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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGF</td>
<td>[US] Army Ground Forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIB</td>
<td>Allied Intelligence Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATIS</td>
<td>Allied Translator and Interpreter Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCS</td>
<td>[US-British] Combined Chiefs of Staff; see also JCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIC</td>
<td>Commander-in-Chief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINCPAC</td>
<td>Commander-in-Chief, Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINCUS</td>
<td>Commander-in-Chief, US Fleet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNO</td>
<td>[US] Chief of Naval Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMAIRSOLS</td>
<td>Commander Aircraft Solomons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMAIRSOPAC</td>
<td>Commander Air, South Pacific</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMINT</td>
<td>communications intelligence; a subdiscipline of SIGINT</td>
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<tr>
<td>FEAF</td>
<td>[US] Far East Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRUMEL</td>
<td>Fleet Reporting Unit, Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRUPAC</td>
<td>Fleet Radio Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMINT</td>
<td>human intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICPOA</td>
<td>Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGHQ</td>
<td>[Japanese] Imperial General Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJA</td>
<td>Imperial Japanese Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJN</td>
<td>Imperial Japanese Navy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAAF</td>
<td>Japanese Army Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCS</td>
<td>[US] Joint Chiefs of Staff; see also CCS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIC</td>
<td>[US or British] Joint Intelligence Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JICPOA</td>
<td>[US] Joint Intelligence Center, Pacific Ocean Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JNAF</td>
<td>Japanese Naval Air Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSP</td>
<td>[US] Joint Staff Planners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSSC</td>
<td>[US] Joint Strategic Survey Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JUSSC</td>
<td>Joint U.S. Strategic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MID</td>
<td>[US] Military Intelligence Division, part of G-2, War Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIS</td>
<td>[US] Military Intelligence Service, field operating arm of intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONI</td>
<td>[US] Office of Naval Intelligence</td>
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

OSINT  open-source intelligence
OSS  Office of Strategic Services
POA  [US] Pacific Ocean Areas (Admiral Chester Nimitz)
SAASS  School of Advanced Air and Space Studies
SIGINT  signals intelligence
SIS  [US] Signal Intelligence Service
SWPA  [US] South West Pacific Area (General Douglas MacArthur)
USAAF  US Army Air Forces (nominally coequal with Army Ground Forces and Army Service Forces; at the strategic level it functioned as a quasi-independent air force)
USAF  US Air Force
USSBS  US Strategic Bombing Survey
FOREWORD

Peter R. Mansoor

War has both physical and intangible characteristics. The former—weapons, soldiers, logistical wherewithal, intelligence, command and control, and so forth—are more readily quantified, analyzed, and documented than such facets as morale, discipline, and training. Even harder to come to grips with are more esoteric concepts such as the principles that various military philosophers have posited since the nineteenth century as key to the successful conduct of war. In The Turn of the Tide in the Pacific War, Sean Judge introduces a unique concept, strategic initiative, to explain why and how contending powers design campaigns and use military forces to alter the trajectory of war. He identifies five factors that affect the attainment and retention of the initiative in war: resources, intelligence, strategic acumen, combat effectiveness, and chance, all of them affected by political will. How well contending actors capitalize on these elements determines which side will, to use an analogy from the sport of hockey, “have the puck.” In Judge’s estimation, “Although it does not grant total control, strategic initiative allows the possessor greater latitude to shape the war toward his ends.”

By virtue of excellent leadership, superior training, and in some cases better equipment, Japanese forces possessed a qualitative advantage over Allied forces at the beginning of the Pacific War on December 7, 1941. Japanese military leaders skillfully crafted a series of offensive campaigns—the so-called Centrifugal Offensive—that shaped the contours of the war during its first six months. While many armchair historians believe the initiative then passed from the Japanese to American forces after the Battle of Midway in June 1942, Judge establishes rather that the consequence of that battle was strategic equilibrium. The outcome of the subsequent nine-month struggle in the Pacific was hardly foreordained. At one point during the vicious fighting the US Navy had a single damaged but still operational aircraft carrier left on station in the South Pacific. Judge examines the interplay of the various factors, analyzed for their impact on the fighting in Guadalcanal and New Guinea, which turned the strategic initiative definitively in favor of the United States from 1943
onward. American leaders and the forces they commanded took control of the war before they held the preponderance of resources that became available beginning that year.

