JAPANESE–GERMAN RELATIONS AND THE IMPACT OF THE WAR IN EUROPE ON JAPAN’S STRATEGY OF SOUTHERN ADVANCE, 1935–1941

by

Brian J. Sivell

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Graduate Department of East Asian Studies
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Brian J. Sivell (2000)
The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author’s permission.

L’auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L’auteur conserve la propriété du droit d’auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-53718-8
Japanese–German Relations and the Impact of the War in Europe on Japan’s Strategy of Southern Advance, 1935-1941

Brian J. Sivell

Doctor of Philosophy (2000)
Department of East Asian Studies
University of Toronto

ABSTRACT

For the Japanese, the outbreak of war in Europe seemed to be a “godsend.” It wasn’t, however, the windfall which they had expected it to be. If Japan had properly seized the moment, they could have turned the events in Europe to their advantage; but they didn’t, and what was thought to be a “godsend” turned out to be more of an “evil demon.” Unfortunate as it was for Japan, the Japanese people had become intoxicated with the German victories, turning their heads to gaze towards the south—it was all quite pitiful; the divine wind turned out to be an ill wind.¹

So goes Satō Kenryō’s appraisal of Japan’s fortunes in the Pacific War. This summary is germane to the present thesis insofar as it alludes to the fact that Japan’s fortunes were strongly tied to events in Europe. During the two-year period immediately preceding the outbreak of war in the Pacific islands and Southeast Asia (On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and Great Britain and France declared war upon Germany two days later), the Blitzkrieg attacks of the

¹ Satō Kenryō, Daitōka sensō kaikoroku (Tokyo: Tokuma shoten, 1966), p. 91. Satō Kenryō was appointed chief of the Military Affairs Section of the Military Affairs Bureau in February 1941. He also served as the Vice-Chief of Staff of the South China Army.
Wehrmacht had resulted in overwhelmingly successful German military campaigns throughout much of Europe.

In the Pacific, however, apart from their interminable conflict with China, Japan was not yet engaged in open warfare; even the "China Incident" remained an undeclared war. Japan preferred at this stage to make inroads and establish her footholds by other means: diplomacy, intimidation, cajolery; anything short of open hostilities. Herein we may discern the essence of Japanese strategy and the main subject of this thesis.

I shall make the argument that Japanese strategy was intimately linked to events in Europe—being essentially predicated upon German successes; that is, Japan took advantage of Germany's successful military campaigns in Europe to advance her own agenda in the Far East. By allying themselves with Germany through the Anti-Comintern, and later, Tripartite Pact, the Japanese hoped to deflect the attention of America and the European democracies away from their activities in the Far East as they executed their southern advance.
Acknowledgements

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to a great many individuals who have assisted me throughout the several years during which time I have devoted myself to the study of Japan. Certain of these people also deserve much credit for assisting me in the writing of this thesis. Foremost among them, I would like to acknowledge the tremendous help I have received from the members of my supervisory committee: Professors John Brownlee, Shuzō Uyenaka, and Neil McMullin, all of whom are faculty members at the University of Toronto. Acting in his capacity as my head supervisor, Professor John Brownlee was particularly helpful; permitting me to work at my own pace, freely offering his advice, providing direction at all times, and coaching me through the nervous months leading up to my comprehensive examinations.

During my undergraduate years, all of these professors were instrumental in instilling in me a great interest in the various aspects of Japan: its history, religion, language, and culture. A heartfelt thank you also goes out to Professor Jacob Kovalio from the History and Asian Studies Department at Carleton University in Ottawa. Professor Kovalio was thoughtful enough to read through my thesis; not only offering his invaluable insight, but going out of his way to treat me with much kindness.

Various undergraduate and graduate co-ordinators at the University of Toronto are also deserving of much credit for helping to push me in the right direction. I am particularly grateful to Professors Richard Guisso, Victor Falkenheim, and David. B. Waterhouse. A special thank you also goes out to Dr. E. Bruce Reynolds from the History Department at San José State
University. Professor Reynolds was kind enough to review a preliminary draft of my thesis, and he subsequently provided me with some tremendously useful suggestions.

During my stay in Japan, I benefited from the hospitality of several people. I wish to acknowledge the hospitality extended me by Professor Emeritus Toshio Kawabe of Tokyo Kokusai Daigaku, who, despite the lack of a formal introduction on my part, made every effort to assist me. In addition, I wish to thank his colleague, Professor Kaneko Masaru of that same institution, for offering me his services. While in Tokyo, I was befriended by Professor Masayoshi Kikuchi of Tōyō University, and his wife Miwako. Both of these individuals went far out of their way to welcome and assist me, not only while I was in Japan, but during their stay in Canada. I have also benefited greatly from the expertise and knowledge of a great many anonymous persons who work in the various campus libraries at the University of Toronto: The Robarts Library, the Sidney Smith Library, and the Cheng Yu Tung East Asian Library. To all of these unnamed persons, I offer a most sincere thank you.

A very special thank you also goes to some dear friends, who in various capacities have helped me in the writing of this thesis. Much appreciation goes out to Miss Yoshiko Hachiya for proof-reading some of the more highly frustrating Japanese translations. I wish also to thank my very dear friend Miss Apinya Boonying, who acted not only as my guide, but my constant companion as I scoured the various bookstores and university campuses of Bangkok. Finally, I owe an irreparable debt of gratitude to my loving parents, Dr. Charles and Aileen Sivell. I could not have completed this thesis without them.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1

CHAPTERS

I. JAPAN'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN DECLINE ........................................ 16


The Four-Power and Nine-Power Treaties .......................................................... 24

The Roots of Japan's Collision with Chinese Nationalism ................................. 27

Manchuria, Mongolia, and Tanaka ....................................................................... 31

The London Conference ....................................................................................... 41

The Mukden Incident ......................................................................................... 46

The Collapse of the London and Washington Naval Treaties ......................... 47

The Brussels Conference ..................................................................................... 53

II. THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT ....................................................................... 58

Preliminary Negotiations ....................................................................................... 60
Hitler Pushes East .............................................................. 70
The First Steps ...................................................................... 75
America Tightens the Screws .................................................. 79
The Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact .................................. 85
Japan's New Priorities ............................................................ 94
Yonai Replaces Abe ............................................................... 98

III. THE TRIPARTITE-PACT .................................................... 104

Matsuoka Becomes Foreign Minister ....................................... 115
Stahmer Visits Tokyo ............................................................ 125
Army–Navy Consensus ........................................................... 133
The Alliance is Signed ........................................................... 139

IV. JAPAN, FRANCE, AND THAILAND ...................................... 149

Japanese–Thai Relations in their Historical Context ................. 157
The Fall of France and Increased Pressure from Japan ............... 163
The Nishihara Mission ........................................................... 166

V. THE MATSUOKA–HENRY PACT .......................................... 175
Germany Overruns the Netherlands ................................................................. 322
The Kobayashi Mission ........................................................................... 338
The Yoshizawa Mission ......................................................................... 346
The Indies Respond ................................................................................ 361
Operation Barbarossa ........................................................................... 371

IX. JAPANESE TROOPS OCCUPY SOUTHERN FRENCH INDO-CHINA .... 385

The Hull–Nomura Talks Resume .............................................................. 391
The Atlantic Conference ......................................................................... 395
Having Second Thoughts in Tokyo ......................................................... 400

X. INTO THE ABYSS ................................................................................. 407

The Talks Drag On .................................................................................. 409
Tojō Becomes Premier .......................................................................... 413
The Decision for War ............................................................................. 417
The Fateful "Hull Note" ........................................................................ 425

CONCLUSION .......................................................................................... 434
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES ........................................ 444

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................................................................................... 445

LIST OF MAPS

East Asia ....................................................................................................... 15

Land Reclaimed following the Franco-Thai Border Settlement. .............. 261
INTRODUCTION

Originally, the idea for the present thesis arose out of my deep interest and admiration for the nations of Japan and Thailand: their respective cultures, histories, and peoples. During the course of my preliminary research into Japanese–Thai relations, I discovered that the area in which I was principally interested—the wartime relations between the two nations—had already been admirably elucidated by the scholarly works of Dr. E. Bruce Reynolds and the late Dr. Edward Thadeus Flood. This discovery, coupled with my own lack of facility in the Thai language, convinced me that there was little of substance which I could add to complement the commendable works already compiled by these two particular authors. However, this did not deter me from continuing to pursue my interest in the subject of Japan’s relations with the countries of Southeast Asia. Over time, I became particularly intrigued by her infiltration into certain of these nations during the years leading up to the outbreak of the Pacific War. I was struck by what appeared to me to be the “opportunistic” nature of Japan’s penetration into Southeast Asia. The German seizure of France and the turmoil in the Netherlands emboldened Japan to push forward with her plans for the southern advance—as did Germany’s invasion of Russia. The evidence shows in the timing of her demands, the nature of her diplomatic intercourse with other relevant governments, and the words spoken during the course of their many discussions; both in the conferences of 1939–41, and in their private conversations with one another.
It would be foolhardy to suggest, however, that Japanese diplomatic and military strategies were founded solely upon such opportunities as provided her by Germany’s military victories; for at the same time, the Japanese were actively engaged in such pro-active measures as might provide for her, new opportunities to advance the establishment of a “new order” in the Far East. The Anti-Comintern Pact of November 1936, the September 1940 Tripartite Pact between Japan, Germany, and Italy, and the Russo–Japanese Non-Aggression Pact of April 1941, are the most prominent examples of Japan’s “forward-looking” diplomacy. Less well-known, however, are the Matsuoka–Henry Pact of August 1940 between Japan and officials of French Indo-China (under authority of the Vichy Government), and the treaty between Japan and Thailand pledging “the continuance of friendly relations and the mutual respect of each other’s territorial integrity.” Some extended analysis will be devoted to each of these pacts—particularly the latter two—as their ratification had a direct bearing, not only upon Japanese actions, but upon her relations with the other world powers.

Regarding the analysis of Japanese strategy, I have imposed two major restrictions: (1) The specific strategies to be investigated and the manner in which they were linked to events in Europe, will be generally confined to Japan’s なしん or “southern advance”; and (2) the preceding shall be restricted further still, by limiting the examination to Japan’s strategies vis-à-vis specified locations, including: Thailand, French Indo-China (Vietnam), the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia), and Singapore.

Equal attention will not be given to all these areas, that being dependent, not surprisingly, upon the degree to which they have a bearing on the overall focus of the thesis. These are no arbitrary restrictions; they have been included for the following reasons: (1) All these areas—save Thailand—were, during the period under investigation, European colonial holdings. Thailand, although the sole
exception, figured too prominently in the overall southern advance strategy—particularly as it related to Japanese attempts to gain a foothold in French Indo-China’s northern Tonkin province—to be overlooked. (2) The Philippines receives only superficial attention because, as an American colonial territory, its fortunes were only indirectly linked to the war in Europe, while Hong Kong, although an important and valiantly (though briefly) defended outpost of the British Empire, was felt to be insignificant in terms of Japan’s overall southern advance strategy; and finally, (3) The subject matter of the thesis relates only to those events, policies, conversations, etc., which took place before 7 December 1941. After this date, strategic priorities shifted and other geographical areas; that is, the numerous heretofore unknown islands and atolls in the Pacific, came to serve as significant strategic locations: bases, harbours, and airstrips. Although their military significance cannot be denied, it was felt that this alone was insufficient to warrant their inclusion in the present thesis.

Although there exist a great many works which make at least some passing reference to Japan’s efforts to exploit events in Europe to her own advantage, during the course of my research, did not come across any study, the main focus of which centred upon this seemingly apparent case of “foreign diplomacy” based upon such expediency. That Japan’s aggressive activities in Asia should have been conducted with one eye set upon events then unfolding in Europe seemed to be a curious phenomenon and one which I felt worthy of further inquiry. Asia and Europe seemed to me so remote from one another. Not only are Japan and Germany culturally, historically, geographically, linguistically—and, by almost any other criteria—dissimilar from one another, there was at the same time, very little to recommend them as eventual alliance partners. This is not to say that they held no common-ground nor that they didn’t share certain elements of similitude. Since the post-Versailles
period in particular, both Japan and Germany had begun more and more to view themselves as “have-not” nations, both pitted against a status quo as maintained by the “have” nations, exemplified chiefly by Great Britain and the United States. Anti-Japanese immigration legislation in the United States: the segregation of Oriental school children by order of the San Francisco school board in 1906; a “gentleman’s agreement” between the U.S. and Japanese governments in 1908 which slowed Japanese immigration to the United States; the failure to include a “Racial Equality Clause” in the League of Nations Covenant; the denial of Japanese to lease land, and; in 1922, a United States Supreme Court decision to prohibit Japanese from attaining U.S. citizenship, were only some of the anti-Asian articles of legislation which had stoked the fires of enmity. In Australia, too, there was a “whites only” policy, while the failure of Britain to renew the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the raising of protectionist tariffs which penalised Japan, were still other elements which contributed to a legacy of ill-will.

Several prominent Japanese including Ishibashi Tanzan gave a voice to Japan’s disappointment with the results of the Versailles Conference. Ishibashi complained that a double standard had applied, especially revealed in American demands that Shantung be returned to the Chinese. “Two countries were defeated in the war,” said Ishibashi, “. . . Germany and Japan.”

For the Germans, a number of punitive measures laid down at Versailles were viewed (by Germany) as devices designed to prohibit her from fulfilling her rightful aspirations. Following her defeat in the First World War, she was forced to part with a tremendous amount of territory: the Port

---

of Danzig went to Poland; Belgium took Eupen and Malmedy; France regained the Alsace-Lorraine region; to Denmark went the northern area of Schleswig, while the Rhineland and the valuable coal-producing Saarland fell under control of the allied forces. And, as if these losses were not enough, it was further stipulated that Germany’s Weimar Government was to maintain a standing Army of no greater than 100,000 soldiers, while she was burdened with impossibly large reparation payments; payments which were beyond her ability to cover. In both Japan and Germany, then, the perception that the Western democratic nations were responsible for much of their distress was to provide enormous propaganda value which was later used by militarists and ultra-nationalists, especially during the 1930s to fan the flames of societal discontent.

Both Germany and Japan also epitomised societies which might fairly be termed “militaristic” or “martial” in their outlook. In Japan, for example, these characteristics had been the hallmark of an officially-recognised, distinct, and even highly-esteem segment of society: the samurai. Even after the Meiji Restoration (1868), this class of people continued to be looked upon with both awe and respect, despite governmental revocation of their official status. Historically, power in Japan had frequently passed from hand to hand by virtue of the sword, and the successful exploits of the Japanese military were to increasingly become a source of great pride for all Japanese. Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō, for example, was hailed as a national hero following the defeat of the Russian fleet in the Straits of Tsushima, while the exploits of the military also brought Japan new wealth arising from their conquests in Manchuria, Formosa, and Korea.

The Japanese had only to observe the fate of their weaker neighbours in China, as well as East and Southeast Asia, to recognise the consequences which had been brought down upon those nations
which, for whatever reason(s), had failed to sufficiently militarise. In an increasingly hostile and imperialistic world, the Japanese were made increasingly apprehensive by what they had observed in Asia. Fukoku kyōhei, or "a wealthy country and a strong Army," had been the twin goals of the Meiji oligarchy, and they had steadfastly pursued these goals in order that Japan might avert those same misfortunes which had befallen their Asian neighbours. Japan was determined that she would not be compelled to surrender her sovereignty as China had been forced to do, and the Japanese citizenry were themselves, increasingly inculcated with martial virtues, particularly as the military began to assume an ever-greater presence in their daily lives.

Similarly, Germany and the German people were historically infused with a martial spirit. Particularly after Hitler's rise to power, the glorification of military splendour became commonplace. The Nazi party was quick to adopt many methods with which to inculcate the German populace with feelings of extreme national pride. All forms of pageantry extolling the virtues of Germany, and the supremacy of her people were put to use in an effort to unite the nation.

