York 1988); and Jonathon M. Weisgall, 'The nuclear nomads of Bikini', *Foreign Policy*, 39 (1980), 74–98 and 'Micronesia and the nuclear Pacific since Hiroshima', *School of Advanced International Studies Review*, 5 (1985), 41–55.

few of these latter works deal directly with interservice or interdepartmental rivalry to any great extent. In fact, most of these books and articles concentrate on America's role in Micronesia from a strategic Cold War perspective or focus on the civil administration of post-war American policy.⁶

This article will elaborate on the existing literature while attempting a more comprehensive analysis of the major issues confronting the four departments between 1943 and 1947. Focusing on interservice and interdepartmental rivalry, it is hoped to offer a deeper understanding of some of the issues dividing the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations. In addition, this analysis suggests that America's role in the post-war Pacific was as much a domestic bureaucratic matter as it was an aspect of international strategic rivalry.⁷

Between 1943 and 1945, Micronesia became involved in the Army-Navy debate on post-war strategy in the Pacific. This debate revolved around the use of either naval or land based air forces as the main American deterrent force in the post-war Pacific and East Asia. Each service, faced with declining post-war budgets and demobilisation, tried to use its wartime experiences to argue for a special role in the Pacific which would guarantee it a leading part in American defence policy making.

Soon after the Japanese surrender on 2 September 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) outlined a policy which they hoped would be adopted as the post-war American military strategy. The JCS argued for the post-war maintenance of a highly trained and equipped military deployed on a global basis as the guarantor of American national interests. Supporting such a force would be overseas bases, a sophisticated intelligence and warning system, and the peacetime stockpiling of strategic material. One of its key components would be mobile striking units capable of instant and sustained action against potentially hostile nations.⁸

Navy officials agreed with this concept of mobile striking power. They assumed that post-war responsibilities in Micronesia and the Pacific Basin, such as the control of a resurgent Japan or confrontation with the Soviet Union, would inevitably come under the Navy's jurisdiction and that these responsibilities would require the maintenance of fast carrier task groups. The Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, put this succinctly when he asserted that the Navy would form a defensive wedge in the Pacific based on 'sea-air power' that would

⁶ See Lester J. Foltos, 'The new Pacific barrier: America's search for security in the Pacific, 1945-1947', *Diplomatic History*, 13 (1989), 317-42; Gale, 'Micronesia: A Case Study'; Comdr Dorothy Richard, *United States Naval Administration Of The Trust Territory Of The Pacific Islands* (Washington, DC 1957). For one article which breaks from the predominantly strategic view of Micronesia and Operation Crossroads and explores the social, psychological, and cultural impact of the Cold War on American society, see James J. Farrell, 'The crossroads of Bikini', *Journal of American Culture*, 10 (1987), 55-66.

⁷ For this strategic perspective, see William Roger Louis, *Imperialism at Bay: The United States and the Decolonization of the British Empire, 1941-1945* (Oxford 1977); Foltos, 'The new Pacific barrier'; and Hal M. Friedman, 'The beast in paradise: the United States Navy In Micronesia, 1943-1947', *Pacific Historical Review*, 62 (May 1993), 173-95.

⁸ State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (hereinafter SWNCC) 282, 'Basis for the Formulation of a U.S. Military Policy', 19 Sept. 1945, as found in Thomas H. Etzold and John L. Gaddis (eds), *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York 1978), 39-44.

guarantee both the freedom of the Pacific and American security against any future attacks from East Asia.⁹

Micronesia would play an important role in this defensive perimeter concept.¹⁰ Throughout World War II and the early Cold War, naval officials argued that the islands of Micronesia had to be retained unconditionally by the United States in order to 'neutralise' their potential use by a resurgent Japan or a hostile Soviet Union. The Navy even implied that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor would not have occurred if Micronesia had been under American control.¹¹

Yet, the Navy's ideas about Micronesia went far beyond mere neutralisation. As early as 1943 and into the late 1940s, Navy officials claimed that the islands would be absolutely necessary as logistical support bases for the carrier-based Pacific Fleet to ensure Japanese acquiescence in post-war American control and to contain Communism in East Asia.¹² Just as Micronesian bases had been used as fleet anchorages, dry-dock and repair facilities, and recreational havens for the wartime Pacific Fleet, so the tiny islands would fulfil the same basic support role for the Navy in the post-war world.