Perhaps the most critical of the factors Judge explores is strategic acumen, without which other advantages are easily squandered. The US military was blessed to have senior leaders such as General Douglas MacArthur and Admiral Chester Nimitz designing its campaigns and providing the strategic leadership essential to reversing the tide of war. These leaders then accepted calculated risk to launch two major counteroffensives against Japanese forces before the Imperial Japanese command could recover from the shock of the outcome of the Battle of Midway. Whatever their faults, MacArthur and Nimitz got the vast majority of these big strategic issues right, a far cry from the performance of the Japanese high command, which succumbed to “victory disease” and squandered the temporary advantages gained in the early months of the war. As with the Wehrmacht in Europe, the Japanese military routinely downplayed the criticality of intelligence and logistics in the Pacific War, with commensurate results in both global theaters. Once the virtuosity that propelled Japanese forces to a number of tactical and operational successes in the first months of the struggle diminished with combat losses and mistakes, the foundation of the Japanese war-fighting machine significantly deteriorated. The strategic initiative, once passed to American and Allied forces in the Pacific, would never be relinquished. How and why this happened merits examination, both for the historical consequences and for the education of future strategic leaders.

Sean Judge was a US Air Force lieutenant colonel who had trained in the doctoral program in military history at The Ohio State University to become a professor at the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies at Maxwell Field, Alabama. He was a stellar student in a number of my classes, and I was honored to be a part of his dissertation committee. He had just finished the dissertation upon which this book is based when in the summer of 2011 he was diagnosed with cancer, which tragically took his life a year later. His adviser at Ohio State, John “Joe” Guilmartin, along with colleague Hal Winton at the Air University (who advised Judge’s master’s thesis while Sean was a student there), determined to revise and publish it. Joe’s subsequent sudden and untimely death in 2016 left the project adrift for a short period. Those of us who have worked to bring it to fruition are grateful for the opportunity to share its insights
with the historical and armed forces communities, a fitting tribute to the scholarship of its primary author and of the learned adviser who guided him along the path to a deeper understanding of the conduct of war in all of its complexity.

—Columbus, Ohio, July 2016
AUTHOR’S PREFACE

This work had its origins in my School of Advanced Air and Space Studies (SAASS) thesis on “‘Who Has the Puck?’: Strategic Initiative in Modern, Conventional War,” completed in 2008 under the advisement of Dr. Harold R. Winton. A primary goal of this study is to apply the concepts developed in the SAASS thesis in a deeper, more focused analysis of the critical phase of the Pacific War from mid-1942 until early 1943. The original work analyzed strategic initiative more broadly but with less depth, using the case studies of the Soviet–German war of 1941–1945 and the Pacific War from 1941 to 1945. The reader of both works will therefore recognize that my analytical/conceptual framework relies on many of the same terms. Much of Chapter 1: Introduction and Chapter 2: Strategic Initiative borrows heavily from and expands on the theoretical discussion in the previously completed thesis. The reader will also recognize foundational elements taken from the thesis embedded in Chapter 3: The National Command Structures, Chapter 4: Japanese Intelligence Organization in World War II, Chapter 5: American Intelligence Organization in the Pacific during World War II, and Chapter 6: “East Wind, Rain.” Yet the influence of the original thesis, of course, pervades throughout this book.

Conventional wisdom holds that Japan waged a hopeless war against foes with vastly superior resources and war-making capacity and was destined to be defeated. The present work does not aim to enter that historical debate directly, although I maintain that the course of the war and its final outcome were by no means foreordained. Instead, my purpose is to use these campaigns as a case study in strategic initiative, reconstructing the organizations, decisions, and events that influenced the shift of initiative from one adversary to the other.