Both Japan and Germany also had some singular, almost mythically-inspired aspirations, reminiscent of Kipling's "white man's burden," which drove them to believe that it was their duty to extend their own convictions or ways of life amongst their neighbours. This tendency was not so paternalistic as it has sometimes portrayed by the propagandists. For the Japanese, this "heavenly-inspired" notion was born of a complicated rationale through which she viewed herself as the arbiter of knowledge and culture owing to her unique, even "divine" historical origins. On 29 January 1941, in a speech before the Japanese Diet, Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke summarised this perception when he told his audience:
For the Germans, this "sacred mission" was not so lofty-sounding as that of the Japanese. It incorporated several goals, one of which was to unite the Nordic or Germanic peoples of Europe. Sadly, however, Adolf Hitler's vision of the world called for the elimination or enslavement of those whom he and his Nazi party henchmen viewed as "sub-human": Jews, Poles, Slavs, homosexuals, gypsies, etcetera; anyone in fact, who did not conform to the Nazi's conception as a member of the so-called "master race." German racial ideology posited that the Germanic race was a race of "pure-blooded" peoples, and the manipulation of pseudo-scientific theories such as Social Darwinism were utilised to prop up this racial ideology. Even other less-than-scientific theories, such as phrenology, or the measurement of certain facial features and skeletal structures as a method for determining individual capabilities, were not beyond application by the racial theorists. Nor did the Japanese themselves escape the scrutiny of Nazi racial classification. Hitler himself paid them a left-handed compliment when he offered that, although they were of a "racially uncreative stock, the Japanese

---

were at any rate very clever, and their aggressive moves in the Far East, which brought down upon them the attacks of the liberal press, were to their merit.\textsuperscript{3}

In both the German and Japanese cases, other peoples were viewed as inferior beings. Although certainly not so frenetic as their German counterparts, the Japanese, too, entertained conceptions of their own racial superiority; even for those with whom they shared a strong racial and cultural affinity. Both the Chinese and Korean peoples were, for example, felt to be in need of guidance and direction from their “superior” Japanese neighbours. General Matsui Iwane, former Commander-in-Chief of Japan’s forces in Shanghai, expounded upon this very point when in 1946, he told the Military Tribunal for the Far East:

\begin{quote}
The struggle between Japan and China was always a fight between brothers within the Asiatic family. It has been my belief during all these years that we must recognise this struggle as a method of making the Chinese undergo self-reflection. We do not do this because we hate them, but on the contrary because we love them too much. It is just the same as in a family when an elder brother has taken all that he can stand from his ill-behaved younger brother and has to chastise him in order to make him behave properly.\textsuperscript{4}
\end{quote}

The Germans, on the other hand, appear also to have been driven by more practical considerations than a messianic desire to “enlighten” their “heathen neighbours.” The German concept of \textit{Lebensraum} or “living space” was quite simple in its basic formulation: to acquire more


territory. In his book, *Mein Kampf* or "My Struggle," Adolf Hitler wrote that National Socialism "must attempt to remove the disproportion between our population and our living space—the latter regarded both as a source of food and as the basis of our political power—between our historic past and the hopelessness of our political future."

So too, the Japanese—and with even greater justification than the Germans—felt the need to increase their "living space." A paucity of natural resources, an ever-burgeoning population, and a scarcity of arable land, were all matters of great concern. In a world in which nations were becoming increasingly prone to enact protectionist legislation, the Japanese had cause for apprehension. Indeed, in hindsight, Japan's drive for autarky can be identified as a highly significant factor in setting her on a collision-course with "the West."

Both Japan and Germany were also highly nationalistic, and historically, shared feelings of intense antagonism for the Communist ideology. For the Japanese, the Communist philosophy was anathema to the Emperor-system, and the Japanese authorities had cracked down on any and all such "subversive" doctrines as they had made their way into Japan. Their historical antagonism towards that foremost proponent of communism—Soviet Russia—had brought these two nations into open conflict on more than one occasion.

On the other hand, anti-communism in Germany, was largely a reflection of Hitler's personal anti-Soviet hostilities. Upon coming to power, he was quick to reverse the traditional Weimar policy of détente with the Russians, in effect, repudiating the 1922 Treaty of Rapallo, while preaching his

---

own philosophy of rabid anti-communism. The German leader often equated Bolshevism with world Jewry, and the efforts of the Nazi party to proscribe Marxism and eliminate adherents to that philosophy was much more monstrous than anything practised in Japan.

From the foregoing examples, it is clear that there were indeed, several factors which, taken together, might serve as a foundation for an alliance between Germany and Japan. These two nations certainly held common enemies, and they both felt hampered by these so-called “have nations.” But would that be enough to sustain a workable partnership during war time? Or, as this thesis shall suggest, was it merely a “marriage of convenience,” and were the Japanese able to use this partnership, and the victories their German allies scored in Europe to advance their own war aims?

A tremendous amount of material has been written about the Second World War in the Pacific and Asia. The present study, however, is not in fact a “war story” at all, but rather an account of prewar diplomacy. English-language publications recounting this turbulent era in modern history include all manner of writings: personal accounts of those who participated in the actual battles, fact-based novels, political memoirs, theses, chronologies, and so forth. However, regardless of their particular genre, writings which furnish a scholarly analysis of the relationship between war events in the Pacific and war in the European theatre seem to be either scant or non-existent.

Traditionally, historians (it would appear) have preferred either to treat these events as separate phenomena or, for their own reasons, have been content to devote their energies to the study of either one or the other. Although few in number, there are exceptions. Ernst L. Presseisen, Frank Iklé, and Johanna Meskill have all produced admirable works on the relationship between Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. Perhaps as a reflection of the “Western” writer’s propensity to analyse historical
phenomenon from a Euro-centric perspective, it should not be surprising for the reader to learn that all three of these works are presented from a European, and more specifically, German, perspective. That is, the emphasis is placed upon Germany’s reaction to Japan’s course of action(s) rather than the reverse. In his treatise, Presseisen gives a very thorough and definitive account of German–Japanese relations, principally during the 1930s. He recounts for the reader in great detail, the vicissitudes which dogged the negotiations over the Anti-Comintern and Tripartite pacts. Presseisen also plays heavily upon the perception that Germany and Japan were not allied in the truest sense of the word; that is, there was little joint action between the two along military lines and no co-ordinated efforts at diplomacy. Rather, these “supposed” allies were more concerned with carving out their own spheres of influence on opposite sides of the globe while using one another only as a means for diverting the attentions of those enemies whom they held in common.

In her scholarly work *Hitler and Japan: The Hollow Alliance*, Johanna Meskill has also written authoritatively on the relationship between Germany and Japan, limiting herself primarily to a study of the Tripartite negotiations. The reader will correctly infer from the title of her work, that Meskill has concluded—like Presseisen—that the German–Japanese alliance was essentially bereft of substance. Also, like Presseisen’s work, much of the book is devoted to the contention that Germany’s relationship with Japan was not one of genuine co-operation. Frank Iklé has provided us with much the same analysis although his work on German–Japanese relations is the more thorough of the works covering this subject.

The preliminary chapters of the present thesis cover much of the same ground; not so much as an end in itself, but rather as an adjunct to the main focus of the thesis. That is, if it can be shown with a
certain degree of persuasiveness, that the motivation which lay behind the bid to strengthen Japanese–German relations was the end-result of “self-serving” desires on the part of the signatories to the Anti-Comintern and Tripartite pacts to advance their own agendas, it lends further credence to the thesis that the Japanese used their “nominal” Axis partners merely to accelerate or expedite their advance to the south.

In writing this thesis, I have utilised a great number of reference works; obviously, some more extensively than others. Of those works which I have relied upon most heavily, there are certain multi-volume records which take no definite angle. In particular, such major works as the transcript of the Military Tribunal for the Far East, the German Foreign Ministry archival materials, and selected documents relating to the foreign relations of the United States, do not reflect any tentative assumptions on the part of individual writers. To be sure, there are specific memoranda (particularly in the latter two works) which are worded in such a way as to reveal the sentiments of their various authors. However, these volumes are primarily objective, rather than subjective in nature, and as such, they do not reflect any particular assertions.

In those chapters dealing with Thailand, I have made extensive use of the Japanese-language publication entitled: Nihon gaikō shi: nanshin mondai, which gives a straight-forward and, to all appearances, unbiased version of Japan’s dealings with French Indo-China and Thailand during their border dispute. I have also made frequent reference to material drawn from the work of Edward T. Flood. With his pioneering account of prewar Japanese–Thai relations, Flood has provided for the reader highly credible evidence in support of his thesis, which maintained that the Japanese had the
Thais "in their pocket." On the other hand, this particular work had nothing at all to say on the matter of Japan’s southern advance per se.

In fact, most of the literature which has recounted Japan’s "drive to the south," has focused primarily on Japan’s efforts to achieve autarky and thereby reduce their heavy dependence on imports—particularly from Britain and America. This, of course, has necessarily meant an inescapable retelling of the “tit for tat” escalation in hostilities between Japan and the Western powers. In discussing Japan’s relationship with Germany and the perceived relevance this had on her southern advance, this writer has likewise found that the reiteration of many of the important aspects surrounding this significant era in our modern history were unavoidable. However, as noted above, so far as this writer is aware, no individual work has given comprehensive coverage to the proposal that the Japanese took advantage of Germany’s European victories; at least to a degree commensurate with the importance which it would seem to warrant.

Other works, although fewer in number, have spoken of Japan’s southern advance as an extension of her war with China. This is especially the case in discussing her move in French Indochina; ostensibly to put a stop to the flow of war matériel reaching China from Indochina’s northern provinces and to provide Japan with bases from which they could then launch attacks into southern China. Still other works have discussed Japan’s southern advance in terms of its ideological underpinnings; that is, that Japan was in fact on a quest to “liberate” Asia from Western domination by the forcible eviction of the colonial powers. Although I give little credence to this “Asia for the Asiatics” theory, I have no serious disagreements with any of these interpretations. Indeed, I believe certain aspects of these various theories are all undeniable, particularly the notion that the Japanese
were driven to achieve a greater level of economic self-sufficiency by freeing themselves from their economic over-reliance on the West. I, too, have spoken at some length about these matters. However, these theories fail to make clear the connection between Japan's southern advance and how it was influenced by her relationship with Germany. More importantly, I believe that all of these interpretations only provide us with what we might term "motivating factors." In other words, they only offer us explanations as to why the Japanese felt compelled to push south, with out any mention of the methods through which this was to be accomplished. So, although the difference here may seem very subtle, I think it is nonetheless quite real. In writing this thesis, I simply wanted to encourage the reader to consider the plausibility of an additional dimension from among those factors which helped Japan in determining the scope and timing of her southern advance.
Map of East Asia
CHAPTER I

JAPAN'S INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS IN DECLINE

It is oft-times difficult for the historian to know where the story really begins; where does one locate that moment in time which marks the most suitable "jumping-off point"? The problem which arises in trying to establish such a point, is, that as the historian searches continually further back through the historical record, he or she seems never to arrive at a point at which there is nothing buried still further in the past which doesn't seem deserving of some consideration. If we accept this as a truism, then it necessarily follows that the pivotal event(s) or that period in time judged to be most suitable, must inevitably, be somewhat arbitrary. For the purposes of the present thesis, it would, however, seem appropriate to revisit the Japan of the 1920s; for herein, I do believe we may discover the roots of Japan's later war with China, which in turn led Japan into confrontation—and eventually war—with the Allied powers.

The Taishô Era (1912–1926) has often been acknowledged as one of relative "democracy" or "liberalism" in Japan. Such characterisations are a reflection of several trends, events, and policies which were current during those years. During this period, for example, Japan concluded disarmament treaties with the other major powers, extended the voting franchise, and experimented with administrative rule under majority party leadership. At the same time, there were other less
significant manifestations of liberalism to be found in the social and cultural realms. In the preceding decades, Japan had also maintained a generally co-operative attitude in her dealings with Great Britain and America; in 1902, she had signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, she’d come down on the side of the Allies during the First World War, and she was a signatory to both the Paris Peace Conference and the Naval Limitations Treaties of the Washington Conference. Unfortunately, her relations with China were, at this time, on a less harmonious footing, as evidenced by the mutual animosity conspicuous in their recent history. Not only had they fought against one another in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, but Japan had extracted unequal treaties from her continental neighbour, alienated herself from China—and to a lesser degree, the West— with the presentation of the infamous “Twenty-one Demands” of 1915, and so bullied China that Japan found she had become the target of anti-Japanese boycotts and protests.

The nature of Japan’s imperialistic policies towards China were manifested most prominently by the economic exploitation of China’s northern provinces. Over time, the economic links between Japan and China became increasingly important to Japan as she poured ever-increasing amounts of her own resources—both human and material—into the development not only of Manchuria, but China proper (that area south of the Great Wall) as well. Within certain of the more influential sectors of Japanese society (the military, political, and business communities) there evolved the perception that the prevailing anarchy in China and Manchuria threatened the future of Japanese interests there. Because of the strategic importance which a stable China had in the minds of many Japanese, the military began to give voice to the opinion that if China were unable to put her own house in order, the Japanese should not hesitate to do so. Hence, as early as 1917, on the occasion of the signing of
the Lansing-Ishii Agreements, Viscount Ishii Kikujirô had reminded the American Secretary of State: "A civil war in China may not have any direct affect on other nations, but to Japan it will be a matter of life and death. A civil war in China will immediately be reflected in Japan, and the downfall of China means the downfall of Japan."¹

Although Ishii had undoubtedly exaggerated the consequences for Japan of a civil war in China, his statement highlights the strategic importance which a stable China had already come to occupy in the minds of many Japanese. For the Americans, however, the Lansing-Ishii Agreement was not held to be overly important. In fact, Lansing was later to tell a Senate Foreign Relations Committee "... the terms had no political significance."² The Japanese, on the other hand, felt the agreement had both political and economic significance; it was viewed as a continuation of the long-held view that the Japanese had the right to establish for themselves a predominant position in Asia—a sort of "Monroe Doctrine" for the Far East.

From the Marxist perspective, an important element at the heart of these early Japanese imperialistic adventures was the motivating factor of capitalism. The zaibatsu, with their strong links to Government were able to amass great profits from the "business of war." The large indemnities which the Japanese extracted from China, the new markets which were opened up, and the


opportunities which were provided for the further exploitation of resources in the new territories which came under Japanese control, all demonstrated that imperialism could be a highly profitable undertaking. The second lesson which could be taken from these ventures was that the extension of economic imperialism had at its foundation, the capacity to project one's military power. Not that this lesson had been unclear to the Japanese beforehand. They had only to take their cue from the nations of Europe, particularly Great Britain, to realise the economic advantages of imperial expansion. On the other hand, the non-Marxist viewpoint posits that Japan embarked upon the path of imperialism to escape being "swallowed up" by the other imperial powers. Later, when the Japanese was no longer content merely to avoid the fate of their neighbours, they sought to expel the "white races" from Asia, and introduce themselves as the new "first among equals" in a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

The fears of Western imperialism had long been a motivating factor behind Japan's foreign policy and by securing what they believed to be an American affirmation of Japan's paramount position in Asia, Japanese stratagems were to be carried out within what they believed to be, a diplomatic framework of understanding. It was further hoped that the Paris Peace Conference would provide Japan with an ideal opportunity to consolidate her position in Asia within that diplomatic framework.
The Japanese delegation entered the conference with three main demands. These were: (1) The transfer of the German leasehold in the Shantung Peninsula; (2) the transfer of German possessions in the North Pacific; and (3) the inclusion of a "racial equality" clause in the covenant of the League of Nations.

Many Japanese were particularly sensitive to this final point and the question of racial discrimination was to later become a serious point of contention between Japan and the United States. The atmosphere between these two nations at the peace conference was tinged with feeling of mutual suspicion. Shortly before the conference, Konoe Fumimaro—who would later serve as Premier of Japan—had published a paper entitled: "Against a Peace to the Advantage of England and America," in which he had criticised the ideals of the League of Nations and pointed out—with some justification—that America and Great Britain were dedicated to preserving a status quo in which they held an advantage in the Far East. President Wilson was to later adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards Japan because he was anxious to secure her co-operation in setting up the League of Nations. By way of compromise, the Japanese demands were met, with the exception of the inclusion of the "racial equality" clause and the proviso that Japan would—at some unspecified time in the future—relinquish the Shantung Peninsula "in full sovereignty to China, retaining only the economic privileges granted to Germany."\(^3\)

\(^3\) *Ibid.*
When news of the recognition of Japan's special rights became known in China, Chinese indignation turned to violence, directed towards foreigners and foreign concerns. The anger directed towards Japan was most vehement, taking the form of strikes and boycotts, riots and violent demonstrations. Chinese students were in the vanguard of these anti-Japanese boycotts which reached a crescendo in what would later be labelled "The May Fourth Movement." Japanese reaction to the boycotts and assorted acts of violence was restrained and, as it turned out, the effect of the boycotts on Japanese merchants and industry was minimal. Eventually the boycotts died out of their own inertia, only to resurface in 1923 and then again in 1928.