The Navy contended that it was ideally suited to fulfil this mission. It specifically argued that carrier airpower in the Pacific was the only means of providing the United States with a mobile tactical air force close to the Eurasian continent.¹³ The Navy's record in the Pacific War encouraged it to assert that naval airpower, which the Army Air Force (AAF) argued had become obsolete because of land based atomic airpower, could in fact meet and defeat land based forces. Indeed, the Navy had impressive statistics concerning Japanese air bases overwhelmed by roving carrier fleets.¹⁴ Moreover, the Navy argued that it could carry out vital strategic missions in the Pacific which the AAF was prevented

⁹ See Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal's statement, US Congress, House Committee on Appropriations, Navy Department Appropriation Bill for 1946: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Navy Department Appropriations, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1945, 13, 14, and 25.

¹⁰ For further insight on the concept of a 'defensive perimeter' in the Pacific and East Asia, see John Lewis Gaddis, 'The Strategic Perspective: The Rise and Fall of the "Defensive Perimeter" Concept, 1947-1951', in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (eds), *Uncertain Years: Chinese-American Relations, 1947-1950* (New York 1980), 61-118.

¹¹ For an example of the numerous documents which illustrate this attitude, see Assistant Secretary of the United States Military Staff Committee to the United Nations to President Truman, 22 Feb. 1947, file 12-9-42 sec. 29, Joint Chiefs of Staff (hereinafter JCS) Central Decimal File, 1946-1947, box 89, Combined and Joint Chiefs of Staff (hereinafter CCS) file 360, Records of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Record Group 218, Washington, DC, National Archives (hereinafter RG 218, NA).

¹² See especially SWNCC 59/7, 'Draft Trusteeship Agreement — Pacific Islands', 19 Oct. 1946, as found in file 12-9-42 sec. 28, JCS Central Decimal File, 1946-1947, box 89, CCS file 360, RG 218, NA.

¹³ See US Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Navy Department Appropriation Bill for 1947: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Navy Department Appropriations, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., 1946, 8; US Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Navy Department Appropriation Bill for 1946: Hearings before the Subcommittee on Navy Department Appropriations, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1945, 4-5; SWNCC 282, 'Basis for the Formulation of a U.S. Military Policy', as found in Etzold and Gaddis, *Containment*, 39-44; Davis, *Postwar Defense Policy*, 148-50; and Borowski, *The Hollow Threat*, 74, 76, and 77.

¹⁴ See statement by Forrestal to Senate Subcommittee on Appropriations, US Congress, Senate Committee on Appropriations, Navy Department Appropriation Bill for 1946 ..., 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1945, 4-5.

from doing by the inherent limitations of aircraft. Naval officials believed that a heavy maritime lift capability and a continual presence on the world's oceans guaranteed maritime supremacy to the United States and that maritime supremacy was absolutely necessary for American national security and economic prosperity. Therefore, the physical limitations of airpower in these categories provided evidence for the Navy to argue that land based airpower could not fulfil the necessary strategic roles in the Pacific Ocean Area.¹⁵

The Navy even cited operations during the Pacific War as testimony to the efficacy of naval airpower. Claiming that it was the only service able to operate 'reliable' systems of supply, communications, and surface transportation on a scale necessary to win the Pacific War, Navy officials asserted that their service was ideally suited to patrol a vast region like the Pacific Ocean Area because of its alleged ability to conduct sustained operations at sea with minimal support from shore bases.¹⁶

Conversely, the AAF believed that the Pacific was the region most suited to supporting atomic airpower projected toward East Asia. AAF officials went beyond their usual arguments about naval obsolescence in the atomic air age when it came to the Pacific Ocean Area. The AAF saw the islands of Micronesia as 'permanent aircraft carriers' which it could use to undermine the Navy's arguments about deterrence and strategic capability.¹⁷ It also cited operational experiences in bombing Japan from bases in Micronesia in 1944–45 as evidence of its capabilities in the Pacific¹⁸ and noted the relative invulnerability of Micronesia to the Soviet Union compared to nations in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Since many of these nations had expressed a reluctance to host American military bases and since the United States exercised unilateral control over Micronesia, the AAF could claim that Micronesia's major value lay in its potential as a system of advanced bomber bases which could be used to contain Communism in East Asia. Accordingly, the AAF emphasised Pacific operations in its training deployments in 1946 and 1947 and tried to use these deployments to

¹⁵ See Vice Admiral W. H. P. Blandy, Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Special Weapons, to Senate Special Committee on Atomic Energy, US Congress, Hearings before the Special Committee on Atomic Energy, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1946, 394. Some Congressional officials apparently also agreed wholeheartedly with the Navy on these points. See US Congress, House Committee on Naval Affairs, Subcommittee on Pacific Bases, *Study of Pacific Bases*, 79th Cong., 1st sess., 1945, 1014, 1020, and 1022–3.