—Sean M. Judge
Columbus, Ohio, 2012
I never met Sean Judge, but by all accounts he was passionately interested, from an early age, in both the US Air Force and the Pacific campaigns of World War II. Like other officers privileged to attend the advanced studies schools operated by the various armed services, he blossomed intellectually, learning to place the complexities of modern battle into the larger contexts of campaigns and strategies for the execution of national policy.

To my mind, therefore, a graduate of the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies who is endorsed by two such distinguished soldier-scholars as Peter Mansoor and Hal Winton deserved serious attention. I anticipated a high level of scholarship from this manuscript, and I was not disappointed. Nonetheless, a doctoral dissertation involves a degree of detailed historiography and documentation that often require reformatting and rephrasing before the general public can appreciate the originality of the author’s thought. Having worked with me on other book manuscripts, Professor Winton asked me to make the changes that, had he been granted sufficient time, the author would have made himself prior to publication. In undertaking this reformatting, I made every effort to retain Sean Judge’s ideas and phraseology, seeking only to recast both for ease of understanding. Although I added a few sentences for clarification and summation, this version scrupulously retains Sean’s original conception of a case study in strategic initiative.

I am indebted to Professor John T. Kuehn, who gave me the benefit of his deep understanding of the Pacific campaigns on which this case study is based.

—Jonathan M. House
Leavenworth, Kansas, August 2017
Introduction

The Pacific War raged from December 7, 1941, until Emperor Hirohito announced Japan’s acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration on August 15, 1945, leading to the surrender ceremony on the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2. This conflict was a subset of a wider world war that most historians date to Nazi Germany’s invasion of Poland on September 1, 1939. To the Western Allies and the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, the Pacific represented a secondary theater of far less importance than the European continental contest. Geography contributed in part to the different character of the Pacific War, which included two broad theaters: a continental war in China and Southeast Asia, and a maritime conflict throughout the expanse of the great Pacific Ocean and beyond. This analysis focuses on the maritime conflict in the southern and southwestern Pacific.

The ocean war ranged from the Aleutian Islands in the north to Darwin, Australia, in the south, and from the Hawaiian Islands in the eastern Pacific to Ceylon in the Indian Ocean. The conflict unfolded in three phases. In the first phase (December 1941 to mid-1942), Japan seized the strategic initiative and ran rampant, rapidly achieving its initial expansionist aims of conquering the resource-rich area south of Japan and establishing a defensive perimeter to protect those gains by mid-1942. The second phase embraced a period of strategic dispute, in which the Japanese vied to retain the initiative while the Allies, led by the Americans but with important contributions from Australia and New Zealand, aimed to gain the initiative. Finally, by early 1943 the Allies gained the strategic initiative and retained it until the close of the war.

Our focus is on the pivotal second period of the war, during which the Allies seized the initiative and Japan lost it. Surprisingly, the Allies gained the initiative without the preponderance of material resources that characterized the later stages of the war. Using advantages in other means, the Allies redirected the course of the war toward accomplishment of their objectives while Japan’s influence over events steadily diminished. The period thus demands close examination.
Chapter One

Pacific War historiography illustrates the common recognition that the course of the war shifted in the period between mid-1942 and early 1943. Yet, historians differ over the catalysts for the shift, the relative importance of the various campaigns during this period, and even in their terminology for the change, using terms such as “turning point,” “strategic initiative,” and/or “offensive” and “defensive.” This book aims to bring rigor to this argument by investigating the concept of strategic initiative in the context of the Pacific War and by clarifying the interrelationship of the dual campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Indeed, the manner in which the combatants conducted those concurrent campaigns enabled the Allies to seize the strategic initiative before achieving a preponderance of resources. In order to do so, the Allies had to exploit other advantages such as military intelligence and strategic judgment. The Allies also had to fight effectively to overcome the experienced forces the Japanese fielded. Additionally, as in every conflict, chance inserted unpredictable variables to which both sides had to adapt.