London faced a dilemma when, in 1920, renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance came up for consideration. The British Foreign Office was greatly concerned that a renewal of the alliance would give the Chinese the impression that Britain was assisting Japan in turning China into a vassal state—the Peking Government having already raised such concerns. The proposed alternative was to form a triple entente which included America, Japan, and themselves. In addition, Britain felt that by bringing America into the alliance, they would be "in a far stronger position to exercise an effective restraint on Japanese ambitions, and counter the insidious ramifications of their policy of peaceful penetration." Such considerations on the part of the British added to Japanese fears of an East-West confrontation and this was the situation which existed when, in November 1921, the Japanese delegation took their seats at the Washington Conference.

The first round of Sino-Japanese negotiations opened on 1 December 1921. As had been the case at the Paris Peace Conference, Dr. Wellington Koo, along with Alfred Sze, were at the head of the Chinese delegation. China’s main demands were for an increase in the import tariff duties, and for the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Shantung province. As it turned out, the second of these demands proved to require a great deal more diplomatic manoeuvring than had been expected. Speaking for the Japanese, were their chief delegate, Prince Tokugawa Iesato, Ambassador Plenipotentiary Admiral Katô Tomosaburô, and Shidehara Kijûrô. By the time of this conference, Shidehara already had a long and distinguished career with the Japanese Foreign Service, following his graduation from Tokyo Imperial University Law School in 1895. He had joined the Foreign Ministry the following year and served as a diplomat in both Korea (Inchon) and London. He had also assisted Japan’s ambassador to the U.S., Chinda Sutemi. Shidehara then spent a number of years as Japan’s Deputy Foreign Minister under various cabinets and in 1919, was appointed by Prime Minister Hara Takashi (Kei) as ambassador to the United States, despite the fact that Hara was with the Seiyûkai party, while Shidehara was linked to the Kenseikai.6 Shidehara was plainly a very capable diplomat with a record which testified to his competence. With these credentials, and his fluency with the English language, he seemed an obvious choice to accompany the Japanese team, although it was, in fact, Prince Tokugawa who officially headed the Japanese negotiating team.

---

6 Although he tried to remain aloof from “partisan politics,” in 1903, Shidehara had married the sister of Katô Takaaki’s wife. Katô, who went on to serve as the leader of the Kenseikai, was therefore Shidehara’s brother-in-law.
Obviously, the Japanese were not prepared to simply give up their gains in northern China. Rather, they sought to reach what they believed would be a compromise solution with China, while at the same time offering certain proposals which, because of their potential benefit to other interested observers (the U.S. and certain major European powers), were expected to gain the backing of those powers. Shidehara volunteered the following:

The restoration of Kiaochow Bay to China with the promise that it be opened for international trade and that the Tsingtao-Tsinan Railway and all appurtenant mines be worked as joint Sino-Japanese enterprises, to be guided by a special Sino-Japanese police force. Other reservations were the opening of more ports in Shantung, the construction of several railways under the international consortium, special status for the customshouse at Tsingtao, and special arrangements on maintenance and operation of public works.\(^7\)

Despite this attempt at settlement, these proposals were found unacceptable to the Chinese delegation, which rejected them outright, refusing even to negotiate directly with the Japanese. However, working through the sponsorship of the British and American delegates, the Chinese Government was finally persuaded to accept the following proposals: (1) The transfer to China of all public properties in the leased territories, except those reserved for the Japanese consulate and community; (2) the withdrawal of Japanese troops along the Tsingtao-Tsinan Railway within six months; and (3) a host of important economic agreements.\(^8\)


\(^8\) Ibid., p. 67.
The Four-Power and Nine-Power Treaties

The Washington Conference, aside from discussing Japan's immediate relationship with China, was a forum for much broader agreements such as the Four-Power Treaty and the Nine-Power Treaty. The former treaty between America, Great Britain, Japan, and France, reinforced the status quo in the Pacific. Under its terms, Japan accepted a 6:10:10 ratio in capital ships relative to the British and the Americans. In addition, the treaty imposed a ten-year moratorium on the construction of new capital ships. Under the Four-Power Treaty, Japan was guaranteed naval superiority in her home waters because it also precluded the construction of any new naval bases or fortifications in the western Pacific.⁹

Although a naval limitations treaty, it was not military considerations alone which persuaded Japan to accept the 6:10:10 ratio. Economically speaking, Japan was unable to compete with America and Britain in an expensive escalation in the construction of capital ships. Admiral Katō Tomosaburō admitted as much in a letter to Naval Vice Minister Ide when he wrote: "It would be difficult for us to pursue a plan to expand the 8:8 fleet after 1927. Thus the gap between American

---

⁹ James W. Morley, ed., Japan's Foreign Policy, 1868–1941 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 40. The Japanese had hoped for a 7:10:10 ratio of capital ships relative to America and Britain. Unfortunately for them, American cryptologists had broken a Japanese cipher indicating that they (the Japanese) would accept a 6:10:10 ratio if necessary.
and Japanese naval strength would widen more and more and we could do nothing to narrow it. Japan would therefore be seriously threatened."

It might be supposed that with Admiral Katô present, Shidehara would have had very little input in the negotiations concerning naval matters, but such was not the case. In the historian Takemoto Tôru's judgement: "His [Shidehara's] influence was present in each and every phase of the negotiations, including issues concerning arms limitation for the Navy." In any case, the permissible tonnage for capital ships granted to the major signatories at the Washington Conference were:

Great Britain .......... 525,000 tons.
United States .......... 525,000 tons.
Japan ................. 315,000 tons.
France ............... 175,000 tons.
Italy ................. 175,000 tons.


---

10 Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy*, p. 220.
Except for some criticism emanating from the Navy, the Four-Power Treaty was generally seen in a favourable light. The same cannot be said for the Nine-Power Treaty. Under the terms of this treaty, the powers agreed to respect China’s sovereignty and independence while observing the principle of “equal opportunity” for the conduct of all industry in China. This was merely a reaffirmation of the “open door” policy which was much favoured by America.¹² The Japanese misinterpreted this to mean that the powers would not infringe upon each other’s rights in China proper and did not apply to Japan’s interests in Manchuria and Mongolia.

For the British and the Americans, the reaffirmation of the “open door” policy was particularly welcomed. The lessening of tensions between Japan and American was a relief, as was the avoidance of an expensive naval build-up. However, many Japanese felt they had been too quick to make concessions over hard-won territory in China, and the replacement of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance remained a cause for much concern in Japan.

Although Japan hadn’t lost her desire to pursue economic development in China, she now sought to pursue this objective—in concert with the Chinese—on the basis of a new relationship. This was essentially a reflection of Shidehara’s principles of co-existence and co-prosperity (kyōzon-kyōet). Shidehara made clear these principles during his first speech to the Diet upon his assumption of the office of Foreign Minister in 1924. Speaking to the assembled members on 1 July 1924, he gave his assurance to China and the world that: “... we don’t intend to sacrifice other nations for our

unjust desires nor be influenced by wrongful ideas of aggressive or expansionist policy."

Shidehara, then, was dedicated to the promotion of Japanese economic interests abroad, but only insofar as this goal could be accomplished in an atmosphere of co-operation.

The Roots of Japan's Collision with Chinese Nationalism

Chiang Kai-shek took over the leadership of the Nationalist Government at Nanking in 1928. Chiang's rise to power had been very rapid, particularly following the death of Sun Yat-sen on 12 March 1925. Chiang's background was thoroughly steeped in the military tradition. After completing military training with the Japanese, he took part in the revolution which eventually overthrew the Manchu in the 1911 Chinese Revolution. Following the establishment of the Guangzhou Government by Sun Yat-sen, Chiang served as a military aide to Sun and spent time studying military organisation in the U.S.S.R. before returning to China in 1924, at which time he was appointed to be the commandant at the new Whampoa Military Academy. Chiang was a determined man; he was resolute in his desire to unite China under the Nationalist banner and despite strong opposition within the ranks of the Nationalist party over his so-called Northern Expedition, Chiang disregarded such resistance, in his resolute effort to bring about a unified China under a central authority.

Although Chiang wielded a great deal of power, not only was he forced to compromise with the Communists and the left-wing in order to accomplish his goals (as well as avoid becoming a dupe for

---

the rightists), but in May 1926, he felt compelled to negotiate away some of his powers to these same groups, in order to persuade the “leftists” to join him on his Northern Expedition.

While Shidehara recognised Chiang’s tenuous position vis-à-vis the Kuomintang left-wing, there were many Japanese who sought to exploit the perception that Shidehara’s policies towards the Kuomintang were “soft.” The historians, Morse and MacNair have offered the following rationale:

One would have expected Shidehara’s policy to have been praised in Japan, for the Kuomintang moderates were victorious and likely to establish an anti-Communist Government in Nanking. However, such was not the case, perhaps because the apparent turnabout came too late to influence domestic developments, and criticism of [Shidehara’s] China policy became crucial in the political assault on the Kenseikai Cabinet.14

The Nationalist revolutionaries launched their expedition in July 1926 and were able to demonstrate such rapid progress that by 19 November 1926, Chiang was already feeling confident enough to announce his determination to “abolish extraterritoriality, foreign concessions, and all special rights and privileges.”15 The rapid pace of Nationalist successes continued, so that by early 1927, the Nationalists were poised to attack Kiangsu province with its prized cities of Shanghai and Nanking, and by 15 March, Chiang was within days of conquering Nanking. Enemy troops in the Yangtze River basin had very nearly been completely dispersed, and on 22 March, Shanghai did, in

fact, fall to the Nationalists. The following day, Soochow also fell and on the 24th, the Nationalist forces entered Nanking.\textsuperscript{16}

The Nationalist troops went on a rampage throughout the city; robbing individuals and looting homes. The Americans, British and Japanese consulates we all gutted. Acting through the consul-general in Shanghai, Yada Shichitarō, Shidehara attempted to restrain the foreign powers from adopting too aggressive a response, while at the same time, he attempted to persuade Chiang to stabilise matters and solve the crisis.\textsuperscript{17}

Much of the criticism which was directed at the Kenseikai in general, and Shidehara in particular following this violent outburst by the Nationalist troops, was both misdirected and opportunist. For example, the actual amount of damage that took place during the Nanking rampage didn’t warrant the sharp reaction which it provoked. The total number of foreigners killed during the incident was six: one American, three Englishmen, one French priest, and one Italian. Although several Japanese were wounded, there were no fatal cases.

As the Nationalist campaigns continued, Chiang’s forces pushed back the armies of the warlords Wu P’ei-fu and Sun Ch’uan-fang. However, eventually they came into conflict with a “left-wing” provisional Government in Wuhan which was under the control of Wang Ching-wei, about whom we shall have more to say later. Chiang no longer felt the need to compromise with the “leftists” and his earlier accommodation with the Communists and left-wing appears to have been nothing more than


\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Ibid.}
an expedient which had served his purposes. In truth, Chiang believed the Communists were a drag on his goals of political unification and he now felt himself powerful enough to institute an anti-Communist purge. But he underestimated the strength of his adversaries, and it was Chiang himself who was forced to withdraw. He returned to Nanking where he worked to consolidated his regime, and in July 1927, his group was joined by a faction from the Wuhan Government which had also split with the Communists.

Back in Japan, the rapid progress which the Nationalists had been making was not the only problem confronting the Government. The Cabinet of Wakatsuki Reijirô was also facing a domestic crisis relating to banking and financial matters. The problems stemmed from a request by the Bank of Taiwan, asking the Japanese to provide 200 million yen to assist them in covering bad loans they had made to a large consortium. The Bank of Japan was only willing to provide them money if the Government could provide assurances to back possible losses. Rather than convene a special session of the Diet to authorise the funds, the Wakatsuki Cabinet sought approval from the Privy Council for an Imperial ordinance as the authority for the guarantee.¹⁸ Many Privy Councillors and members of the Cabinet denounced the idea as unconstitutional and raised a great protest against the policies of the Kenseikai. During a speech made to a general meeting of the Privy Council, Itô Miyoji spoke out against the Taiwan relief plan, gradually digressing from the main thrust of his argument to a personal attack upon Shidehara and his policies. He accused Shidehara of bringing dishonour to Japan’s national prestige. An angry Shidehara responded as to the correctness of his policies, but Itô remained quiescent, ending his diatribe with a call for Shidehara’s resignation. Unable to obtain an Imperial

edict, and having aggravated a financial crisis, the Wakatsuki Cabinet resigned *en masse* on 17 April 1927. While the anti-Wakatsuki feelings prevalent in the Privy Council were rooted in their perception of Shidehara’s policies as being “weak-kneed” towards China, it was the Taiwan Bank problem which, in the end, toppled the Cabinet of Wakatsuki Reijirō.19

**Manchuria, Mongolia, and Tanaka**

On the morning of 19 April 1927, General Tanaka Giichi received an Imperial order to form a Cabinet; he did so the following day, appointing himself as his own Foreign Minister. Tanaka had served as Army Minister from 1918–21, and then again in 1923–24. His standing as the Seiyūkai party leader, with a military background and close ties to the high-ranking bureaucrats and members of the Privy Council, seemed to provide the best hope for a balance between civil and military tendencies. Although it has since been denounced as fraudulent, General Tanaka was also to gain some measure of notoriety as the alleged author of the so-called “Tanaka Memorial” (1927) which described the proposed Japanese plans for the conquest of Manchuria, Mongolia, and China and beyond.

Upon coming to power, Tanaka proclaimed a new “positive policy” towards China which he was quick to implement. Within a month of his coming to power, the Japanese Cabinet made a decision to send a force of 2,000 troops to Tsingtao to protect Japanese subjects and property in

Shantung province. This move came in response to the entry into Shantung of the northern expeditionary forces of Generals Sun Ch’uan-fang and Chang Tsung-ch’ang.20

On 1 June, Chinese officials strenuously protested against the presence of Japanese forces in Shantung, but Tanaka, rather than being moved by such protests, dispatched a further 2,200 troops which remained until September, when the Kuomintang offensive collapsed. The revival of anti-Japanese demonstrations and boycotts made clear the damage Tanaka’s hasty moves were causing to Sino-Japanese relations which Shidehara had fought so hard to improve.

At the Eastern Conference, which took place in Japan between 1 June and 7 July, many leading members of Japan’s military, political, and intelligence institutions gathered to discuss Japanese policy regarding China. During this particular conference, Tanaka invoked an idea harking back to the Lansing-Ishii agreements that, due to Japan’s geographical proximity to China, she had a particular responsibility to guarantee the peace and security of the area. In an interesting departure from Shidehara’s policy, Tanaka acknowledged to officials at the Eastern Conference “... the possibility of Japanese support for a powerful figure in the three eastern provinces (Heilungchiang, Kirin, and Liaoning) who met certain obvious qualities.”21

This powerful figure turned out to be Chang Tso-lin. Chang, of peasant origin, rose from the position of leader in a Manchurian militia during the time of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), to become Manchuria’s inspector general and eventually the most powerful Manchurian warlord. If

_____


21 Ibid., 77.
Chang proved pliable enough, Tanaka was prepared to enter into a *quid pro quo* with him, under which Japan would acquiesce to Chang’s governance in Manchuria in return for which he was expected to concede to Japan the economic exploitation of the natural resources in Manchuria-Mongolia. Of paramount importance to the expansion of Japanese economic interests in Manchuria would be the necessity of constructing further railway lines, to take place under the auspices of the South Manchuria Railway Company. In order to facilitate such plans, Tanaka sent the President of the South Manchuria Railway Company, Yamamoto Jōtarō to negotiate with Chang. Through his Japanese advisor, Chang let it be known that any agreement giving the Japanese privileges in railway construction was likely to give rise to renewed anti-Japanese agitation. Nonetheless, spurred on by the fear of Japanese military action, Chang agreed in principle to Yamamoto’s proposed plans for the construction of five new railway lines. Yamamoto, sensing Chang’s apprehension, pressed his advantage and obtained an agreement under which Japanese forces maintained the right to intervene in the three eastern provinces should their economic interests be threatened.

At the same time, Tanaka faced a renewal of Chiang Kai-shek’s Northern Expedition. This second phase, which began in the spring of 1928, threatened not only Japan’s tenuous relationship with Chang, it also caused the Japanese to entertain grave concerns over their commercial interests in northern China—specifically in Shantung province and in the Peking-Tientsin areas. Events became especially worrisome when Chiang’s general offensive reached the outskirts of Tsinan, wherein resided approximately 20,000 Japanese citizens. Tanaka found himself caught in a dilemma: should he trust the Nationalists to insure the safety of the Japanese residents of Tsinan or should he—as
suggested by the residents themselves and certain members of the Army Ministry—send in troops of his own.²²

On 19 April 1928, the Japanese Government made the decision to launch the Shantung Expedition. Without delay, three companies of troops were dispatched from Tientsin to Tsinan. Japanese forces reached Tsinan on 3 May and almost immediately they clashed with Nationalist troops. The fighting continued until 5 May, when an unsteady truce was arranged. But it didn't last. The Japanese commander, General Fukuda Hikosuke went beyond the limitations of his authority and demanded the disarming of the Chinese troops. This was unacceptable to the Chinese and fighting broke out once again on 8 May. In response to the fresh outbreak of hostilities, the Tanaka Cabinet ordered two additional brigades into Shantung and within three days, Chiang's troops had been dislodged from Tsinan. Some 3,600 Chinese troops had been killed and the Japanese occupation of the area continued for the next year.