¹⁶ See statement by Representative Carl Vinson, *Study of Pacific Bases*, 1159. See also p. 1 of 'Postwar Naval Bases in the Pacific', from File 'Agenda Pacific Conference, November 1944', box 182, Strategic Plans Records Division, Washington, DC, Washington Navy Yard, Navy Operational Archives, Naval Historical Center (hereinafter Strategic Plans, OA, NHC); Vice Admiral Carleton H. Wright, USN (RET), 'Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands', *USNIP*, 74 (1948), 1334; and Richard, *United States Naval Administration*, III, 120.

¹⁷ See Borowski, *The Hollow Threat*, 74, 76, and 77.

¹⁸ In fact, John Greenwood claims the Navy requested the AAF on numerous occasions to destroy Japanese air bases so that carrier groups could operate safely off the coast of Japan. See John Greenwood and David Rosenberg, 'Additional Observations', part of David Rosenberg, 'American Postwar Air Doctrine and Organization: the Navy Experience', in Alfred F. Hurley and Robert C. Ehrhart, *Air Power and Warfare: The Proceedings of the Eighth Military History Symposium* (Washington, DC 1979), 279.

show that naval support was largely unnecessary for the AAF to deploy and project American power to the Eurasian periphery.¹⁹

What is striking about the evidence is not the acrimonious debate or the degree to which each service could produce evidence against the other. Wartime operations had been so complex and varied that each service carried out missions it had not planned to in the inter-war period. Thus, each could argue that it was more flexible in its operations and more suited as America's first line of defence in the uncertain atomic age. It is significant, however, that Micronesia became central to so many of each service's arguments. Micronesia was a highly significant geographic region in American defence policy, both in terms of rising tensions with the Soviet Union²⁰ and in the debates between the War and Navy Departments over strategy, roles, and missions. From 1945 to 1947, Micronesia would be at the centre of many of the issues separating the services.

Interservice rivalry had been a reality of American defence policy making since the earliest days of the republic, yet there had been agreements between the two services which lessened the intensity of the rivalry before 1900. Before the invention of the aeroplane, for example, it had been largely understood that the Navy was responsible for defending American interests on the high seas and that the Army was primarily responsible for the land defence of the nation itself.²¹ By the 1920s, the potential of the aeroplane as a military weapon largely dissolved the neat line separating roles and missions and cast doubt on the Navy's ability to continue as the nation's first line of defence.²² With the attack on Pearl Harbor, the revolutionary advances in weaponry during World War II, and the shortened response time to surprise attacks, this doubt among the Navy's critics greatly intensified and put the Navy on the defensive in Congressional hearings over future defence policy.²³

¹⁹ Borowski, *The Hollow Threat*, 74, 76, and 177. For background on the AAF's superb public relations campaign in the late 1940s, see Perry M. Smith, *The Air Plans For Peace, 1943-1945* (Baltimore 1970), passim; Davis, *Postwar Defense Policy*, passim; and Jeffrey G. Barlow, 'The Revolt of the Admirals Reconsidered', in William B. Cogar (ed.), *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Eighth Naval History Symposium* (Annapolis 1987), 226-7.

²⁰ For the importance placed on the acquisition of the islands by the United States government in the light of rising tensions with the Soviet Union, see Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 68-9, 77-8, 82, 90, 115, 259-73, 366-77, 475-96, 512-31, 534-5, and 569; Foltos, 'The new Pacific barrier', 317-42; and Friedman, 'The beast in paradise', 173-95.

²¹ Still, there were disagreements over this rather simple formula. E.g., there was no clear jurisdiction over coastal defence. See Kenneth Earl Hamburger, 'The Technology, Doctrine, and Politics of U.S. Coast Defense, 1880-1945', PhD thesis, Duke University (Durham NC 1986) and Michael E. Unsworth, 'Coast Defense: Roles, Missions, And War Plan Orange', paper delivered to the Annual Meeting of the Society for Military History, 10 Apr. 1992.

²² The famous Mitchell court martial was just one instance in a long and bitter inter-war debate over roles, missions, and budgets between the War and Navy Departments. For a detailed account of these controversies, see Vincent Davis, *The Admirals Lobby* (Chapel Hill 1967), 48-86.

²³ For an overview of defence unification and the post-war debate on roles and missions, see Davis, *Postwar Defense Policy*, passim; and Coletta, *United States Navy and Defense Unification*, passim.

