

---

## Book Review

---

# The lessons of the Philippines

by Dean Andromidas

---

### Hero of Bataan: The Story of General Jonathan M. Wainwright

by Duane Schultz

New York: St. Martin's Press, 479 pages

### Douglas MacArthur: The Philippines Years

by Carol Morris Petillo

Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 301 pages

---

Both these books center around the Philippines, at a time when conventional warfare in far-flung islands once more preoccupies the public. What the Philippines theatre in World War II exemplified was in fact the same strategic debate that is proceeding—at a lower intellectual level—today. That is the reason to examine Douglas MacArthur's ability not only to command the allegiance of the best U.S. officers, like Gen. Jonathan Wainwright IV, who remained in the Philippines after the Allied command forced MacArthur to withdraw, but to recreate a profound conception of the goals of war-winning.

Unlike William Manchester's slick *American Caesar*, the shallowness of these two biographies is immediately apparent. Petillo provides psychoanalytic gumdrops about MacArthur's "periodic retreat to the island haven which from the outset had provided him with a structure which supported his psychic needs," and with "a center stage" as well. Schultz, a military historian, exhibits an anecdotal adulation of a Wainwright heroically facing impossible odds—because, he alleges, of MacArthur's fantasies about the Philippines' defensibility. This is a gross injustice to both men.

### The Civil War tradition

MacArthur and Wainwright were the last representatives of a generation of military thinkers in the original West Point tradition, for whom things military were far more than competence in the weapons of war or a romantic heroism. The negotiation of the battlefield was premised on mastery of the fundamentals of geometry and hydrodynamics, and on a grasp of history and

philosophy from approximately 2600 B.C. This is evident in MacArthur's writings, with their rich allusions to Plato, Dante, Thucydides, and others.

The West Point classes of 1904 and 1906, which graduated MacArthur and Wainwright respectively, were among the last to have had instructors, parents and friends who fought in the Civil War. They taught in the tradition of Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan, that those who wantonly chose war violated the precepts of natural law—but should war become necessary, it must be fought with a scientific will to win. It was General Sherman, the commander of Douglas MacArthur's father Arthur, who studied the scientifically based Prussian Reforms and created the Schools of Application at West Point, including the Cavalry School. Schultz portrays General Wainwright as proficient merely in the grooming of steeds and the swash-buckling mounted charge: students at West Point in reality learned the scientific application of shock waves on the field of battle, and their exploitation by the sustained pressure of the infantry. It was this education that enabled such cavalry officers as Gen. George Patton to develop rapid armored movements with the advent of the tank.

MacArthur's father, a veteran of the Civil War, fought in one of the first "limited wars" imposed through British manipulations on the United States: the Spanish-American War. With the ruthlessness of a Sherman, he crushed the insurgents commanded from British Hong Kong. But at the conclusion of the war, he ushered in a period of development of education, economic activity, and civil government, in order, as he said, to lay the basis for a republic in the image of the United States.

### The prewar fight

When Douglas MacArthur became Chief of Staff in 1930, the undermanned U.S. Army ranked fourteenth among the military powers of the world. It was armed with outdated equipment despite the tremendous technological innovations that a decade later would lead to development of the most advanced military machine in the world.

Despite congressional budget cuts, he developed the military organizational structure, the mobilization plans, and the wartime economic contingency plans that later shaped the World War II effort. He toured Europe, holding strategic discussions; his view of military alliances differed from those of the anglophile policy makers around Franklin Roosevelt. Once, briefing an officer about to become a military attaché in a European capital, he cautioned him not to take Great Britain seriously—"no one likes sleeping with a corpse."

By 1935, when U.S. military unpreparedness amounted to de facto support for Hitler and Mussolini,

whom the British openly supported, MacArthur and his faction lost a key battle. He was ousted as Chief of the General Staff, and a general purge of his associates began. MacArthur took up the position of adviser to the Philippines government, charged with creating a military force that would make the islands impregnable by 1946, when they were scheduled to achieve full independence.