While Tanaka's actions—and more importantly, those of General Fukuda—had preserved Japanese rights in Tsinan, there is no reason to believe Japanese residents were in actual jeopardy. The source of conflict was rooted in feelings of mutual suspicion, but until the Japanese troops arrived in Tsinan, the Nationalist officers had remained disciplined and had worked to keep demonstrators away from the areas of Japanese residence.²³

In order to stem the flow of rhetoric which followed on the heels of the problems in Tsinan, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a draft proposal to Chang Tso-lin and Chiang Kai-shek on


²³ Ibid., p. 117.
16 May, which outlined Japan’s desire for a compromise solution over problems relating to both Manchuria and China proper. The draft also included some informal advice for Chang: a suggestion that he retire. The strongest voices in opposition to Chang had come from the Army, but there were also many Japanese civilians in Manchuria who were disillusioned with Chang because of continuing instances of anti-Japanese agitation. Although Tanaka himself was opposed to Chang’s retirement, in time, the Manchurian warlord was prevailed upon to depart Peking. On 3 June 1928, he boarded a train for Manchuria—he never arrived. On 4 June, an explosion beneath the train cost him his life. The main perpetrator of this deed was Colonel Kômoto Daisaku, an intelligence officer in the Kwantung Army. Colonel Kômoto had miscalculated; he had been angered by the anti-Japanese sentiment he had found in Manchuria and he’d blamed this on Chang Tso-lin. “The most widespread cancer working against Japan’s policy in Manchuria-Mongolia,” stated Kômoto, “is Chang Tso-lin. If we succeed in overthrowing him, by whatever means, there will be no problem later in arranging a reconciliation since Chang Hsueh-liang is so inexperienced.”

On 3 July, Chang’s place was taken by his son, Chang Hsueh-liang, who would later prove to be even less useful to the Japanese in fulfilling their aspirations in Manchuria than had been his father. The younger Chang was prone to cast his lot with the troops of the Kuomintang, who had by now entered Peking under the Army of Yen Hsi-shan, the military governor of Shansi province.

The assassination of Chang Tso-lin was a very troublesome affair for Tanaka and it was to hound him throughout the remainder of his term. Far from improving Japan’s position in Manchuria, events were now proving the opposite to be true. Although Tanaka was not a party to Chang’s

---

24 Ibid., p. 130.
murder, as the Prime/Foreign Minister with strong military links, the episode reflected poorly on his ability to control events.

Although Tanaka tried vigorously to have the culprits dealt with, the Army refused to allow the responsible officers to be court-martialled and they took the offensive by trying to persuade Seiyûkai members to submit to that viewpoint. In fact, many important Seiyûkai members including such notables as Mori Kaku and Minister of Railways Ogawa Heikichi, were influenced into accepting a version of events which absolved the actual perpetrators while pointing the finger of blame at rogue Chinese elements.

In response to Chiang’s military successes, the Japanese Army was taking a very hard-line approach in their dealings with the Nationalist Government. In late June, for example, the Army General Staff drew up a number of terms which they demanded be submitted to the Nationalists. All of these proposals related to the events which had occurred earlier at Tsinan and Nanking. The Nationalists were to extend an apology for their “unwarranted attack” at Tsinan, punish the responsible officers, pay an indemnity for the deaths and injuries to Japanese nationals, and render a guarantee of future security for those Japanese who wished to remain in Shantung.25

The Japanese were also finding Chang Hsueh-liang to be far less pliable than they had thought he would be. Upon assuming the role formerly held by his father, the younger Chang was quick to assert his independence from the Japanese. Despite pressure brought to bear upon him by the Japanese, not to recognise Nationalist authority, he did precisely the opposite. Not only did he offer his full recognition to the Nationalists (in December 1928), but he went a step further, placing himself under

25 Ibid., pp.142-43. See also Coox and Conroy, eds., China and Japan, p. 222.
their direction. In return, the Nationalists promised to recognise Chang’s supremacy in Manchuria. Their determination now greatly augmented by the promise of co-operation they had received from the Manchurian warlord, the Nationalists adopted a hard-line attitude of their own. They were now prepared to take a tougher stance in their dealings with the Japanese. On 7 July 1928, the Nanking Government announced that any treaties which had expired, were considered to be abrogated, unequal treaties still in effect would be abrogated through proper procedures, and the Nanking Government would formulate (on its own) interim regulations to cover any situations which would formerly have been dealt with according to those treaties which they now considered void.\(^\text{26}\)

Meanwhile, throughout the autumn of 1928, Chang continued to consolidate his power in Manchuria. In October of that year, he was named a member of the Central Political Committee of the Nationalist Government in Nanking and much to the chagrin of the Japanese, he exhibited an increasing reluctance to deal directly with Japanese negotiators; preferring instead to refer them to the Nationalist Government.

None of these developments augured well for the Tanaka administration which was also coming under increasing criticism from left-wing elements as well as some members of the business community back home. The former were expressing their anti-imperialist sentiments, while the latter decried the decline in Japan’s China trade. On 17 February 1929, thousands would gather at Tokyo’s Aoyama Hall, where the following declaration was made:

\(^{26}\) Morton, *Tanaka Giichi*, p. 140.
The unification of our neighbouring country, China, will bring a good opportunity for a fundamental alliance of two great nations, Japan and China. Nevertheless, what the Tanaka administration is doing is harmful not only to our own national interests, but also to the general welfare of East Asia. . . . For the sake of "popular diplomacy" we are determined to destroy the Cabinet.27

In addition, Tanaka was still plagued by persistent questions surrounding the death of Chang Tso-lin and both the Chinese and the Western press continued to write frequently concerning on this incident. In order to clear his name, Tanaka had sought to have the guilty parties punished through a court-martial. However, as noted, the Army was against such proceedings, claiming that such a measure should be opposed since the honour of both the Army and the nation itself was at stake.28

By the summer of 1929, this simmering disagreement between Tanaka and the Army finally came to a head. At a Cabinet meeting held on 28 June, Army Minister Shirakawa Yoshinori's opinions were solicited concerning proposals to deal with those responsible for the Chang Tso-lin Incident. Shirakawa was absolutely adamant in his opposition to a court-martial and he was able to convince many of his Cabinet colleagues to adopt a similar viewpoint. While the Cabinet meeting continued, the Army Minister dismissed himself and headed for the Imperial Palace. Upon his arrival, Minister Shirakawa related the Cabinet proceedings to Emperor Hirohito who, according to news

reports, told Shirakawa that problems arising from the Chang Incident should be taken as a lesson for the future.29

Tanaka also left the same Cabinet meeting at one-thirty that day and proceeded to the Imperial Palace where he made a report to the throne in which he stated that he would take punitive action against Chang’s assassins. “Is this not a change from what you told me the last time?” replied the Emperor.30 An embarrassed Tanaka was unable to respond in the face of the Emperor’s obvious displeasure and retiring from the Imperial presence, he then paid a visit to Grand Chamberlain Suzuki

29 According to Admiral Okada Keisuke, Shirakawa was actually in agreement with Tanaka, but even he was unable to overcome the opposition of certain personnel in the Army General Staff. This opposition on the part of the Army, according to Shirakawa “... was based upon the view that to take steps to punish those responsible for the event would be to expose to the public something which the Army wished at the time to conceal.” Some of the greatest opposition came from the chief of the Military Affairs Bureau, General Sugiyama Gen, and Chief of Staff Kanaya Hanzô. Rather than report his inability to have the perpetrators of the Chang assassination punished, Tanaka chose to resign. See Yale C. Maxon, Control of Japanese Foreign Policy: A Study of Civil-Military Rivalry, 1930-1945 (Wesport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1957), pp. 73-75 for further explanations concerning this controversial affair.

30 Tanaka had first told the Emperor about the details of the Chang assassination in December 1928. Tanaka himself was unaware of the precise circumstances of the assassination until October. Tanaka had told the Emperor back in December that if Japanese troops were implicated in the affair, the guilty parties would be punished, to which the Emperor had responded by urging Tanaka to “uphold military discipline strictly.” See Morton, Tanaka Giichi, p.150. As six months had passed since Tanaka first reported events to the Emperor, and the perpetrators had yet to face a court-martial, Tanaka’s seeming ineptitude and subsequent “loss of face” were surely contributing factors in his decision to resign.
Kantarô. “I would like one more opportunity for an Imperial audience where I might discuss the present situation,” explained Tanaka. “If this is what you want,” replied Suzuki “I shall speak to the Emperor on your behalf. However I fear he shall not listen.” After this exchange, Tanaka took his leave. He then contacted Saionji Kinmochi, one of the Emperor’s key advisors, with whom he discussed the details of his conversation with the Emperor. It is believed that the decision for a general resignation of the Cabinet was determined during the course of these talks. In accordance with Tanaka’s desires, a special session of the Cabinet was convened on 1 July. At this Cabinet meeting, Tanaka announced his decision that there should be a general resignation. On the morning of the following day, during an Imperial audience, Tanaka officially announced that the resignation of his entire Cabinet had been settled.31

The formation of Hamaguchi Ōsachi’s Minseitô Cabinet (the Minseitô was the Kenseikai re-named) followed Tanaka’s resignation. Hamaguchi was generally thought to be a liberal, and in line with this characterisation, he appointed Shidehara to be his Foreign Minister. Like his predecessor, Hamaguchi was to be dogged by Japan’s problems dealing with China. By early 1929, Japan remained the only major power which had failed to sign an agreement sanctioning a return to China of her tariff autonomy. Even as early as 1927, the British had turned their concessions in Hankow and Kiukiang back to the Chinese and entered into talks concerning tariff autonomy.

It wasn’t until the spring of 1930, that Japan and China finally reached agreement relating to these outstanding problems. China’s right to set her own tariff rates was recognised by the Japanese Government with the proviso that on Japan’s most important export items to China, there would be a

31 Kamimura, ed., Nihon gaikôshi, 17: 304.
three-year exemption period. This measure was intended to allow the Japanese business community a period of grace in which to make adjustments to their export arrangements.\(^3\)\(^2\)

While the Japanese Government was thus engaged in these dealings with China concerning matters of economy, there were, at the same time, talks underway in Europe which were of a much different nature. These talks concerned the perceived necessity of curtailing expansion in naval shipbuilding; more specifically, they pertained to ongoing efforts on the part of the Western powers, which were aimed at convincing the Japanese that their defensive needs could be satisfactorily met regardless of their agreeing to abide by naval limitations which fell below those of the West.

The London Conference

The conference opened in London on 21 January 1930, its purpose being to hammer out an agreement limiting the tonnage for capital ships: cruisers, destroyers, and submarines. The Japanese delegates to the conference were calling for a 70 percent ratio versus America and Britain in heavy cruisers. However, neither the British nor the Americans wished to see Japan with anything more than the 60 percent overall tonnage worked out at the Washington Conference and reaffirmed during the 1927 conference at Geneva. The impasse which resulted from Japanese intransigence on the question of naval parity, guaranteed deadlock; in order to break the stalemate, the American delegate,

\(^3\)\(^2\) Beasley, "Japanese Imperialism," p. 173. Negotiations concerning extraterritoriality did not work out because of the interruption caused by the seizure of Manchuria by the Kwantung Army in September of 1931.
Senator Reed, and Japanese Plenipotentiary Matsudaira Tsuneo, worked out a compromise formula under which there would be parity in submarines. However, Japan would have a 69.75 percentage in overall tonnage, and for large cruisers Japan would be permitted 60.02 percent that of America and Britain. This final figure would be allowed to rise to 70 percent after the next conference, which was scheduled to be held in 1935.33

Despite Government pledges that the Japanese negotiators would not accept a heavy cruiser tonnage which was less than 70 percent of the American and British Navies, they had gone against this pledge and many Japanese were angered owing to the perception that Japanese security had been compromised. Shidehara found himself coming under the same criticisms to which he had been subjected during his previous term as Foreign Minister. It was left up to Hamaguchi Ōsachi, after first having obtained the reluctant concurrence of the chief of the Navy General Staff, Katō Kanji, to overrule those members of the Naval General Staff who were completely opposed to the outcome "because of the inadequacy in the tonnage of auxiliary vessels permitted to us by the treaty."34

In Japan, opposition to the London (and Washington) Conference, was widespread and contentious. Not only did the results give rise to expressions of dissatisfaction over the perception that Japan's security in the Pacific had been compromised and that the lower ratio constituted an affront to Japanese "face," but the actions of the Hamaguchi Cabinet in vetoing naval opposition to

34 *Ibid.*, p. 171. On the Japanese side, the actual signatories to the treaty were Foreign Minister Wakatsuki and Navy Minister Takarabe Takeshi. Admiral Katō states that he was only given two hours notice of the decision to ratify the agreement. In addition, he later requested an audience with the Emperor to voice his opposition. See Maxon. *Control of Japanese Foreign Policy*, p. 76.
the treaty were seen to have made a mockery of the principle of "Imperial prerogative." As a result of this perceived "slight," Hamaguchi was targeted by right-wing elements and forced to pay a heavy price for his actions. On 14 November 1930, he was struck by two bullets fired by Sagôya Tomeo, a youthful member of the Aikyôjuku or "Institute for Rural Patriotism"; a so-called "patriotic society."

Despite this assassination attempt, Hamaguchi—who was temporarily replaced by Shidehara—was eventually able to return to the Diet. However, he did eventually succumb to his wounds and passed away in the spring of 1931. In April of that year, he was succeeded by Wakatsuki Reijirô—a man whose views were not dissimilar from his own.

1931 represented a pivotal year for Japan; not simply with regard to domestic developments, but also in foreign affairs. On the domestic front, extremists—both military and civilian—were spreading terror. In March of 1931, certain well-placed members of the military including Generals Koiso Kuniaki and Tatekawa Yoshitsugu, along with a number of lower-rank officers under their command, conspired to launch a coup d'état in league with such civilian extremists as Ôkawa Shûmei and Tokugawa Yoshichika, who helped to fund the failed plot in the amount of at least 100,000 yen.35 These conspirators organised a plot (later aborted) to replace the civilian Government with one made up of military personnel. The plan called for bomb attacks on the major party headquarters, after which martial law would be put in place as a response to the resulting confusion. Only the fact that General Ugaki Kazushige withdrew his support for the plot shortly before it was set in motion, prevented almost certain bloodshed. In October of 1931, the Kempeitai (or military police) quashed yet another plot hatched, this time, by Colonels Hashimoto Kingorô and Nemoto Hiroshi. Violence of

35 See Maxon, Control of Japanese Foreign Policy, pp. 78-79.
this nature continued into the next year. On 9 February 1932, ex-Finance Minister Inoue Junnosuke was assassinated by members of the ketsumeidan, another right-wing society. Within a month of this murder (on 5 March 1932), Baron Dan Takuma, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Mitsui Company, was murdered by members of the Aikyōjuku. Following these episodes, on 15 May 1932, a small group of Navy officers and Army cadets assassinated Premier Inukai Tsuyoshi (Ki) after bursting into his official residence. Not only were the perpetrators given relatively light sentences for their criminal deeds, but they were allowed to display their fanatical ideas during court proceedings. Unfortunately, public opinion was inclined to be sympathetic towards the "pure motives" of these young officers and cadets. The objective of the assassins had been to create a situation of confusion whereby, under declaration of martial law, a military Cabinet might be established. Terrorist episodes of this nature heralded only "the beginning of the end" for party Government in Japan, and ushered in an period of Japanese history which the noted journalist Hugh Byas has referred to as an era of "politics by assassination." Japan was now sliding quickly and irreversibly into an abyss; that is, rule by the militarists, in league with the ultra-nationalist members of the many extremist societies which had sprung up in Japan. The creeping terrorism which was now enveloping Japan steadily generated a well-founded sense of paranoia in the minds of many of Japan's intellectual elite. Increasingly, scholars, journalists, and authors were cowed into the unenviable position of self-censorship as the balance of power slipped inexorably into the hands of the militarists. An important consequence arising from this shift in the balance of power, was the increasing tendency on the part of right-wing elements to take matters into their own hands with less and less regard for civil authority.
Unfamiliar with the concepts of egalitarianism and natural rights, the Japanese people had never completely lost their awe for—and their feelings of subservience towards—the warrior class. Although, theoretically the old class barriers had been eliminated many years earlier by the Meiji oligarchy, the Japanese military still saw themselves as the standard-bearers for the preservation of the Japanese polity (kokutai) and much of Japan’s civilian population was inclined to agree. An additional factor in the rise of the military owed to the fact that the elite of Japan’s military services had the right of direct access to the Throne and, after 1936 they re-instituted the policy whereby only active-duty generals and lieutenant-generals could be appointed as Minister of the Army, while to serve as the Navy Minister, one had to be an active-duty admiral or vice admiral. The military had convinced the Privy Council and the Premier that in the wake of the February 1936 Incident, it was necessary for the military to exert greater control over their membership. Many members of the Japanese military could not countenance any “interference” from civilians, and they were prepared to bring down any Cabinet which they felt was inimical to their agenda.36

Generally speaking, although the Japanese people held the military in high regard, politicians were viewed with mistrust. As Japan entered the 1930s, this distrust was reinforced by a number of considerations. By now, there had grown a great resentment towards the international order that had been mapped out at Versailles and the Washington Conference as well. After World War I had come to an end, and America and the European powers began to reassert their influence in Asia, the Japanese began to feel disillusioned with the ideals of peaceful expansion and international co-

36 In 1900, General Yamagata Aritomo, the “Father of the Japanese Army,” made it compulsory that Army and Navy Ministers should only be generals and admirals on active duty.
operation. This loss of faith arose, in the main, from two sources. One of these was the economic and social ills which seriously plagued Japan and the second reason was the conviction that the other powers seemed prepared to forego international co-operation in pursuit of their own interests in China.\footnote{Sharon Minichiello, \textit{Retreat from Reform: Patterns of Political Behaviour in Interwar Japan} (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1984), pp. 81-82.}

The negative consequences for Japan which were to come about as a result of this usurpation of power were not limited solely to the repercussions which they caused in the domestic arena. During the fall of 1931, for example, in a place called Mukden, Manchuria, there occurred a highly disturbing event; an event which was to have tremendous consequences for Japan’s future relationships, not only with China, but with many of the other world powers as well.