By 1945, Micronesia played a key role in these debates because the islands played a key role in post-war American defence policy. Michael Sherry has gone far in demonstrating that American strategic planners placed great emphasis on the idea of a 'defense in depth' concept to ensure American national security after 1945. Similarly, William Roger Louis and Lester Foltos have outlined the central importance Micronesia took on in this defence in depth concept, especially in the light of the Pearl Harbor raid, high American casualties during the Pacific War, and tensions with the Soviet Union after 1945.²⁴ In effect, strategic planners hoped that the unilateral American control of Micronesia would facilitate a permanent American military presence in the Pacific Ocean Area and East Asia which could maintain vigilance over a possibly resurgent Japan and a bellicose Soviet Union.²⁵ However, the War and Navy Departments argued over which service should hold primary responsibility for defence and occupation of the islands. In short, Micronesia became entangled in the Army-Navy debate over atomic versus naval airpower.

An early example of Micronesia's involvement in this debate occurred immediately after the war during the 1946 atomic bomb tests against American, Japanese, and German naval vessels at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. First proposed in September 1945 by Senator Brian MacMahon of Connecticut as a test against surviving Japanese naval vessels and later labelled Operation Crossroads, the tests were enthusiastically adopted by the AAF and thereafter by the Navy, which broadened the proposal to include American and German naval vessels as a way to demonstrate that atomic bombs had not made warships and navies obsolete. The Navy's survival as the nation's first line of defence depended on illustrating this fact. Similarly, the AAF tried to use the operation to illustrate the effectiveness of precision strategic bombing and to demonstrate its ability to provide the first line of defence in the atomic age.²⁶ Conducted in the summer of 1946, the tests illustrated that warships were very vulnerable to atomic airpower, but the results were not decisive enough to silence the Navy's opinion that it could survive an atomic war at sea. Nor did the tests change the Navy's low opinion of precision strategic bombing since the B-29s had dropped their bombs miles off the target. At the same time, the very destructiveness of

²⁴ See Sherry, *Preparing For The Next War*, 198–205; Louis, *Imperialism At Bay*, 77–8, 115, 259–73, 366–77; and Foltos, 'New Pacific barrier', 317–42.

²⁵ See 'Strategic Areas and Trusteeships in the Pacific', JCS 1619/19, 19 Sept. 1946, file 12-9-42, sec. 28, CCS file 360, JCS Central Decimal File, 1946–47, RG 218, NA; and Assistant Secretary of the United Nations Military Staff Committee to President, 22 Feb. 1947, *ibid.* See also Top Secret presentation by Vice Admiral Forrest Sherman to President, Senate, and House, 14 Jan. 1947, no. 26, box 8, series III, Forrest Sherman Papers, OA, NHC, and Joint Staff Study Triagonal, 31 Oct. 1947, Commander in Chief, Pacific (hereinafter CINCPAC) Command File, OA, NHC, both found in Palmer, *Origins of the Maritime Strategy*, 31, 37.

²⁶ See Lloyd J. Graybar, 'The 1946 atomic bomb tests: atomic diplomacy or bureaucratic infighting?' *Journal of American History*, 72 (1986), 895.

the weapons was made quite clear and this demonstration allowed the AAF to continue its claim that in a real war the fleet would have been destroyed.²⁷

What is most interesting about the operation, however, is not the inconclusive results in terms of interservice rivalry, but the way in which the tests epitomised the rivalry between the Army and Navy. Not only had the services debated the objectives and desired results of the operation, but they had even debated basic aspects of the tests such as the placement of ships.²⁸ Even more significant was the extent to which each service attempted to control the test conditions. The Navy had an inherent advantage in controlling the Bikini test conditions. It exercised control over the vessels involved, the territory where the bombs were dropped, and the majority of the personnel and logistics support. The commander of Operation Crossroads, Vice Admiral William Blandy, took rather extreme steps to control the press and foreign observers, including indoctrination films, a limit on the number of foreign correspondents and observers who could attend the tests, and their separation from American military personnel and scientists involved in the operation.²⁹ The most explicit example of this attempted control and the intensity of the rivalry between the Army and Navy was contained in a top secret memorandum by Vice Admiral Forrest Sherman, a future Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and probably the Navy's foremost strategic thinker in the late 1940s.³⁰ Sherman believed that vessels which survived the tests would be 'on their last legs', that their condition would offer the AAF evidence of the Navy's obsolescence, and that the AAF might even try to sink the ships with strategic bombers as part of a public relations coup.³¹ Because of these potential problems for the Navy, Sherman went so far as to urge the CNO and the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet (CinCPAC) to concoct exper-

²⁷ See JCS 1691/10, 29 Dec. 1947, CCS 471.6 (10-16-45), sec. 9, Part 2, JCS, the text of the Bikini Evaluation Report of 'The Atomic Bomb as a Military Weapon', especially Section Three, 'Effects on Ships'; see also W. H. P. Blandy, 'Bikini: Guidepost to the Future', *Sea Power*, 6 (1946), 7-9; all found in Rosenberg, 'American Postwar Air Doctrine', 248-49. See also Lloyd J. Graybar and Ruth Flint Graybar, 'America Faces The Atomic Age: 1946', *Air University Review*, 35 (1984), 72, 73, 75.