Historians, strategists, and military professionals use the term “strategic initiative” often and assume a common understanding, but very few have explicitly defined the term or investigated its supporting elements. Chapter 2: Strategic Initiative discusses the concept in some detail and defines it in more specific language, while also investigating several of the important elements that contribute to the initiative at the strategic level. For the moment, it is important to note that possession of the strategic initiative implies potentially greater influence over the course and conduct of the war. Although it does not grant total control, strategic initiative allows the possessor greater latitude to shape the war toward his ends. For this reason, the process by which strategic initiative is gained, transferred, and lost should be of concern to statesmen, soldiers, and historians alike. (See map 1.)

The mid-phase of the Pacific War is particularly suited to a close study of shifting strategic initiative. The Japanese and the Allies were engaged in two simultaneous and grueling campaigns in eastern New Guinea and on Guadalcanal that changed the course of the war. The latter campaign receives the lion’s share of historiographical coverage and the majority of credit for the shift in the course of the Pacific War. Yet, it was the interaction of these campaigns that allowed the Allies to seize the initiative. Far from being just a bloody sideshow, the struggle on Papua New Guinea enticed the Japanese to divide their forces at a critical moment and thereby contributed to their defeat in both campaigns and to their loss of the strategic
initiative. Following the Allied victories in these campaigns, Japanese expansion ceased and the Allies were able to exercise the strategic initiative through continued offensive action on New Guinea, New Georgia, and up the Solomon Islands chain. Had Japan emerged the victor, the front would likely have moved south and east, threatening Australia directly and endangering the Allied lines of communications between Australia and Hawaii that passed through New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa.

Indeed, the Japanese decision to push on to New Guinea and the Solomons in the spring of 1942 ensured that prewar Japanese and Allied conceptions of the course of the war would be proven wrong. Neither side had planned for large-scale, attritional campaigns involving significant land operations in the South Pacific. Rather, both had envisioned that the two sides would meet in a prolonged series of encounters as the United States projected power across the Central Pacific, culminating in a final decisive battle somewhere in the vicinity of Japan, the Philippines, and Formosa (the island known today as Taiwan). Thus, the unforeseen campaigns in New Guinea and the Solomons must be examined together, and the influence of possession of strategic initiative does much to explain why those campaigns began, why they evolved into desperate struggles, and why the outcome of those campaigns changed the course of the Pacific War writ large.

This book seeks to address a number of important questions:

- **Strategic Initiative:** What is strategic initiative? What elements underlie strategic initiative and contribute to its possession or its loss?
- **Strategic Acumen:** What strategic decision-making structures did the Japanese and the Allies employ? How did those structures contribute to or inhibit maintenance of the strategic initiative in the Pacific during the mid-phase of the Pacific War?
- **Intelligence Apparatuses:** What organizations did the combatants employ in the pursuit of intelligence? How effective were these intelligence organizations in the prosecution of the war?
- **Resources:** How did resources contribute to the outcomes of those campaigns and to the side that held the strategic initiative? How effectively were available resources used?
- **Combat Effectiveness:** How important were combat effectiveness and operational/tactical methods? How did battle successes and failures, and the exploitation thereof, contribute to shifts in strategic initiative?
Chapter One

- **Chance:** What was the role of chance? Which side operated more effectively in the face of the unknown? How did this change over time?
- **Political Will:** How did the decisions, desires, and determination of political leaders influence possession and retention of strategic initiative in the Pacific War?

**HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The dominant campaigns in the Pacific between mid-1942 and early 1943 included General Douglas MacArthur’s New Guinea campaign and the simultaneous effort on Guadalcanal under US Navy direction. Historiography has not neglected the period, and strategy is a popular and perennial subject in military history and military science; but there remains room for investigation in both areas. Historians often study these campaigns in isolation, thereby undervaluing the contribution of the Papuan campaign to the outcome of the war.

Moreover, although these accounts frequently refer to possession of the strategic initiative, they rarely define the term. It is possible to exercise initiative at the tactical or operational (campaign) levels while lacking overall strategic initiative. Many of the works do not even mention strategic initiative but refer instead to “turning points.”