The Mukden Incident

In September 1931, on their own initiative, and with no regard for the authority of the civil Government, certain units of Japan’s Kwantung Army which had been stationed in Manchuria for the protection of the South China Railway and other Japanese interests, suddenly initiated a clash with Chinese troops. As a pretext for their actions, the Japanese claimed that the Chinese had attempted to set off an explosion on the railway near Mukden. The Japanese Army ignored the protests of its consul-general in Mukden, Hayashi Hisajirō, for a diplomatic settlement, choosing instead to press
the attack. At the same time, Japanese naval forces landed at Shanghai, seizing portions of that city as well as some surrounding territory. So thorough was this unauthorised campaign, that by 15 September of the following year, Japan was able to declare the birth of the puppet state of Manchukuo. Most Significantly, Japan’s occupation of Manchuria and her subsequent censure by the League of Nations’ Lytton Report, led to Japan’s withdrawal from that body, which, in turn, seriously contributed further to Japan’s growing sense of ostracism, dealt a terrible blow to “collective security” principles and the League of Nations, and constituted a precedent that Germany would follow.

The Collapse of the London and Washington Naval Treaties

Like their Army counterparts, the Japanese Navy was now becoming more outspoken, particularly on the limitations which had been imposed on them by the Washington and London Naval Treaties. During the fall of 1934, the Japanese travelled to London to voice their concerns regarding these limitations. In order to pacify the vocal and sometimes violent critics amongst the anti-treaty segments of the military, Navy Minister Ōsumi Mineo, who was also for abrogation of the treaties, demanded the support of former Navy Minister Okada Keisuke, who had served in the first half of Saitō Makoto’s Cabinet (May 1932–January 1933) in a revision of Japan’s naval capacity in relation to the other powers.

---

In accordance with this discontent, a Five Ministers Conference was convened to discuss the
details of a proposed new treaty (of Japanese origins) to replace the Washington and London
Treaties. In September 1934, opposition to the discussion of any proposal which would leave Japan
with anything less than naval parity vis-à-vis Britain and America, led to a very important resolution;
the Cabinet made the decision to abrogate the Washington Treaty, and on 17 September 1934,
Foreign Minister Hirota Kôki informed America’s ambassador to Japan, Joseph C. Grew, of Japan’s
intention to do so before the end of the year.39

Grew must have had some premonition of Japanese intentions. The previous year, he had
committed his thoughts to paper. “Japanese naval leaders,” wrote Grew, “have built up a feeling
among the people of resentment and contempt for anything connected with the London Treaty. . . .
The result of these efforts by military leaders has been the creation of an intense antipathy for the
arms limitations treaties and a universal demand for revision of the present naval ratios in favour of
Japan.”40

According to Hirota Kôki’s recollection, many elements in the Japanese Navy were anxious to
see the immediate abrogation of the Washington Treaty, but the Foreign Minister wished to postpone

39 Japan’s ambassador to the United States, Saitô Hiroshi had already served notice at Geneva on 25
May 1933 that the Japanese were unprepared to accept the renewal of the Washington-London
Treaties in their existing form. They were regarded by the Japanese as “unstable.” See Thomas A.
I).
such a move until he'd had the opportunity to discuss the matter with the other signatories. It was hoped that by doing so, Japan could avoid imparting any offence to the other parties involved, while staving off any feelings of ill-will which the abrogation of the treaty might generate.41

Like many lower-echelon Navy officers, there were certain members of the Army General Staff who had similarly been in favour of scrapping the current naval treaties. As a consequence, they suggested that the Army and Navy Ministers, along with the two Chiefs of Staff—in order that they might avoid a repeat of the "usurpation" of their power such as had occurred under Hamaguchi—go over the heads of the Cabinet by making a direct appeal to the Throne. However, the Army Ministry refused to go along with this suggestion and the Chiefs of Staff were left to seek independent endorsement. When they did so, they were referred to the Board of Field Marshals and the Admirals of the Fleet.42

At a U.S. Government policy conference of September 1934, Admiral Standley, America's chief of Naval Operations, probably reflected Roosevelt's own canon when he announced that the current

42 Imai Seiichi, "Cabinet, Emperor, and Senior Statesmen," trans., H. Paul Varley, in Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese–American Relations, 1931–1941, eds., Dorothy Borg and Okamoto (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 64. It has been reported that the genrō Saionji brought up the idea of a conference between the two chiefs of staff and the Emperor, after which the Emperor "would issue a general warning regarding the international situation." Although the precise meaning here remains unclear, the idea was eventually quashed because Kido, Saitô, and Harada all preferred to shield the Emperor from involvement in any such highly-charged political affairs. See Maxon, Control of Japanese Foreign Policy, p.97.
ratio between the Japanese and American fleets "must be maintained at all costs . . ." He further maintained that "if the United States was prepared to stand up for the Open Door, for the 9-Power Treaty, for the Kellogg Pact, etcetera, it must have a strong enough fleet."

During conversations held in London in the autumn of 1934, both the U.S. and the British took a firm stand against the Japanese delegation's demands for parity, insisting on the maintenance of current naval ratios. These preliminary discussions were terminated on 19 December without result, and the Japanese were forced to return home empty-handed. And it was, in fact, as a result of this failure to secure parity with Britain and the U.S., that the Japanese decided to inform the Americans of their intention to terminate the Washington Naval Treaty.

These preliminary discussions were really only a "dress rehearsal" for later talks which opened in London the following December. When the first scheduled meeting convened, the participating members—Britain, France, the United States, Japan, and Italy—found themselves in the same positions they had been in when the talks had left off the previous December. The Japanese had not altered their stance regarding naval parity, nor had the Anglo-American representatives—who had the additional support of the French and the Italians—modified their opposition. As in the previous talks, the impasse led the Japanese to withdraw on 15 January 1936. Despite the withdrawal of the Japanese, a new treaty was signed by France, Britain, and the United States on 25 March 1936, and

in June of that year, Japan gave notice of its refusal to adhere to this treaty as well. On New Year’s Eve 1936, the Washington and London Naval Agreements lapsed, and thereafter, Japanese naval expansion was greatly increased; so much so, that by 1937, the figures for Japanese naval construction were the greatest for any year between 1931 and 1945. American and Britain had earlier made the decision to expand their own respective naval capacities. On 27 March 1934, Roosevelt had signed the Vinson-Trammel Act, which gave authorisation from the Congress to the Navy Department to proceed with a naval building program; although Congress failed to pass the appropriations necessary for construction to begin. Throughout 1937, United States Navy capacity remained within the treaty restrictions imposed by the Washington and London Treaties despite their lapse. However, in 1938, the Congress passed the Naval Expansion Act, authorising a 20 percent increase in U.S. naval strength over the next six to eight years.

While the discussions on naval limitations had been taking place, the Japanese had been busily—and with extreme secrecy—fortifying the islands they had received under mandate by the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles. These fortifications included the construction of air and naval facilities on Saipan in the Marianas. Regarding this construction, Edward Miller made the following observation:

---


46 Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 1: 72.


For two decades Japan had shrouded the mandated islands in mystery, barring visits by foreign vessels and rarely admitting travellers and then only to five ports. Scientists observing a solar eclipse, for example, had to travel on Japanese warships. Japan’s exclusionary policy and the building of the military fortifications were both in contravention of the League Covenant as well as the treaty signed in Washington on 11 February 1922 which related to Pacific possessions.  

Interestingly, these islands, along with certain territories on the Chinese mainland had come into Japanese hands as a result of their having used the opportunity of the First World War to take over these German holdings. So, the Japanese propensity for exploiting her opportunities at the expense of others, was nothing new. And in China, skirmishes with the Japanese continued apace. So widespread had this conflict now become, that a major war seemed inevitable. The culmination of hostilities finally occurred in the late-night hours of 7 July 1937. The so-called “incident” which took place at the Marco Polo Bridge has been thoroughly documented and we need not dwell on the details here. However, we may say there is a general agreement amongst historians that it signified a “point of no return” for the Japanese in China. The fighting spread rapidly and the Japanese Government, unable to control events, was compelled to provide further support and reinforcements for her troops. The first Cabinet of Konoe Fumimaro (4 June 1937–5 January 1939), in office for only one month at the time of the Marco Polo Bridge “incident,” sent reinforcements numbering close to 1 million combatants, helped push the General Mobilisation Law through the Diet, and put the economy on a

Despite these facts, there was a continuing denial on the part of Japanese statesmen "that their country had any designs upon Chinese territory. . . . But, so great had been the discrepancy between these professions and the nature of Japan's activities upon the Asiatic continent, that the rift between Japan and the Western powers had become perceptibly greater."\(^{51}\)

The Brussels Conference

In November 1937, the U.S. and the European democracies gathered in Belgium for the Brussels Conference. The conference was convened in order to provide a forum at which the concerns of these nations regarding the preservation of the territorial integrity of China might be reaffirmed. For the Roosevelt administration, it was hoped that the conference would be the medium through which the Japanese would—under the pressure of world condemnation—be forced to display a greater degree of compromise towards China, while adhering to the principles of the Nine-Power Treaty and the Kellogg-Briand Pact. However, the prospects for any significant resolution(s) coming out of this conference were poor from the start. Before the invitations had even been sent out, the Japanese had made known their unwillingness to attend, and the Japanese Government was urging Germany to join them in their boycott. A telegram from the German Foreign Ministry to its embassy in China observed:

\(^{50}\) Kenneth Colgrove, "The New Order in East Asia," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1941): 5.

\(^{51}\) Röling and Rüter, *TTJ*, 1: 100.
Tokyo reports that the Japanese Government, while reserving definite decision until after receipt of an invitation, considers Japanese participation in a Nine-Power Conference as scarcely possible, since it is being called on the basis of a League of Nations resolution condemning Japan. For the same reason Japan would welcome Germany’s nonparticipation.\textsuperscript{52}

Some Germans were reluctant to follow Japan’s lead in a boycott of the conference, and Oskar Trautmann—Germany’s ambassador in Nanking—upon receipt of the cable from German State Secretary Mackensen, advised German participation in view of Roosevelt’s recent conciliatory radio address inviting accommodation at the upcoming conference, and British State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden’s promise of co-operation.\textsuperscript{53} However, in late October, Hitler himself made the decision not to attend the conference, and days after Hitler’s decision, Germany’s Foreign Minister spoke at Munich, saying, in part:

I should like to point out without expressing any opinion on the conflict, that it would be a most unfortunate beginning to the initiation of attempts to terminate the struggle if those attempts were instigated in the spirit of the resolution which the League of Nations recently passed in this


\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 767 and see also p. 773, for a later memo, dated 29 October 1937 from Mackensen, in which he stated that Germany did, in fact, decline the invitation. For extracts from Roosevelt’s radio speech, see FRUS, Japan, I: 401. Eden’s speech may be found in Stephen Heald, ed., Documents on International Affairs, 1937 (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. 55-58.
matter. This resolution, it is true, contains only a very diluted form of collective policy. But I believe that, however the conflict itself might be judged, the Powers who wish to mediate between the contending parties must not for this purpose sit in the chair of the moral judge.\textsuperscript{54}

On 21 October, Anthony Eden issued a statement concerning the upcoming Brussels Conference in which he indicated:

\begin{quote}
We welcome the summoning of this conference, because in our view a meeting of the powers principally concerned, in the capital of one of the signatories of this Nine-Power Treaty, is the best hope of finding a means of putting an end to this unhappy conflict. . . . The paramount desire of everyone must be to see an end put to the slaughter, the suffering, and the misery which we are witnessing in China to-day. If the meeting of the Brussels Conference can achieve this—and I repeat that, in our view, it offers the best chance there is of achieving it—the Conference will render the greatest possible service. If it fails, then we enter into a new situation which we shall have to face.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

Throughout the course of the conference, the participants failed to take any significant action against Japan, and the Japanese simply chose to defy statements issued against them at the conference; responding to the mild reprimand they had received by issuing a statement of their own proclaiming that they could not help “but laugh” when the U.S.S.R., which was also regarded as having aggressive designs on China, condemned Japan for the same offence. The statement further noted that the nations which had failed to live up to their war-debt obligations, were castigating Japan

\textsuperscript{55} Heald, ed., \textit{Documents on International Affairs, 1937}, 56-57.
as a treaty violator.\textsuperscript{56} The Japanese had chosen also to snub a League of Nations report issued on 6 October 1937, which was related to the investigation of Japan’s undeclared war in China.\textsuperscript{57}

The feebleness of the conference participants’ condemnation of Japan’s aggressive behaviour largely reflected a hesitation on the part of the American public to involve themselves in affairs which they perceived as having little bearing upon their own well-being. Without vigorous American backing for sanctions against Japan, no-one else was prepared to take the lead. Anthony Eden stated that Britain could not engage herself in economic warfare without the support of military commitments from the U.S. and other nations. “They labored and brought forth a mouse,” wrote one observer to the proceedings.\textsuperscript{58} Owing to this atmosphere of seeming apathy, the conference soon deteriorated from its own inertia and an apparent lack of resolve on the part of the Western powers.\textsuperscript{59}

Meanwhile, the continually worsening relations between Japan on the one hand, and the U.S. and Britain on the other, suffered a further serious setback when, on 12 December 1937, Japanese military aircraft bombed the American man-of-war, the U.S.S. \textit{Panay} (as well as three steamers belonging to the Standard Oil Company). The Japanese were quick to admit responsibility (the facts were impossible to deny), to express their regrets, and to offer an indemnity. In response to the


Panay Incident, President Roosevelt sent a memorandum to Secretary of State Cordell Hull urging him to visit the Japanese ambassador and relay American concerns over the continuing and seemingly indiscriminate bombings of non-Chinese vessels on the Yangtze. He was also to be told that Japan should take measures to guarantee against the repetition of such acts in the future.60

The Panay Incident was only one example from amongst a number of episodes in which the Japanese had committed serious violations which resulted in either damage or destruction to American and British property, in addition to the reckless endangerment of their citizenry. No amount of protest appeared sufficient to rein in the Japanese in their endeavour to subdue the Chinese.

---

CHAPTER II

THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT

In a world where Japan was feeling ever more alienated—even isolated—from the other world powers and at the same time, was suffering from feelings of apprehension and loathing concerning her historical nemesis, Soviet Russia, she went searching for allies. In Germany, she saw a potential partner who shared with her an abhorrence for communism. Discussions relating to such important matters had, in fact, been in progress, both in Berlin and in Tokyo for some time. These talks were being carried out with the aim of strengthening the relationship between Japan and Germany.