²⁸ See Top Secret dispatch from Commander, Joint Task Force One, 17 Aug. 1946, Folder O-1 (Operations-Future), Box 163, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OP-OO), OA, NHC.

²⁹ Memorandum for Vice Admiral W. H. P. Blandy, 18 Mar. 1946, file 39-1-37, box 72, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Navy, General Records of the Department of the Navy, Washington, DC, National Archives (hereinafter RG 80, NA) and undated letter from Blandy to Forrestal, file 39-1-37, box 72, RG 80, NA. In addition, see Appendix 'A' to Memorandum by the Secretaries of War and the Navy, SWNCC 248/3, 4 Feb. 1946, SWNCC Papers (mf), film 15172, reel 22. For a more favourable view of Blandy concerning security during the tests, see Graybar and Graybar, 'America Faces The Atomic Age', 340.

³⁰ For additional information on Sherman as a strategic planner, see David Alan Rosenberg and Floyd D. Kennedy, *History of the Strategic Arms Competition, 1945-1972* (Falls Church, Va 1975), 28-37, and Palmer, *Origins of the Maritime Strategy*, 28-39, 60-6.

³¹ This was not the first time that military operations were used for furthering bureaucratic objectives. During the final stages of the Pacific War, the Army and Navy engaged in what one reporter called 'competitive bombing' of the Japanese battleship *Haruna* in order to illustrate their respective talents in precision bombing. See letter from W. H. Lawrence to Secretary Forrestal, 2 Aug. 1945 as found in the Forrestal Diaries, 8 Aug. 1945, Princeton, Princeton University, Seeley Mudd Library.

iments as a pretence to sink any vessels which survived the tests!³² While Sherman's suggestion is one of the most blatant examples of interservice rivalry this author has ever encountered, it is only one of many in which Micronesia played a role in the interservice debates.

Micronesia also became the focal point for a controversy over the Army–Navy command relationship in the Pacific. During the Pacific War, disagreements between General of the Army Douglas MacArthur and Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz over the strategy to be pursued against Japan had resulted in a compromise situation in which Nimitz controlled all air, naval, and ground forces in the Central Pacific and MacArthur controlled all military forces in the Southwest Pacific. As a result of this compromise, MacArthur had an entirely self-contained naval force, Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid's Seventh Fleet, under his direct operational control by January 1945.³³

By this time, the Navy was concerned that MacArthur's authority had gone too far since Kinkaid had been ordered by MacArthur not to carry out any fleet movements without his (MacArthur's) express permission.³⁴ Later, in July 1946, as Supreme Commander, Allied Forces Japan (SCAP), MacArthur even asserted that the Seventh Fleet should be kept permanently forward deployed in the Western Pacific with one Marine division based at Guam and that the entire force should be kept under his operational control in the event of hostilities in East Asia.³⁵ One month later, Secretary Forrestal wrote that the Army Chief of Staff, General Eisenhower, believed that a proper command relationship in the Western Pacific would entail an army officer exercising control over Japan, the Philippines, and the Ryukyus, while a separate Pacific Ocean Command of the Pacific Basin should be placed under a naval officer.³⁶ Apparently, MacArthur would have none of this, since in September 1946 Forrestal wrote that Nimitz's conversations with Eisenhower over MacArthur's demands were not promising. MacArthur continued to argue for control of the Marines and the Seventh Fleet on the grounds that they were needed as support in case of hostilities in East Asia. But even Eisenhower admitted the reasons were more 'political' than strategic and again proposed a single Pacific theatre under one naval officer.³⁷

To the Navy, the idea of fleet units being controlled by an Army officer was bad enough; the thought of Fleet Marine Forces based in Micronesia falling

³² See Top Secret Memorandum from Rear Admiral Forrest Sherman attached to cover letter by M. B. Gardner to Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), 25 Mar. 1946, folder D-3, 'Disposition of Japanese Ships', box 161, Records of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, (Double OO), OA, NHC.

³³ See Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against The Sun: The American War With Japan* (New York 1985), 285–6, 417–18; and D. Clayton James, 'American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War', in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton 1986), 720–31.