In his first report to the Philippines President, MacArthur described "the local situation as an articulate part rather than as a detached phenomenon of civilization's development." The report specified how Asia, as exemplified by Japan's achievements, was fully capable of rapid industrialization, and identified technologically and politically progressing republics there as the key to war-avoidance.

In military terms, he said, an impregnable Philippines would block a "strike south" by Japan's militarist faction. With an underfunded group of American officers, including Col. Dwight Eisenhower, he built a Filipino military force based on the American concept of universal training for the citizen-soldier.

By July 1941, Roosevelt had decided to fortify the Philippines to the best of America's ability, but it was too little too late. Japan struck Pearl Harbor four months sooner than Washington planners expected. Three days after Pearl Harbor, MacArthur called on the Soviet Union to mount a "master-stroke" attack from the north against the overextended Japanese. A speedy defeat of the Japanese, he argued, would have opened a secure line of supply to the U.S.S.R. from the United States to defeat the Nazis.

MacArthur's adversaries moved quickly. Admiral Hart, commander of the Asiatic fleet, ordered all his major fighting ships from Philippine waters within hours of Pearl Harbor, only to see them sunk in a futile defense of the Dutch East Indies. Within days, Winston Churchill met with Roosevelt in Washington and reaffirmed that the Pacific theatre would be secondary. Chief of Staff George Marshall, drawing in Eisenhower to back him up, declared the Philippines unable to be reinforced.

Schultz documents the irony that the Japanese commander, General Masaharu Homma, teetered on the brink of disaster as his Philippines campaign stretched from a planned month into a gruesome five months. Yet Schultz fails to draw the obvious conclusion: despite its powerful air force and navy, Japan did not possess the in-depth capabilities to conduct amphibious assaults on heavily fortified and defended positions. Its rapid victories through Southeast Asia were the result of its adversaries' unpreparedness. Had MacArthur's plans been carried out, the Japanese would have been defeated at the beaches, Wainwright and his men would not have spent three and a half years in Japanese captivity, and

untold numbers of lives on both sides might have been saved.

### **Alexander versus Scipio Africanus**

In March 1942, Roosevelt ordered MacArthur to escape from Corregidor to Australia. Wainwright continued to fight on Bataan and Corregidor to gain time; he surrendered after five months without supplies or reinforcements. MacArthur was fighting an equally desperate battle to reorganize his meager forces and, most important, to force a change in Allied command policy.

Pearl Harbor was the result of Churchill's strategy. If Alexander the Great was MacArthur's model, the Roman consul Scipio Africanus was Churchill's. In the third century B.C., Scipio Africanus ravaged Italy, Spain, and North Africa in quest of the defeat of the great Carthaginian Hannibal; the 15-year Second Punic War made Rome the undisputed ruler of the known world, but civilization did not recover for centuries.

Churchill's policy was to drag American armies across Italy, North Africa, and eventually continental Europe, leaving hundreds of thousands dead and the regions devastated, in hostilities that the Prime Minister—who vetoed British support for the 1944 plot against Hitler—hoped would last something like a decade and shore up the global pre-eminence of the British Empire.

Dovetailing with this policy was the U.S. Navy's longstanding plan for the conduct of war in Asia. Assuming 18th-century British cabinet-warfare methods (as opposed to a high-technology naval and amphibious mobilization), they foresaw frontal assaults against heavily fortified Japanese positions in the Central Pacific. The aim was to establish air bases for strategic bombing against Japan—bombing that proved militarily ineffective, as in Germany, but eliminated civilian population—and, by destroying Japanese industry, to set back for decades the economies of Japan and the rest of Asia.

MacArthur's counterstrategy was to effect a speedy defeat of the Axis powers, and strike a postwar alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union, as the most industrialized nations, dominating the British and other colonial powers. In his "Grand Design," the massive U.S.-U.S.S.R. industrial capacity could be used to modernize both China and the Asian nations freed from colonialism, as the principal task of the second half of the 20th century.