The notion of an alliance between Japan and Germany was not, in fact, a recent phenomenon. It seems that Joachim von Ribbentrop, the Nazi party’s head diplomat who later became Minister of Foreign Affairs, had heard about the suggestion of Germany forging a closer relationship with Japan as far back as 1933 from Adolf Hitler, who had himself studied the ideas of Karl Haushofer—one of Germany’s earliest proponents of such an alliance.¹ Evidently, American ambassadors in both the

German and Japanese capitals had reported to their home governments that rumours of a Japanese–German rapprochement had been circulating since the summer of 1933 as well.² And the following summer, Vice Admiral Matsushita paid a visit to Germany while on a training cruise. It is said that during this particular sojourn, Admiral Matsushita “was shown an unusual amount of attention by both Hindenburg and Hitler.”³

An improvement in military relations between the two nations was fostered further still by the arrival of a secret German military mission to Japan, which had gone to study aircraft carriers. Germany, at that time lacked the necessary technical know-how to construct such a ship and sought the assistance of the Japanese. During this mission, German pilots also flew Japanese aircraft and visited Japanese aircraft carriers.⁴

² Horinouchi Kensuke, Andô Yoshirô, and Narita Katsuhiro, eds., Nihon gaikō shi (Tokyo: Kajima shuppankai, 1967), 21: 49. (hereafter cited as NGS, 21). See also See Nihon kokusai seijō gakkai, ed., Taiheiyō sensō e no michi, 8 vols and 1 supplemental text. (Tokyo: Asahi shimbunsha, 1963), 5: 16, in which it notes that at this time, such rumours appear to have been without foundation. (hereafter cited as TSM, 5).


Preliminary Negotiations

In October 1935, Ōshima Hiroshi, who had taken up his post as Japan’s military attaché at Berlin in May of 1934, had spoken with von Ribbentrop about the possibility of a Japanese–German alliance or some sort of defensive pact. Ōshima, who was to play a pivotal role in the negotiations with Germany, was more in tune with the aspirations of the Japanese Army than he was with those of his own Government. He was highly enamoured with Germany and fell deeply under the sway of the Nazis, particularly as their successes in Europe began to mount.5

According to Ōshima, the alliance had been Ribbentrop’s personal idea and it had been he who had approached Ōshima sometime around May or June 1935 through an intermediary—Friedrich Hack of the Heinkel Aircraft Company. Ribbentrop, following the involvement of the Japanese military in Manchuria, had recognised the possibility of Japanese interest in a Japanese–German defensive alliance; that is to say, the rationale for Japan would be clear, now that she and the Soviet Union were challenging one another across a common border. On his own initiative, Ribbentrop had asked Ōshima whether or not Japan might not be interested in joining Germany in some sort of a mutual defence pact aimed at opposing the Soviets. Ōshima exhibited an interest and the two discussed the matter informally at a subsequent meeting held in October at Hack’s residence.6

---

5 As early as July 1935, Ōshima had argued for stronger ties with Germany. Other embassy officials were cautious over the damage this might cause for their already shaky relations with Britain and the U.S., so the idea was temporarily shelved. See TSM, 5: 20.

6 NGS, 21: 50.
Ôshima cabled this information back to Tokyo and the General Staff sent him a return cable indicating that they had no fundamental disagreement with Ribbentrop's proposal. However, they informed Ôshima that at the same time, they believed it necessary to conduct a more thorough inquiry into the details involved. In accordance with this precautionary measure, they would be dispatching Lieutenant-Colonel Wakamatsu Tadaichi, the German specialist in the Intelligence Division of the Japanese Army General Staff, to Berlin in an attempt to determine Germany's aims. Upon his departure, Wakamatsu had been told by chief of the Army General Staff Prince Kan'in, that he was to determine Ribbentrop's intentions and the prevailing opinions within the German military and Government regarding the feasibility of concluding an anti-Communist alliance. He was also to find out what he could about Ribbentrop, the individual, and his relationship with, and status within the German Government.

Major-General Sugiyama Hajime (Gen)—at that time, the Army Vice-Chief of Staff—also supported the idea of developing more steadfast co-operation between Japan and Germany as a first step towards solving Japan's international difficulties: isolation following the "Manchurian Incident," the Soviet military threat, and the threat that resurgent communism posed to Japan's "national essence" or kokutai. 8

Wakamatsu arrived in December 1935 for a two-week stay. During that time, together with Ôshima, he set out to achieve the tasks which had been delegated him when he'd departed Japan on his fact-finding mission. In the course of talks with Ribbentrop and Army Minister von Blomberg,

---

7 Ibid.

8 TSM, 5: 20.
Ribbentrop suggested that since the Comintern was a threat to both Japan and Germany, they should enter into an Anti-Comintern Pact, in addition to exchanging a separate secret agreement. Wakamatsu told Ribbentrop that the Japanese Army was in agreement with the idea, and the contents of their discussions were subsequently cabled back to Tokyo for the Army's perusal. 9

After Hirota had taken the office of Prime Minister on 9 March 1936, Mushakôji Kintomo, the new Japanese ambassador in Berlin, had also begun negotiations with the aim of bringing about such a pact. Hitler had met with Mushakôji on 9 June 1936, and at that time they were able to come to an agreement to unite against communism. Then about a month later, the Germans produced a draft treaty and attached protocols which were handed over to Ôshima. After various arguments were put forth, there was an acceptance in principle of the draft by Japanese officials—both civil and military. However, it was feared the treaty would antagonise the Soviet Union and the Communist party and it was at first considered preferable to keep the treaty a secret. Only the portion of the treaty known as

bōkyō kyōtei [Anti-Comintern Pact] should be made public; the feeling being, that if the treaty were kept from the public, its value would be diminished.\(^{10}\) The draft was discussed in a joint War and Foreign Ministry memo: “The Problems of the Conclusion of a Japanese–German Political Pact,” of 24 July, and its main points were taken up at a Four Ministers Conference on 7 August 1936. The conclusions were included in a paper entitled: “Foreign Policy of the Empire”. “This paper set out in the utmost clarity the principles which were to guide Japan, both in her relations with other nations and in completing her internal preparations for war.”\(^{11}\)

Japan entered into the Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany on 23 October 1936 (it was ratified on 25 November in Japan) with the aim of keeping the Soviet Union in check. The Japanese maintained that the alliance did not represent a military pact with Germany and was exclusively ideological in nature insofar as both countries “agreed to exchange information on the activities of the Comintern and to collaborate in preventative measures.” In reality, the alliance also contained undisclosed provisions calling for joint consultations should there be an unprovoked attack against either of the contracting parties by the Soviet Union as well as a provision that neither country should conclude a basic treaty with the Soviet Union without the other’s consent.\(^{12}\)

\(^{10}\) TSM, 5: 29.


\(^{12}\) The secret protocols of the pact can be found in their entirety in DGFP, series D, 1: 734. See also F.C. Jones, Japan’s New Order in East Asia: Its Rise and Fall (London: Oxford University Press,
In talks with Soviet Ambassador Konstantin Yurenev held on 16 November 1936, Foreign Minister Arita actually denied that any agreement had been concluded which was aimed at the U.S.S.R. He went on to say: "Japan was trying to establish friendly relations with the latter and that the negotiations in progress with a third power could not reflect on Soviet–Japanese relations either directly or indirectly."\textsuperscript{13}

Despite Arita’s denials, Yurenev knew very well the yet-to-be published agreement was “in fact a cover for a secret German–Japanese agreement on agreed actions on the part of Germany and Japan in case one of the countries is at war with a third state.”\textsuperscript{14} That unnamed state was, of course, Soviet Russia. On the 28th, (November 1936) People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov stated:

\begin{quote}
As regards the published Japanese agreement, it is only a camouflage for another agreement which was simultaneously discussed and initialled and in all probability signed, but which has not been published and is not intended for publication. . . . I assert, being conscious of all the responsibility of my words, that negotiations were carried on for 15 months between the Japanese military attaché and the German diplomat, and were devoted precisely to the elaboration of this secret document in which the word “communism” is not even mentioned.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 9.

The alliance was renewed the following year (6 November 1937) with Italy joining in. The conclusion of the alliance was not well received in certain quarters. Both the Seiyūkai and the Minseito were hostile towards the Hirota Government and the Foreign Minister became the object of much criticism.\(^\text{16}\)

The criticism directed at the Hirota Government, was to continue when Hayashi Senjūrō took over as Prime Minister. In order to allay fears in Japan that the pact would hurt relations with the West, Hayashi’s Foreign Minister, Satō Naotake himself, criticised the pact in statements he made before several audiences, including the House of Peers and the Lower House of the Diet. Not only was Satō concerned lest the pact should further strain Japan’s relations with the West, but he stated on 11 March that it was an “unfortunate event” as it also exacerbated Japan’s relations with the Soviet Union. This drew a sharp response from Herbert von Dirksen, the German ambassador in Tokyo. In a dispatch of 24 March 1937, on the subject of Satō’s statements, Dirksen reported to his own Government that he’d spoken with Satō in a “friendly but plain manner . . .” He went on to say that he had told Satō, that he regretted “that the press and Parliamentary attacks on the agreement, some of which were violent,” had occurred. Dirksen also told Satō that he feared such negative statements “might arouse the impression abroad that it was not only the agreement itself that was being rejected by wide political circles in Japan, but the whole line of friendship with Germany.”

\(^{16}\) Richard Storry, *The Double Patriots: A Study of Japanese Nationalism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), p. 204. Storry suggests that the attacks on the Government were, in reality, directed at the Army, which had undertaken the initial negotiations with Germany.
Finally, Dirksen urged Satô to make public some sort of pro-German statement in order to clear up any possible misunderstandings.17

Despite the penchant for criticism on the part of certain Japanese over the forging of more intimate ties with Germany, there were those who sought to take advantage of their allies. Thus, there were attempts on the part of still other Japanese to concoct excuses for invoking the Anti-Comintern Pact. For example, shortly after the hostilities between Japan and China had become widespread in July 1937, the Japanese had attempted to explain their conflict with the Chinese as an attempt to contain communism under the Anti-Comintern Pact. In a conversation on 28 July, Mushakôji told German State Secretary Ernst von Weizsäcker that the “lack of understanding” Germany was exhibiting towards Japan’s efforts [to suppress communism] threatened the “genuine continuance” of the pact. Germany, however, saw things in a different light. It was their belief that Japanese actions in China would prevent the “consolidation” of that country, further the spread of communism, and push the Chinese “into the arms of Russia.”18 The Germans were quick to point out that the pact between their two nations “was designed only to meet situations created by Russia” and the American ambassador in Berlin, reported that the acting head at the German Foreign Office, Hans Georg von

18 Telegram from Weizsäcker—who was, at that time, the head of the Political Department of the German Foreign Ministry—to the German embassy in Tokyo; dated 28 July 1937. See DGFP, series D, 1: 742 and 745.
Mackensen had noted: “Japan’s action in China had nullified the value of the Anti-Comintern Pact as far as Germany was concerned.”

It was also around this time, that Weizsäcker noted that Tsuneo Yanai (a counsellor at the Japanese embassy) had paid him a visit, during which time he had protested against the “alleged” shipment of German arms to China. In fact, noted the counsellor, the German Foreign Minister had told Mushakōji, he was “quite willing” to stop the arms shipments and then again around 15 July, in response to a second inquiry, Ribbentrop went so far as to “promise” Mushakōji these arms shipments would be stopped. Weizsäcker pled ignorance to the situation, saying only that he would investigate the matter.

At the same time, the Japanese had begun resorting to basic propaganda techniques in an attempt to persuade the German people that an anti-Communist, ideological conflict was at the root of the China conflict. The Japanese, therefore, began beaming German-language broadcasts into Germany which, in the words of Weizsäcker, were meant “to represent war against China as a war against communism.” And Weizsäcker went on to say: “We do not welcome this propaganda.”

In letting their concerns be known in such a manner, perhaps the Japanese felt the employment of such tactics was better suited to the maintenance of Japanese-German affability, than would be the resort to a more confrontational approach. Oskar Trautmann, for one, felt sure the Japanese were

---

19 Quoted in Iklé, German-Japanese Relations, p. 57.
20 Memorandum from Ernst von Weizsäcker, dated 22 July 1937. See ibid., 737-38. See also Presseisen, Germany and Japan, p. 129.
21 Memorandum from Weizsäcker, dated 28 July 1937. DGFP, series D, 1: 742-43.
hesitant to castigate their German allies openly, and offered a plausible explanation; reporting: "... Japan has thus far been in a predicament which has prevented her from clearly expressing her dissatisfaction with Germany, because she needed Germany as her only support in the world."\(^{22}\)

Despite the fact that Japan had entered into a new, ostensibly more amicable phase in her relationship with Germany, certain sources of friction such as alluded to above did, in fact, exist. To add to this discord, the German Government was at that time, indeed, shipping arms to China and had also supplied the Chinese with military advisors. These shipments were only stopped after protests from the Japanese, and General Eugen Ott (at that time the German military attaché in Berlin) had been told by a Japanese Army Ministry official that the presence of the advisors "was seriously prejudicing the sentiments of the Japanese officers’ corps toward Germany."\(^{23}\)

Notwithstanding the assistance being offered China, a telegram had been sent out shortly after the outbreak of the conflict, in which the German Government made known that it intended to observe strict neutrality in the Far East, and that the Chinese and Japanese ambassadors in Berlin were given notice of this intention by German Foreign Minister Baron Constantin von Neurath. The Germans would say only that they were hoping for a quick and peaceful resolution to the conflict as they were concerned lest it should affect their own economic interests in the Far East. The telegram then went on to say: "A military showdown between Japan and China would benefit the Soviet Government, which has an interest in engaging Japan elsewhere and weakening her by military

\(^{22}\) Telegram from Trautmann to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 8 March 1938. See ibid., 848.

\(^{23}\) Telegram from Germany’s ambassador in Japan, Dr. Herbert von Dirksen, to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 27 July 1937. See ibid., 740 and 742.
operations." Regardless of the claims to neutrality, according to the recollections of Germany's one-time ambassador to Japan, Herbert von Dirksen, after war broke out in China, German officers still took a "pretty active" part on the Chinese side and it wasn't until April 1938 that Hitler ordered the recall of the German military mission from China.25

Germany was also coming under subtle psychological pressure from Chiang Kai-shek who had hinted to Trautmann, that the possibility of closer relations between China and Russia did exist. Germany had, of course, been cognisant of this possibility and had cautioned Japan of just such a development. Chiang told Trautmann specifically, that although he hadn't entered into any agreement with the Soviets, he declared himself to be a "free agent"—thus hinting that such an association was within the realm of possibility.26 Although Ambassador Trautmann seemed somewhat sensitive to Japan's position, he also held that "the Anti-Comintern Pact was being exploited opportunistically by Japan at Germany's expense."27 And just weeks after Trautmann had cast aspersions upon Japan's sincerity as an ally, the Japanese ambassador in Berlin, Tōgō Shigenori, told Ribbentrop: "... Germany could not be conceded economic equality with Japan in China, despite the fact that

24 Telegram from the German Foreign Ministry to various German diplomatic missions; dated, 20 July 1937. See ibid., 733-34.
25 Poole, "Light on Nazi Foreign Policy," p. 137.
26 Telegram from Oskar Trautmann to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 27 July 1937. See DGFP, series D, 1: 741-42.
27 Quoted in Iklé, _German-Japanese Relations_, p. 69.
Ribbentrop vainly insisted upon Germany’s entitlement to a certain measure of equality with Japan, and a more privileged position than that of other countries.”

Hitler Pushes East

During the early months of the new year, there were some key developments in Europe which served to divert attention away from Japan’s campaigns in Asia; most notably, with complete impunity, on 12 March 1938, Hitler’s troops invaded Austria, annexing it to the German Reich. Following the Anschluss, Hitler turned his eyes towards Czechoslovakia, particularly the western portion, or Sudetenland, wherein resided a substantial German minority. Throughout the following year, an increasingly sombre atmosphere slowly descended over Europe owing to various provocations of German origin, which were feared to be a prelude to further military action. Inflammatory speeches in the Reichstag, threatening manoeuvres by the German Army, massive troop movements in proximity to the Sudetenland, and incitements to unrest instigated under the direction of the Sudeten Nazi party, all worked as catalysts to heighten the tension. As the increasingly volatile situation reached near-crisis dimensions during the spring and summer of 1939, Britain’s Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain volunteered to meet personally with Adolf Hitler in an effort to try and defuse the situation. Hitler agreed to Chamberlain’s proposal, and the two met in mid-September of 1939 at Hitler’s Berchtesgaden hideaway. During their meeting, Hitler demanded

---

28 Memorandum of a conversation between Tōgō and Ribbentrop; dated 8 April 1938. See DGFP, series D, 1: 851-52.
the annexation of the Sudetenland, and neither Britain nor France, it seemed, were prepared to refuse the *Führer*. On the contrary, they jointly advised the Government of Czech President Jan Masaryk to consent to Hitler’s claim over the disputed territory. Without the support of their “allies,” the Czechs capitulated. This fainthearted exercise in accommodation, far from satisfying Hitler’s hunger for Czech property, merely heightened his perception of cowardice on the part of French Premier Édouard Daladier and Britain’s Neville Chamberlain, and served to whet his appetite for more of his neighbour’s property. Having pocketed the Sudetenland, Hitler was now emboldened to demand additional territory, and nothing Chamberlain told the German leader during subsequent meetings held at Bad Godesberg on 22 and 23 September convinced him that he need fear Allied reprisals.