³⁴ See the Forrestal Diaries, 19 Jan. 1945, Princeton, Seeley Mudd Library.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10 July 1946.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 21 Aug. 1946.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 24 Sept. 1946.

under MacArthur's control was even worse.³⁸ The Navy and Marines, after all, had been the primary forces which took the islands from the Japanese in 1943 and 1944. In addition, the Navy had been planning since 1943 to be the primary defence force in the Pacific Ocean Area.³⁹ Finally, the Navy-Marine Corps expertise in amphibious warfare was one of allegedly unique capabilities which the services were using to defend their operational autonomy in the defence unification hearings. To naval officials, amphibious forces falling under the permanent control of an Army officer might defuse the Navy's arguments in the unification debates.⁴⁰

The results of this disagreement were as inconclusive as those over Operation Crossroads. MacArthur's ideas were never carried out, nor were his motives really ever made clear. Yet the incident goes far in illustrating the tensions between the two services over bureaucratic prerogatives in the Pacific Ocean Area and the role which Micronesia played in those tensions. More importantly, although disputes of this nature continued between the two services and were never satisfactorily settled, there is some evidence that Army and Navy officials sought to work together to try to resolve differences over the control of Micronesia as well as the larger issues dividing them. According to Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air John L. Sullivan, the Army and Navy needed to stand 'shoulder to shoulder' in these matters.⁴¹

One reason for this perceived need for co-operation was Congress's 1946 investigation of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Taking place at the same time as the debates on strategy, the defence budget, and the administration of Micronesia, the Congressional investigation revealed that one significant cause of the surprise attack's success had been a lack of co-operation between the Army and Navy. In the light of the investigation, Nimitz, in February 1946, stated that if command relationships in the Pacific Ocean Area were not worked out soon, the services were due for serious public criticism. More specifically, Nimitz felt that '[w]ith the Pearl Harbor investigation fresh in its mind, the public would probably give vent to great and righteous indignation'.⁴² The main reason for any co-operation between the Army and Navy in 1946 was probably opposition from the State and Interior Departments over the military control of Micronesia. If the services disagreed over which branch was to be the primary defence force

³⁸ See Allard, 'Interservice differences in the United States', 72-3.

³⁹ See Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 366-77.

⁴⁰ See the Forrestal Diaries, 3 Dec. 1946 and Keiser, *US Marine Corps and Defense Unification*, passim.

⁴¹ For Sullivan's statement, see Richard, *United States Naval Administration*, III, 15. See also Elliot Converse, 'United States Plans For a Postwar Overseas Military Base System', PhD thesis, Princeton University (Princeton 1984), 226-7.

⁴² See the Forrestal Diaries, 16 Feb. 1946, Princeton, Mudd Library.

in the Pacific, they strongly agreed that the administering authority should be a military service.⁴³ However, as early as 1943, the State and Interior Departments had lobbied for Micronesia to be placed under strategic 'trust' as a United Nations international trusteeship. The United States would be the sole administering authority and would exercise virtual and unimpeded control, but the State and Interior Departments felt that the facade of international supervision and civil administration would go far to dispell charges by numerous nations that the United States was practising 'territorial aggrandizement'.⁴⁴

The military services, however, were vehemently opposed to anything less than virtual American annexation of the islands. One officer, Vice Admiral Russell Willson, Navy member of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC), even referred to the State Department as the 'international welfare boys' as an example of his disdain for the department and its proposals.⁴⁵ In fact, military opposition to trusteeship concepts was so serious that it could be said that American military planning toward Micronesia between 1943 and 1946 was in conflict with the foreign policy goals determined by Presidents Roosevelt and Truman and key personnel in the State and Interior Departments such as Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and State Department Chief of Dependent Areas Benjamin Gerig.

Roosevelt and Truman hoped to deflect charges of territorial aggrandisement from the Soviet Union and the European colonial powers. Strategic trusteeship would have provided for virtual American control and security in the Pacific while still allowing the Administration to criticise Soviet annexations in Eastern Europe and East Asia, as well as European colonialism in Africa and Asia. The military, however, struggled against the Administration's, State's, and Interior's advocacy of strategic trusteeship from the start.⁴⁶

The Navy was particularly concerned with the efforts of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to bring Micronesia under Interior Department control. Ickes wanted to correct what he believed were the abuses of pre-war naval civil

⁴³ Essentially, the War and Navy Departments did not want to take any chance that the islands would be inadequately defended. Both services believed that unless strong military forces were present on the islands and in complete control, lightly held bases under civilian administration would become the norm and future deterrence against a resurgent Japan or the Soviet Union would be weakened. In addition, they believed that if the islands were under civilian or international administration, they might become subject to intervention or inspection by other powers, such as the Soviet Union. Both services wanted absolute sovereignty over the area in order to turn the islands into permanent bases. See JCS to President, JCS 656/1, 1 July 1944, file 1-8-44 sec. 1, CCS file 093, RG 218, NA as found in Foltos, 'New Pacific barrier', 320-1.