Upon his arrival in Australia in March 1942, with the mission of organizing a counterattack, MacArthur found no army, no navy, and no air force to speak of. The country was on the edge of invasion by Japan, but Churchill refused to allow Australia's best troops to return from British command in the Middle East.

Examining once more the far-flung archipelagos across thousands of square miles of ocean that lay along the axis of advance between Australia and Japan, MacArthur revived the classical method dubbed by his staff "hitting them where they ain't": to cut lines of supply by striking enemy flanks. During the war years MacArthur described his strategy: "The system is as old as war itself . . . the ancient principle of envelopment. . . . It always proved the ideal method for success by inferior in number but faster-moving forces."

MacArthur was able to take the initiative by January 1943. His Southwest Pacific operations had the lowest rate of casualties of any theater; despite the fact that he received an average of 5 tons of equipment per man, (compared with 50 tons in North Africa), he demonstrated, in often heavy and bloody engagements, that he could wield the modern weapons of war with both economy of force and minimal loss of life—while the Navy, hammering away at Japan's island strongholds, spent lives so extravagantly that it shook American public opinion.

Writing shortly after the successful Papua campaign in late 1942, MacArthur states:

The outstanding military lesson of this campaign was the continuous calculated application of air power . . . employed in the most intimate tactical and logistical union with ground troops. . . . For months on end, air transport with constant fighter coverage moved complete regiments and artillery battalions across the almost impenetrable mountains and jungles of Papua and the reaches of the sea; transported field hospitals and the other base installations to the front; supplied the troops and evacuated casualties. For hundreds of miles bombers provided all-around reconnaissance, protected the coast from hostile naval intervention, and blasted the way for infantry. . . . The offensive and defensive power of the air . . . in effective combination with ground forces, represents tactical and strategic elements of a broadened conception of warfare that will permit the application of offensive power in swift, massive strokes, rather than the dilatory and costly island-to-island advance that some have assumed to be necessary. . . .

### **The final campaigns**

By 1944, MacArthur was prepared to fulfill his pledge to return and liberate the Filipinos. Admiral King, the Navy Chief, and General Marshall wanted to bypass the Philippines and instead invade Formosa and mainland China to gain strategic bombing bases against Japan. MacArthur's protests prompted the conference in Pearl Harbor among himself, the President, and Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, in July 1944, where MacArthur "stated that if I could secure the Philippines it

would enable us to clamp an air and naval blockade on the flow of all supplies from the south to Japan, and thus by paralyzing her industries, force her to early capitulation. Psychologically, I argued that it was not only a moral obligation to release this friendly possession from the enemy now that it had become possible, but that to fail to do so would not be understandable to the Oriental mind. . . . The President accepted my recommendations and approved the Philippine plan."

Following the defeat of the Nazis, the campaign marked the largest American effort in the Pacific, deploying over half a million men. But it violated two of MacArthur's principles: the necessity for a unified command of all theatre forces, and adequate air cover for all offensives. The result was near-disaster: the Navy insisted on maintaining operational control over its battle fleets, which included the bulk of the most powerful aircraft carriers. During the early phases of landing operations at Leyte, the inadequately defended fleet was attacked by a powerful Japanese contingent. MacArthur could not communicate with Admiral Halsey, whose fleet was on a fool's errand chasing a Japanese decoy.

As Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Far East, MacArthur then planned the invasion of Japan. President Truman superseded those plans with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an evil decision which deepened MacArthur's determination to create the preconditions for lasting peace. "Military alliances, balances of power, Leagues of Nations all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative," he said in his radio broadcast to the American people following the official Japanese surrender ceremony. "We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advance in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh."

What precisely MacArthur meant, and why he and his faction failed to avert the disasters of the postwar period, are beyond the scope of this review. What must be finally noted is that the General's occupation of Japan, in the Lincoln tradition, free of the destructiveness of Anglo-American policy in occupied Germany, stands as testimony to his statesmanship. The respect the Japanese people accord him, and the tremendous economic success of postwar Japan, stand as a rebuttal to those who seek to sow new Carthages with salt, and annihilate America's own power to bring industrial civilization to every realm on earth.