Hitler agreed to a further meeting with Daladier and Chamberlain, which took place in Munich on 29 September 1939. The British and French leaders had come to make a final plea to Hitler that he be satisfied with the terms of the agreement on the Sudetenland; but their pleas fell upon deaf ears and Germany swallowed up those remaining portions of Czechoslovakia, declaring it a German protectorate.

Obviously this is a grossly simplified description of a much more complicated episode in European history. But for the purpose of the present thesis, it illustrates how the feeble response of Britain and France in the face of German aggression betrayed the impotent nature of their policies of appeasement; and this was something which certainly was not going unnoticed by the Japanese.

Throughout 1938 and into 1939, the Japanese advance into China continued without respite. The Chinese were steadily being driven southward, as well as westward into the comparative safety of China’s vast interior. In keeping with a decision made at a Five Ministers Conference of 8 July
1938, Japan had dispatched an expeditionary force to subdue those Chinese troops who’d already fled south. As a result of this offensive, the Japanese were able to capture Canton on 20 October, and on the 25th, Hankow.29 Neither were the Americans and Europeans, nor their properties safe from the excesses of the Japanese military as they swept across China.

In the fall of 1938, the Japanese Government protested against French Indo-Chinese authorities in an attempt to force an end to the shipment of munitions being sent from Indo-China in support of Chunking’s war effort. Chiang Kai-shek’s forces had been receiving matériel through four major routes, one of these being the French Indo-Chinese railway running from the port of Haiphong, then via Hanoi, onward to the Chinese border. From that point, a narrow-gauge line continued to the terminus at Kunming in Yunnan province.30

After the Japanese had captured Canton and cut the Hong Kong-Canton-Hankow route in October 1938, the passage through Indo-China assumed even greater importance as an element in the Sino-Japanese conflict. It was the determination of the Japanese to sever this “lifeline” to China, which led to the increased pressure against the French authorities.

It was around this point in time that Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro felt confident enough with the Japanese military successes in China to announce to the world via a radio broadcast of 3

29 It has been suggested that the Japanese held off on a direct attack against Canton “out of respect for British strength at Hong Kong, ...” But after the “weakness” they exhibited in signing the Munich Pact, the Japanese felt the timing opportune. See Iklé, German-Japanese Relations, pp. 83-84.

30 The other routes were the Soviet “Red Road” through Turkestan, the “Burma Road,” and the route through Hong Kong into Canton province.
November 1938, his proposal for the creation of the “New Order in East Asia.” His broadcast stated in part:

Japan desires to build up a stabilized Far East by co-operating with the Chinese people who have awakened to the need of self-determination as an Oriental race. . . . History shows that Japan, Manchukuo and China are so related to each other that they must bind themselves closely together in a common mission for the establishment of peace and order in the Far East by displaying their own individuality. . . . Japan desires to establish a new peace fabric in the Far East on the basis of justice.31

During the same broadcast, Konoe also made reference to the assistance Japan had received from their Anti-Comintern allies; telling his audience: “Germany and Italy, our allies against communism have manifested their sympathies with Japan’s aims in East Asia and we are profoundly grateful for the encouragement that this moral support has given our nation during this crisis.”32 Although the creation of a Japan–China–Manchukuo bloc was now official policy, Japanese officials had not lost sight of the need to acquire the resources of Southeast Asia; an official report noted:

[T]he first consideration for the formation of the East Asian Economic Bloc must be the national defense material requirements of Japan, which is the leading and nucleus nation of the [East Asian] Bloc. . . . It is natural that Japan spread into the South Seas region in order to acquire the resources essential for national existence between the Superpowers—the Soviet Union and the


United States. . . . For the countries of the South Seas, it will also be profitable to incorporate themselves into the East Asian Economic Bloc.33

However, the United States rejected Konoe’s declaration of a “new order” in Asia and in order to make clear their opposition, Ambassador Grew informed Foreign Minister Arita:

The people and the Government of the United States could not assent to the establishment, at the instance of and for the purposes of any third country, of a regime which would arbitrarily deprive them of the long-established rights of equal opportunity and fair treatment which are legally and justly theirs along with those of other nations. . . . The people and the Government of the United States cannot assent to the abrogation of any of this country’s rights or obligations by the arbitrary action of agents or authorities of any other country.34

In December of 1938, Stanley Hornbeck, the chief of the Far Eastern Division at the State Department, said that U.S. retaliatory measures against Japan would not only prevent a military conflict but also a prompt revision in Japan’s recently announced “new order.” A diplomatic note of the 31st of December gave a comprehensive summary of America’s attitude concerning Japanese activities in China, which contained the following paragraph:

Whatever may be the changes which have taken place in the situation in the Far East and whatever may be the situation now, these matters are of no less interest and concern to the American Government than have the situations which have prevailed there in the past, and such changes as may henceforth take place there, changes which may enter into the producing of a “new situation” and a “new order,” are and will be of like concern to this Government. This

34 Lockwood, Our Far Eastern Record, pp. 24-25.
Government [U.S.] is also well aware that many of the changes [in the Far East] have been brought about by action of Japan. This Government does not admit, however, that there is need or warrant for any one power to take upon itself to prescribe what shall be the terms and conditions of a “new order” in areas not under its sovereignty and to constitute itself the repository of authority and the agent of destiny in regard thereto.\footnote{Shepard S. Jones and Denys P. Myers, eds., \textit{Documents on American Foreign Policy: January 1938–June 1939} (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1941), p. 250. See also Frederick Moore, \textit{With Japan's Leaders: An Intimate Record of Fourteen Years as Counselor to the Japanese Government, Ending December 7, 1941} (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), p. 104.}

The First Steps

On 5 January 1939 (Tokyo time), the Cabinet of Konoe Fumimaro, facing what now seemed an endless war in China—a war which General Sugiyama had told the Emperor back in 1937 would be over in a month—and having for some time been under relentless criticism for some of its domestic reforms, saw fit to tender its resignation. As Konoe’s successor, the Emperor appointed Baron Hiranuma Kiichirō, President of the Privy Council and former head of the influential, right-wing, ultra-nationalist, \textit{Kokuhonsha}.

French fears for the future of her colonial holdings in Southeast Asia reached new heights shortly after Hiranuma took control of the reins of Government. On 10 February 1939, in accordance with a decision made at a Five Ministers Conference of November 1938, Japanese Navy forces and Imperial Marines executed a successful surprise attack on the island of Hainan, which culminated in its take-
over. On the same day the landings began on Hainan, the Information Bureau of the Japanese Foreign Ministry issued a statement proclaiming that the island had become a base of operations for Chiang Kai-shek’s forces. The actions of the Japanese military were therefore carried out with the aim of sweeping the Chinese from that island.

On 30 March 1939—a month and a half after the Hainan campaign—the Japanese announced the annexation of the Spratly islands, to which both the Japanese and the French had laid claims. The Japanese Foreign Ministry offered a most peculiar statement regarding this latest transgression, saying: “The desire of the Japanese Government is to avoid any quarrel with France.”

The decision to take the Spratly Islands had been made by the Japanese Cabinet three months previous to its actual annexation. These islands were ideally suited as potential bases for submarines and their location made their use a very real threat to Dutch, French, British, as well as American

36 In actuality, the takeover of Hainan Island was said to have taken Baron Hiranuma completely by surprise. See Shigemitsu Mamoru, Japan and her Destiny: My Struggle for Peace ed., Major-General F.S.G. Piggot, trans. Oswald White (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1958), p. 164.


38 IMTFE, Transcripts, p. 6,710.
territorial holdings. At the same time, the Japanese claimed the rights to certain coral reefs which covered approximately 100,000 square miles; from Palawan in the Philippines to the southern Indo-China Peninsula. 39

The French were quick to respond to the aggressive take-over of the Spratlys; lodging a protest on 4 April charging that the Japanese had acknowledged French ownership of the islands in 1935. And U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull addressed a note dated 17 May, to Horinouchi Kensuke, the Japanese ambassador to Washington, stating:

The United States Government did not consider that the action of Japan in blanketing within the territory of Japan, islands or reefs, either known or unknown, with respect to which the Japanese Government has heretofore exercised no acts which may properly be regarded as establishing a basis for claim to sovereignty, has any international validity. 40

One month earlier (on 15 April), the American Government had already effected a symbolic reaction to the annexation of these islands and the continuing Japanese "adventurism" in China, by ordering the United States fleet back to the Pacific from its berth in New York City, where it had


40 Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, 2 vols. (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), 1: 628-29. Hull also notes that surveys conducted in the Spratly Islands area by the American Naval Department, showed that the eastern two-thirds of the area, adjacent to the Philippines, afforded anchorage for light naval forces and aircraft. See also FRUS, Japan, II: 280-81.
been temporarily transferred in order to lend pageantry to the World’s Fair celebrations.\textsuperscript{41} It was clear to all concerned that due to the location of Hainan Island and the Spratly group, their annexation by the Japanese could, in no way, be rationalised as necessary to their current military operations in China.

The occupation of Hainan Island and the Spratly group, although intended to intimidate the French into ending the shipment of supplies through Indo-China, had instead, the opposite effect. French Foreign Minister George Bonnet warned the Japanese that their aggressive operations “would force France to reconsider its obligations in the Far East.”\textsuperscript{42}

The actions of the Japanese and their subsequent rejection of the previously referred to French protest of 4 April 1939, also prompted the French Government into making a decision to broaden the variety of matériel then being shipped into China. And, in a further move, the French placed a semi-embargo on the export of certain raw materials of a strategic nature which were being shipped from Indo-China to Japan; including a variety of ores such as lead, tungsten, iron ore, and coal. However, this unilateral embargo by the French was undercut by increased Japanese ore purchases from British Malaya and the Philippines.

I have earlier made reference to the indiscriminate bombing by Japanese military planes upon Western interests. In addition to these calculated acts of aggression against the West, the Japanese military, under the command of Major-General Homma Masaharu, instituted a blockade of the

\textsuperscript{41} Hull, \textit{Memoirs}, 1: 630.

French and British concessions at Tientsin in June 1939—subjecting citizens of those European nations to humiliating physical searches and other forms of harassment. The International Settlement at Shanghai did not escape the notice of the Japanese military authorities. All of these confrontations were calculated to exploit the mounting crisis taking place in Europe. The historians, Langer and Gleason, have postulated that these aggressive acts directed again the peoples and properties of the Western powers in China were meant to intimidate the West into putting a stop to their China-aid programs, and to illustrate to those who opposed the alliance with Germany, that the Western powers could be cowed into submission.43

America Tightens the Screws

Shortly after the blockade of European concessions in China, the American Government introduced a measure (on 26 July 1939) designed to show the Japanese that they would have to pay a heavy price for their continuing escapades in the Far East. On that date, the Japanese Government was notified through Ambassador Horinouchi, of America’s intention to terminate the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation—a treaty which had been in place since 1911. Some members of the administration such as Assistant Secretary of State Francis Sayre were reluctant to annul the treaty, believing it would lend weight to the argument being put forth by anti-American elements in the Japanese military that America was attempting to get a stranglehold on the Japanese economy.

However, U.S. Government hard-liners, led by Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Key Pittman, and Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan, remained unconvinced by this argument; and it was their unyielding attitude which prevailed. According to one writer: "A new policy was then adopted by the [State] Department; it was not one of written protest but of protest by retaliatory action." Because abrogation of the treaty required six months' advance notice, the termination date was scheduled for 26 January 1940. Until that time, however, the "moral embargo"—which carried no legal force—was to remain in effect. At about this same time, Congress passed a bill submitted by Chairman Vinson of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, which authorised an increase in naval

---


45 In June 1938, the Roosevelt administration initiated a "moral embargo" on aircraft and aircraft parts to Japan. This was followed up in February by the termination of credits. Still later, on 20 December 1939, the U.S. Government applied the moral embargo on the export of plants, manufacturing rights and technical information required to produce high-quality aviation gasoline. Although no specific country was named, it was clearly intended that Japan would be the target of this embargo; an embargo which was a follow-up to the U.S. President's 2 December announcement that henceforth, the Americans would cease to export certain materials necessary for the manufacture of aircraft to any countries engaged in the bombing of civilian populations. Protests registered on 6 January by Ambassador Horinouchi in Washington were to no avail. See Hull, *Memoirs*, 1: 729-30. As early as July 1938, as a result of increasing instances of the violation of American rights in China, and destruction of her properties, Stanley Hornbeck had recommended to President Roosevelt that the U.S. terminate the 1911 Treaty of Commerce and Navigation as a warning to Japan that future economic sanctions would accompany continued Japanese aggression. See Lockwood, *Our Far Eastern Record*, pp. 31-33.
tonnage of 11 percent over and above what it had already been in 1938 under the Naval Expansion Act.\textsuperscript{46}

Not only were the Americans, then, taking steps to augment their naval capacity, but they were attempting to remove any possible legal recourse which might become available to the Japanese if, at sometime in the future, the U.S. felt it necessary to impose an embargo on the shipment of aircraft and/or other war matériel to Japan. In addition, according to provisions in the Treaty of Commerce, the U.S. administration was unable to initiate an embargo against Japan without imposing a similar embargo on all other foreign countries, including China.\textsuperscript{47} The 26 July 1939 article of notification which State Secretary Hull addressed to Ambassador Horinouchi said in part:

\begin{quote}
During recent years the Government of the United States has been examining the treaties of commerce and navigation in force between the United States and foreign countries . . . . In the course of this survey, the Government has come to the conclusion that the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation between the United States and Japan which was signed at Washington on February 21, 1911, contains provisions which need new consideration . . . . With a view to safeguarding and promoting American interests as new developments may require, the Government of the United States, acting in accordance with the procedure described in Article XVII of the treaty under reference, gives notice hereby of its desire that this treaty be terminated. . . .
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} USWA, 1940: 100-01.


The consequences which Japan was to suffer as a result of this gesture of America's disapproval with respect to Japanese belligerence in the Far East, were keenly felt. After its abrogation, it became even more obvious to the Japanese that for the sake of their own economic survival and development, they would have to free themselves from their economic dependence on America and Great Britain.49

In a statement made to the Japanese Cabinet on 27 October 1939, Admiral Nomura Kichisaburō, then-Minister of Foreign Affairs, had noted with regard to the impending termination of the treaty: "... the Imperial Government must anticipate that with the expiration ... Japanese–American relations may reach the worst state possible and must take into consideration at once countermeasures with respect to imports and exports, plans for commodity mobilisation and similar problems."50

---

49 DSKK, 2: 23. Former Premier Tōjō was later to say: "Following the notification of the abrogation of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation on 26 July 1939, American economic pressure against Japan greatly increased with each passing day." See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 36,248. It would also appear that Japan was none too successful in reducing their dependency on Anglo–American imports. As late as 26 September 1940, Planning Board President Hoshino Naoki stated during a Privy Council meeting: "... our country has for the last few years been making preparations for self-sufficiency as regards materials. Out of ¥2,100,000,000 in imports, ¥1,900,000,000 is received from England and the U.S. See IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 9,757-58. The newspaper, Kokumin denounced the abrogation of the treaty as "unfriendly," noting further that "if there is trouble in the future, it will be the American President who is to blame." Quoted in USWA, 1940: 155.