⁴⁴ See D Minutes 5, 27 Feb. 1945, box 189, United States State Department 'Notter Files' (Post-war Planning) of the State Department (hereinafter USSD, NF), General Records of the Department of State, Record Group 59, Washington, DC, National Archives (hereinafter RG 59, NA) as found in Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 481.

⁴⁵ See D Minutes 2, 8 Feb. 1945, box 189, USSD NF, RG 59, NA as found in Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 478.

⁴⁶ See Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 68-87, 366-7, and 463-573; see also Foltos, 'New Pacific barrier', 317-42.

administration in areas like Guam and American Samoa.⁴⁷ Ickes's accusations about the military administration of dependent territories had become serious enough for Sullivan to write to Forrestal that 'the Navy should attempt to reach an understanding with the Army on the whole problem before the matter is discussed further with civilian agencies'.⁴⁸

On the surface, it appears that a large part of the controversy between the Navy and Interior Departments was due to personal animosity between Forrestal and Ickes. Asked in January 1945 to comment on a bill proposed by Ickes to have Micronesia directly administered by a civilian agency under an assistant secretary of the Navy, Forrestal remarked 'that the Navy's suggestion was that . . . "Mr. Ickes be made King of Polynesia, Micronesia, and the Pacific Ocean Area"'.⁴⁹ Even after Ickes resigned as Secretary of the Interior in 1946, Forrestal wrote harshly about him in his secret files, sarcastically accusing him of hypocritical self-righteousness and of carrying on a moral crusade against the Navy.⁵⁰ However, the alignment of the Navy Department against the Interior Department was actually much more than a conflict between two men. It was, in the words of Louis, 'just one aspect to one of the most serious controversies in the history of the American government'.⁵¹ Throughout 1945 and 1946, the State and Interior Departments continued to assert that the islands needed to be placed under an international trusteeship to avoid accusations about territorial aggrandisement from other nations and to avoid the abuses of naval civil administration.⁵² The military, however, used several arguments to try to avoid trusteeship under a civilian agency.

The services argued that a civilian agency controlling the islands would, of necessity, have to acquire its own fleet of patrol vessels because of the geography of Micronesia, thereby adding additional expense to the administration of the islands in a time of fiscal austerity.⁵³ Even more importantly, the services implied that administration by a civilian agency would endanger national security,⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Ickes was particularly critical of the inter-war naval administration of areas like Guam and American Samoa. He accused the Navy of violating civil rights, administering the islands 'like a battleship', and violating constitutional guarantees in an 'absolutist' manner. In all likelihood, the Navy was probably concerned about Ickes because he was a close adviser of Roosevelt during the New Deal. Naval officials probably felt people such as Ickes had FDR's ear when it came to trusteeship matters. See Harold L. Ickes, 'The Navy at Its Worst', *Colliers*, 118 (1946), 22-3. For a critical account of naval administration on Guam in the inter-war years, see Maga, *Defending Paradise*, 78-149.

⁴⁸ John L. Sullivan, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Air to Forrestal, file 77-1-6, box 128, RG 80, NA.

⁴⁹ See the Forrestal Diaries, 5 Jan. 1945, Princeton, Mudd Library.

⁵⁰ The Forrestal Diaries, 8 Dec. 1946, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 19, 475-96, and 512-35.

⁵² Secretary of State to President, 9 Apr. 1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereinafter *FRUS*) 1945, 1:211-13.

⁵³ See Gale, 'Micronesia: A Case Study', 64.

⁵⁴ See Appendix 'B' of 'Position With Respect To The Government of Guam, American Samoa, and The Trust Territory Of The Pacific Islands', SWNCC 364/3, 26 June 1947, box 679, file 8-21-45, CCS 014 Pacific Ocean Area, JCS Geographic Files, 1942-45, RG 218, NA.

since control of the islands was desired for their usefulness as security outposts, not as experimental showcases of territorial development for the State or Interior Departments. In addition, Secretary of War Robert Patterson pointed out that the civilian control of Micronesia would suggest to the global community that the United States intended to annex the islands as it had in the case of Alaska and Hawaii, thus creating the type of diplomatic situation the State and Interior Departments were supposedly trying to prevent.⁵⁵ Finally, the Navy contended that the development of the island populations along family and clan lines made it impossible for them to create any type of 'republican' form of government in the future, thereby requiring a strong American presence to maintain order and stability. It was thought that the interests of the inhabitants would best be served 'by establishing in most of the islands a strong but benevolent government — a government paternalistic in character'.⁵⁶