The best-known official account is Samuel Eliot Morison’s fifteen-volume *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, covering the naval aspects of the war. Morison also composed a single-volume survey, *The Two Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War*. In this latter work, Morison devotes an entire chapter to Guadalcanal but grants only scattered references to New Guinea, which involved far fewer naval combat actions. Morison mentions Allied possession of strategic initiative only after continued fighting in the central Solomons concluded in October 1943, and he offers an implied definition: “They [the Allies] would call the tunes, selecting when and where to fight.”

Understandably, the US Marine Corps devoted an entire volume of its official history to the Guadalcanal campaign as a turning point in the war, arguing that the campaign gained the strategic initiative for the Allies while making no mention of any contributions from the concurrent New Guinea operation. Perhaps more surprisingly, however, the exhaustive *United States Army in World War II* series agrees with this assessment. After separate volumes on the New Guinea and Guadalcanal
campaigns, the army’s historian concludes that it was the latter campaign
that wrested the initiative away from the Japanese. The army’s historian
concludes that it was the latter campaign
that wrested the initiative away from the Japanese. In a separate volume,
*Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941–1942*, the army historians
Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell imply that Allied offensive power in
New Guinea and the Solomon Islands contributed to the beginning of the
shift in strategic initiative to the Allies in December 1942; however, they
do not define “initiative.” The fourth volume of the US Air Force (USAF)
account, *The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944*,
briefly gives credit to both campaigns for the shift of initiative to the Al-
lies but, again, includes no specific definition or explanation.

Beyond such government works, professional historians and biogra-
phers have examined this period and these campaigns from a variety of
perspectives. However, many surveys of the Pacific War focus on Mid-
way and/or Guadalcanal as the points where initiative changed hands.
Williamson Murray and Allan Millett provide a more nuanced view in
*A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War*. They conclude that
Midway, although it did not give the Allies the strategic initiative in the
war, opened the door for them to vie for that initiative.

Other works that analyze the Pacific War typically address the South
Pacific campaigns of 1942 and 1943 in greater detail. Dan van der Vat
discusses initiative and turning points in his book *The Pacific Campaign:
The U.S.-Japanese Naval War, 1941–1945*. In his analysis, three turning
points—the Coral Sea, Midway, and Guadalcanal—preceded a slow shift
in initiative, which he equates with offensive action, in the Pacific war.

Ronald Spector’s influential study *Eagle against the Sun: The American
War with Japan* presents yet another perspective on Midway. In Spector’s
judgment, the Japanese leaders chose to transition to a defensive posture
after this battle even though they had sufficient forces to take the initia-
tive if they chose. Spector describes Guadalcanal as a defensive victory,
which implies some sort of turning point, but stresses the psychological
effects of both jungle campaigns in removing the veneer of the Japanese
army’s invincibility.

A more recent work examines Japanese calculations in World War II
from yet another perspective. *Japanese Military Strategy in the Pacific
War: Was Defeat Inevitable?* by James Wood seeks to overturn conven-
tional wisdom that Japan was foreordained to defeat at the hands of the
richer Western nations. He argues that Japan had brilliantly executed its
initial strategic plans, only to fight three battles—Midway, Guadalcanal,
and New Guinea—at the wrong places and times. While he does not
clarify his concept of strategic initiative, he clearly feels that the cam-
Chapter One

Campaigns and battles mentioned above contributed decisively to Japan’s loss of that initiative.