In the end, the interdepartmental controversy seems to have been somewhat of a draw. Against the opposition of the military, the State and Interior Departments were able to convince first President Roosevelt and then President Truman to have the islands offered to the United Nations as a strategic trusteeship with the United States serving as the sole administering authority and the Navy serving as the direct administrative agency. Virtual control was still in the hands of the United States, but it was a less than perfect situation from the military's point of view.⁵⁷ Ironically, by 1951 the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI) was turned over to the administration of the Interior Department by the Department of Defense (DoD), even though the DoD kept direct control of future bases such as Guam's Andersen Air Force Base and the Kwajalein Test Range.

The motives of the various departmental officials are not entirely clear. Personal animosity between civilian and military officials or personal beliefs in annexation versus trusteeship probably ran deep and may have been significant. In addition, since Micronesia counted so heavily in the bureaucratic interests of the War and Navy Departments, the State and Interior Departments' bureau-

⁵⁵ See the Forrestal Diaries, 30 Oct. 1945 and Memorandum for the President, 'Administration of Pacific Island Bases', SWNCC 249/1, Jan.-Feb. 1946, SWNCC Minutes, SWNCC Papers (mf), frame 1125, reel 22, film 15172, 'any such change in administration would have the appearance of this Government settling down for a long period of occupation'.

⁵⁶ Capt. Harry L. Pence, a retired naval officer recalled to active duty during the Second World War and placed in charge of the Navy's Occupied Areas Section (OP-11X) of the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations (OPNAV) specifically stated that 'the islanders seldom comprehended or respond rationally to federations or to other features of the American-European political patterns'. For quotations, see Officer-in-Charge (OinC), OP-11X memorandum, 22 Apr. 1943, as found in Richard, *United States Naval Administration*, I, 18-20.

⁵⁷ Louis, *Imperialism at Bay*, 475-96 provides an excellent account of FDR's views in favour of international trusteeship as well as the debates over the wording of the United Nations strategic trusteeship agreement. In addition, Foltos, 'New Pacific barrier', 317-42, provides an account of Truman's support of the State and Interior Departments vis-à-vis the War and Navy Departments concerning strategic trusteeship in Micronesia.

cratic interest in this matter cannot be overlooked. The State Department may have fought for trusteeship as a way to gain the upper hand against the military services in foreign policy making. Clearly, a State Department victory over Micronesia might have paved the way for the department's ascendancy in the Truman Administration's foreign policy bureaucracy. It is difficult to believe, however, that State needed this kind of boost with Truman since he relied so heavily on his diplomatic advisers from the very beginning of his administration and since State was clearly the leading agency of foreign policy making during the late 1940s. Similarly, Ickes's primary motive may have simply been the Interior Department's administrative control over Micronesia, regardless of his proposals being couched in humanitarian language. Interior Department control of Micronesia would have extended its area of jurisdiction from Alaska and Hawaii into the Central Pacific, increased its political influence in Congress, and indicated a post-war American commitment to 'dependent peoples' whom Ickes thought the Navy had so badly abused since 1898. Most importantly, control of Micronesia may have been a way in which to promote his visibility within a new administration.

It is also unclear to what degree the Navy's success in gaining the administrative control of Micronesia assisted it in the all important unification debates. It is uncertain, for example, if the naval control of Micronesia helped justify a large, balanced fleet in the Pacific and therefore an autonomous Navy. The Navy continued to come under strong criticism from the Army Air Force, Congress, and the general public for harbouring 'outmoded' ideas and beliefs about national defence in the atomic age. Yet in spite of the fact that the Army Air Force, soon to be the United States Air Force, continued to capture the major share of appropriations in the late 1940s, the Navy did survive as an autonomous institution with a major role to play in containing Communism.⁵⁸

American policy makers between 1943 and 1947 saw control over Micronesia as the solution to strategic problems arising from the Pacific War and tensions with the Soviet Union. In fact, it could be argued, given post-war American plans for defence in depth in the Pacific Ocean Area, that control over Micronesia was perceived by American strategic planners as central to post-war American national security. At the least, the tiny islands of Micronesia were important enough to spark major disputes within the United States government over the form which post-war administration should have taken. At the same time, strategic concerns do not entirely explain the intensity of the bureaucratic rivalry over the islands. The context of interservice and interdepartmental rivalry over roles, missions, and budgets offers an additional and crucial dimension to explaining the internal conflicts which took place in the United States government in the mid to late 1940s.

⁵⁸ See especially Coletta, *United States Navy and Defense Unification*, passim.

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