One additional work deserves mention: H. P. Willmott’s *The War with Japan: The Period of Balance May 1942–October 1943*, originally published in 2002. He rejects the idea of “turning points” in the war but likens the strategic initiative to a “gun lying in the street: it was there for either side to pick [up] and use” following the Battle of Midway.13

Turning to primary sources, any such study necessarily requires a look at the “other side” from the Japanese perspective. Unfortunately, primary Japanese sources pertaining to the Pacific War remain limited, particularly for one not versed in the complexities of the Japanese language. The Japanese destroyed much of their documentation when they realized the imminence of their impending defeat in 1945, before Allied forces occupied the island nation. Nonetheless, the postwar interrogations of Japanese officers and leaders conducted under the direction of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) remain a treasure trove of information. Indeed, many historians judge the Japanese participants in these interviews to be more forthcoming and forthright in their responses than were their German counterparts.14 In addition, in the decades following the war the Japanese produced their own 102-volume history of the conflict, titled *Senshi Sōsho*, portions of which have been translated into English.15 Finally, the series of postwar “Japanese Monographs” produced by Japanese officers for the US Far East Command provide another source for their perspective.

Studying these campaigns from the Allied perspective is less challenging. The official histories and campaign studies represent solid starting points, but several archival collections located in the United States offer the opportunity to get behind the scenes on the Allied side. Many pertinent US Army, Navy, and Marine Corps records are readily available for examination at the US National Archives II, located in College Park, Maryland. The Naval History and Heritage Command’s Operational Archives Branch at the Washington Navy Yard offered additional naval resources, such as Admiral Nimitz’s handwritten diary, to supplement the naval records available at the National Archives. Many, if not most, of the supporting US Air Force resources may be found at the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. Finally, a number of resources are also available through electronic means, including portions of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s archives in the FDR Library and records of the numerous inter-Allied war conferences.
Introduction

STRUCTURE

Chapter 2 examines the theoretical concept of strategic initiative and seeks to define the term explicitly in the military context. It then describes several important elements that contribute to the possession of strategic initiative, including resources, intelligence, strategic acumen, and combat effectiveness.

Chapter 3 describes how the Japanese and Allied decision-making structures functioned during the war. It investigates the interaction and working relationships among the political leaders, the army, the navy, and the air force leadership structures down to the units in the field waging the war in the South Pacific.

Chapters 4 and 5 describe and compare the intelligence structures employed by the Japanese and the Allies, in turn. As with the preceding chapter, the examination surveys the structures from national to tactical levels. Although both sides often used common methods of collection and similar sources such as radio intelligence/decryption and aerial photoreconnaissance, their integration of intelligence among the services differed markedly. The Allies developed structures that fostered better cooperation among their land, sea, and air forces than did the Japanese.

The analysis then transitions to the course of the Pacific War between December 1941 and February 1943, evaluating the main theme of shifting strategic initiative. Each chapter recounts a segment of the war, providing a narrative background of events, followed by an analysis of the period utilizing the supporting elements that underlie the possession of strategic initiative.

Chapter 6 is a brief narrative of the first six months of the war, recounting the war of Japanese conquest. It describes Japanese aims and reviews the seemingly irresistible tide of the Imperial advance. It examines the raid at Pearl Harbor as well as the invasions of the Philippine Islands, Malaya, and the Bismarck Archipelago. It also assesses the elements contributing to Japan’s possession of strategic initiative during this period.

Chapter 7 recounts the Battle of Midway. It analyzes the significance of this battle and its influence on strategic initiative in the Pacific War, especially the impact of Midway on the strategies of the combatants as well as contemporary assessments of the meaning of the battle.

Chapters 8 and 9 focus on the period of strategic dispute, during which the Allies vied to seize the strategic initiative from the Japanese, from mid-1942 until February 1943. These two chapters analyze the course of the war through the lens of the underlying elements of strategic initiative.
developed earlier. The resulting analyses attempt to identify where the strategic initiative shifted decidedly to the Allied side and why. The interrelationships among and interactions of these elements provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the course of the Pacific War than has previously been possible. The elements of strategic initiative help explain how and why the combatants engaged in heavy, attritional warfare in the South Pacific when, prior to the war, both anticipated a decisive naval battle in the Central Pacific to determine the war’s victor. This interpretation thus provides a fresh look at the interactive effects of the dual, concurrent campaigns, rather than crediting the turn of events in the Pacific solely to the struggle for Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands.

The first step, then, is to clarify the concept of strategic initiative. What is it, what are the elements that contribute to it, and why is this concept important?