50 Gantenbein, Documentary Background of World War II, p. 904.
Two days after Horinouchi was notified of the imminent termination of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation, Japan initialled a trade agreement in Berlin. However, before it was put into effect, the Japanese reneged on its implementation. Ott cabled the bad news to Ribbentrop, informing him:

The Imperial Government unfortunately finds itself compelled to state that as a result of the outbreak of the war in Europe, the present European situation makes it impossible to put the agreement into effect on October 1 as intended, despite the firm intention of the Imperial Japanese Government already mentioned.⁵¹

It was about this time, that the Japanese now began to talk openly about the idea of southern expansion under the banner of “defend the north and advance to the south.” The Japanese had for some time been considering what role the countries of Southeast Asia might have in reducing their economic dependence on America and Britain, and during the course of a Five Ministers Conference, held far back in August 1936, certain fundamental national policies had been discussed, including, for the first time, the question of the southern regions. Later that same day back in August 1936, during a Four Ministers Conference, a draft paper entitled: “Diplomatic Objectives of the Empire” was produced, wherein the southern regions were described as one of the world’s important commercial areas and an area indispensable to the Empire’s defensive and manufacturing needs.⁵²

Proof of Japan’s dependency upon American and British goodwill for many of their imports may be observed by examining Japan’s overseas trade statistics for the year 1939. They indicate her trade

---

⁵¹ Telegram from Ambassador Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 8 September 1939. See DGFP, series D, 8: 26.

situation as follows: At that time, imports from North America constituted 38.7 percent of what Japan received from overseas. From Europe, Japan received 10.6 percent, while from Central and South America, Africa, and the South Seas combined, the sum total for Japanese imports constituted only 10.3 percent. The table of export figures for the same year reveals a similar pattern of Japanese reliance—particularly on North America—which accepted 14.4 percent of Japan's exports; 6.8 percent went to Europe, while Central and South America, Africa, and the South Seas region combined to take a total of 10.1 percent of Japanese exports. It was clear to the Japanese that they must create their own economic bloc in the Far East, and they set out to implement this decision.53

Upon receipt of the American notification indicating termination of the treaty, the Japanese Foreign Ministry, despite their economic dependence upon the U.S. (and Britain), as indicated above, issued a relatively muted "official" response which called into question the sudden timing of the notification, as well as an indication of Japan's readiness to conclude a new treaty with America "in conformity with the new situation in East Asia."54

The Roosevelt administration preferred to keep the Japanese in the dark as to their future plans. Cordell Hull, in response to Japanese queries regarding what this move would mean for future Japanese–American relations, wrote the following: "I was careful to give them no enlightenment. I felt that our best tactic was to keep them guessing, which might bring them to a position in which

54 The text of the Japanese Foreign Ministry statement may be found in its entirety in Shepard S. Jones and Denys P. Myers, eds. Documents on America's Foreign Relations, July 1939–June 1940, (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1940), 2: 245.
their flagrant disregard of our rights and interests in China was placing them." Nonetheless, the abrogation of the treaty appeared to have little effect upon Japanese military activities in the Far East.

The Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact

Suddenly, on 23 August 1939, Germany entered into a non-aggression pact with Russia. This revelation came as a complete shock to Japanese policy-makers in both the government and the military for several reasons, not the least of which, was the failure of the Germans to inform them in advance of their intention of concluding such a pact at a time when Japan was then involved in a bloody conflict with the Russians at Nomonhan. Not only were the Japanese embarrassed by this "deceitful act" on the part of their supposed ally, but further, it was clearly in violation of Article 2 of the secret provisions of the Anti-Comintern Pact which stated: "For the duration of the present Agreement, the High Contracting States will conclude no political treaties with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics contrary to the spirit of this Agreement without mutual consent." Actually, few people were aware of the secret addendum (Geheimes Zusatzabkommen) which had been signed at the time of ratification. Ambassador Dirksen, who was one of the few people aware of their existence,

55 Hull, Memoirs, 1: 638.


Telegram from the German Foreign Ministry to various German diplomatic missions. The secret articles appended to the Anti-Comintern pact are reproduced in their entirety in DGFP, series D, 1: 734.
says: "When the German–Soviet Treaty of August 23, 1939, was about to be concluded, Hitler and Ribbentrop failed, nonetheless, to give notice beforehand of their plans to Japan, and that the signing of the treaty caught the Japanese Government wholly unprepared."\(^5^7\)

In hindsight, the Japanese should have paid greater attention to the warnings submitted by both Ōshima Shiratori, and by their ambassador to Italy, Shiratori Toshio. Shiratori later claimed that he had on two occasions, given notice to his Government (in February and again in March 1939) that the prospect of a Russo–German rapprochement was within the realm of possibility.\(^5^8\)

According to Weizsäcker's diary, on 21 August 1939, during a late evening discussion, Ribbentrop reminded Ōshima that he had already been warned several months previously about the possibility of a German-Soviet rapprochement. According to the historian Miyake Masaki, the historical record bears out this observation. In fact he had been given such an advance warning as early as 5 March 1939, and Ribbentrop had, in fact, approached both Ōshima and Shiratori on 20 April 1939 (on the occasion of Adolf Hitler's 50th birthday) telling them in confidence that Germany might feel compelled to speak with the Soviets about a non-aggression pact. Then again during a 14 June 1939 meeting this information had once again been passed along.\(^5^9\) Although nothing concrete had yet come of the idea, it was something being considered because the Germans were pessimistic about the chances of a German–Japanese pact. Ribbentrop was apparently under the impression that

\(^5^7\) Poole, "Light on Nazi Foreign Policy," 137.

\(^5^8\) IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 35,042-43.

the Japanese had been showing less interest in such an alliance during the spring of 1939. As noted, as late mid-June 1939, Ribbentrop repeated these warnings to Shiratori, telling him: “Since the Japanese had appeared unreceptive to German proposals concerning a pact, Germany was now thinking of concluding a non-aggression pact with Russia.” As a military man, Shiratori was unable to understand such matters [of diplomacy] and apprised of Ribbentrop’s latest warning, he misinformed Tokyo, saying that Germany would never conclude a pact with the Soviet Union. The Tokyo government too, thought it was “nothing more than a bluff” on Ribbentrop’s part.

As indicated by a German telegram from an unnamed official of the News Service and Press Department to the embassy in the Soviet Union, the Germans were well aware of the negative repercussions which the pact would have upon their relations with the Japanese. It noted: “For submission to the Foreign Minister: In spite of their assumption that the Pact, [sic] political circles [in Japan] regret Berlin’s unexpected manner of acting, which has jeopardised Berlin-Tokyo

---


61 Miyake, *Nichi-doku-i sangoku dōmei*, pp. 233-34. IMTFE, Transcript, p. 24,399 and pp. 35,042-03. See also memorandum from Johann Plessen, counselor at the German embassy in Rome; dated 4 September 1939. See DGFP, series D, 8: 9. Sir Robert Craigie, Britain’s ambassador to Japan, had also warned Foreign Minister Arita that the prospect of a German–Soviet pact was not beyond the realm of possibility. See Sir Robert Craigie, *Behind the Japanese Mask* (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1949), p. 71.
friendship."  

A telegram from Eugen Ott to the German Foreign Ministry, dated the day after the signing of the Russo–German pact, was more precise, noting:  

[In Japan, Army circles and the Foreign Ministry recognized Germany’s need to form a pact with Russia, they were concerned over increased pressure from the Russians in the Far East and the Army was particularly troubled that despite their standing as a partner in the Anti-Comintern Pact, they had been presented with a fait accompli.]  

On 26 August 1939, an “official” manifestation of Japanese displeasure arising out of this stunning revelation was made known. On that date, when Weizsäcker met with Ōshima upon the latter’s request, he was presented with a note of protest against the German Government “concerning the alleged incompatibility of the German–Russian Non-Aggression Pact of which we [the Japanese] were unaware.”  

According to a statement which he then read aloud to Weizsäcker, the Japanese Government took the view that “as a result of the conclusion of the German–Russian pact, the

---

62 Telegram from Herr Braun von Stumm, a press official to the German embassy in Moscow, to Foreign Minister Ribbentrop; dated 23 August 1939. See DGFP, series D, 7: 222-23.  
63 Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 24 August 1939. See ibid., p. 259.  
64 According to Foreign Minister Arita’s memoirs, on 25 August 1939, during a Five Ministers Conference attended by members of the Hiranuma Cabinet, it was decided that because of the conclusion of the German–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, negotiations concerning co-operation between Japan, Germany, and Italy were completely cut off. Ōshima and Shiratori were directed to pass this information along to the German and Italian Governments. In addition, Ōshima was directed by Arita to point out to the Germans that their Government was engaging in steps which clearly ran counter to the secret appendages to the Anti-Comintern Pact. See Miyake, Nichi-doku-i sangoku dōmei, p. 228.
German–Italian–Japanese negotiations on an alliance so far conducted have come to an end.” Weizsäcker disagreed that the two pacts were incompatible, blaming Foreign Minister Arita, since it was he who had kept Germany “waiting for six months in spite of the most extensive German concessions.”

Despite the fact that this was a chilly period for Japanese–German relations, the Germans still undertook to solicit Japanese friendship and collaboration. Telling now-Ambassador Ott of a conversation he had recently had with Ōshima, Ribbentrop stated that he had let the ambassador know that it was his feeling that if Germany were to be defeated in Europe, it would result in the formation of a coalition of forces comprised of the Western democracies. This coalition would, in turn, surely oppose Japanese expansion and would even wrest from Japan her gains in China. A German victory, on the other hand, would therefore serve Japanese interests (assuming Japan maintained and even strengthened her relations with Germany). Therefore, as Ribbentrop explained, a Russo–German rapprochement was also in Japan’s best interests. Furthermore, Germany would be prepared to mediate between Japan and Russia if the former so requested. If this mediation were to succeed, continued Ribbentrop: “Japan would be able freely to extend her strength in East Asia toward the south and could penetrate further there. We were firmly convinced that this was the direction in which Japan’s interests lay. . . . The idea of close co-operation between Germany, Italy, 

---

65 Memorandum from Weizsäcker, dated 26 August 1939. See ibid., pp. 334-35. A variation on this account may be found in Iklé, German–Japanese Relations, p. 136. According to testimony read aloud at the Military Tribunal for the Far East: “The negotiations were completely broken off when the non-aggression pact between Germany and Soviet Russia was concluded on 23 August 1939.” See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 24,401.
and Japan was therefore by no means dead.\textsuperscript{66} However, such enticements met with little serious regard from the Japanese, who wished to steer clear of any involvement in the events in Europe while they were concentrating their efforts on defeating China and pursuing their southern advance. In order to achieve these twin goals, the Japanese did, however, want Germany to exert pressure on Russia to cease providing aid to Chiang Kai-shek. Ambassador Ôshima had in fact told Ernst Woermann, of the Political Department of the German Foreign Ministry that if the Soviet Union would “abandon” Chiang Kai-shek, the Japanese Army would be greatly influenced into showing more co-operation with the Russians.\textsuperscript{67}

As an historical footnote to the signing of the pact, we may mention that Ôshima tendered a letter of resignation from his ambassadorial post. A short time later, he was replaced by Kurusu Saburô.\textsuperscript{68} And on 2 September, Shiratori, too, was recalled from Rome. Before returning to Japan from his ambassadorial post in Italy, Shiratori had occasion to speak with Johann Plessen, the German councilor in their embassy in Rome. Plessen records that according to Shiratori, the conclusion of the German–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was received with “enormous shock” in Japan, and that it had caused a “great sensation.” The end result of this had been to diminish the feelings of amity felt by those Japanese—including Shiratori himself—who were friendly towards

\textsuperscript{66} Telegram from Foreign Minister Ribbentrop to Ambassador Ott; dated 9 September 1939. See DGFP, series D, 8: 36-37. See also Langer and Gleason, \textit{The Challenge to Isolation}, pp. 292-93.  
\textsuperscript{67} Memorandum from Ernst Woermann of the German Foreign Ministry; dated 20 September 1939. See DGFP, series D, 8: 111-12.  
\textsuperscript{68} Ôshima, as it turned out, was back in Berlin within slightly more than a year after his return to Japan.
Germany. Until then, Shiratori had endeavoured to bring about a successful conclusion of the Tripartite Pact, but since he had been unable to achieve this objective, he had tendered his resignation. In fact, it is worth pointing out that as a further consequence to the signing of the Russo–German pact, the prestige and potency of the Army and its more ardent defenders such as Shiratori and Ôshima were seriously undercut; thus permitting the Foreign Ministry to effect a more authoritative role as the overseer of Japan’s foreign affairs. Of even greater consequence, this sudden and unexpected turn of events—coupled with an attempt on Hiranuma’s life—also contributed to the undoing of his Cabinet, which resigned on 28 August (1939).

Shortly after the downfall of the Hiranuma Cabinet, Count Terauchi Hisaichi, ex-Army Minister in the Hirota Cabinet, left on a goodwill trip to Europe where he first met with Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop on 20 September. Terauchi began the meeting by offering his thanks to the Minister for extending him an invitation to visit Germany and congratulating him on recent German successes in Europe. After having responded to Terauchi’s warm acknowledgements, Ribbentrop had the temerity to say that Germany and Japan were the only two powers who weren’t suffering from a “divergence of political interests.” Ribbentrop went on to say that they shared in each other’s fortunes: what was

---

69 Miyake, *Nichi-doku-i sangoku dômei*, p. 233

70 On 14 August 1939, Hiranuma was hit by two bullets from a would-be assassin’s gun. Although he survived this attempt on his life, so shaken was he, that he tendered his resignation. Miyake et. al., note that Hiranuma, citing his now, well-known expression concerning the “complicated and baffling” situation in Europe, also felt compelled to take responsibility for his part in advancing the idea of increased co-operation on negotiations with Germany, in the face of the Emperor’s opposition [to a pact]. See SGS, 3: 16.
good for Germany in Europe was good for Japan in East Asia and if things went poorly for Germany, so too for Japan.\textsuperscript{71}

At 7:30 P.M. that same evening, they met again for a dinner held in celebration of Terauchi’s arrival in Japan. The discussion, not unexpectedly, turned to the topic of the German–Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, with Minister Ribbentrop explaining that it had been clear to him for some time that an understanding between Germany and Japan with Russia was a necessity and it was something he would have striven for even in the case of a German–Japanese–Italian pact. He also indicated that both he and Ôshima had worked towards bringing about such a pact and their failure to do so had regrettably forced Germany to seek an accord with Russia on her own. He thought that such an understanding would benefit Japan as well and that he had talked with Stalin about this very idea sometime in the past.\textsuperscript{72}

Presumably, Ribbentrop felt that Germany was now in a better position to influence the Soviets into smoothing out their relations with the Japanese and, by doing so, they might take away some of the sting the Japanese were certain to have been feeling as a result of the pact with the Soviets. In any case, he reported that he had discussed such matters with Stalin and had been told by him that “if the Japanese desire war, they can have war; if they desire an understanding, they can have that too.”\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{71} Memorandum by \textit{Herr} Knoll, head of Political Division VIII; dated 25 September 1939. See DGFP Series D 8: 131.

\textsuperscript{72} Portions of this conversation can be found in Iklé, \textit{German–Japanese Relations}, pp. 143-44.

\textsuperscript{73} IMTFE, \textit{Transcript}, p. 6,136. See also \textit{ibid.}, p. 135 and p. 144.
Ribbentrop may have honestly believed that Japan could gain from Germany's new relationship with the Soviets. He had no reason to be deceptive when he cabled Ambassador Ott, saying: "Since our settlement and our understanding with Russia constituted an important factor in the present contest of forces, this rapprochement was also, properly understood, in the interest of Japan, to whom any strengthening of the German position should be welcome."\(^{74}\)

We have no cause to doubt Ribbentrop's sincerity when he sent this cable, and we have no reason to suspect that this was anything other than a sincere reflection of his thoughts. However, if such was the case, it shows a terrible lack of understanding on his part for the Japanese point of view, and any efforts on the part of the German Foreign Ministry to assuage Japanese perceptions that they had been betrayed were almost certain to fall short of that goal.

During the course of Terauchi's evening meeting with Ribbentrop, the topic of Japan's southern advance was also briefly touched upon. Ōshima, who had not yet returned to Tokyo, and was also present at this meeting, said he believed Japan—the Japanese Navy in particular—would be perfectly ready for an advance in Southeast Asia, including Hong Kong. Ribbentrop asked him "How far can you go?" to which Ōshima responded that it was Japan's belief that they could go "quite far in Southeast Asia." Although he failed to go into details of a southern advance, Ōshima did state that they (Japan) should try to drive a wedge between the Netherlands and England and that Japan should propose a non-aggression pact with the Netherlands. By doing so, Ōshima believed Japan would be

\(^{74}\) Telegram from Ribbentrop to Ott; dated 9 September 1939. See DGFP, series D, 8: 37.
able to exploit the Netherlands Indies for her raw materials "in an entirely decent way." Ribbentrop merely acknowledged what seemed to him to be Ôshima's personal opinions without commenting.\(^\text{75}\)

**Japan's New Priorities**

As a result of the Nazi-Soviet alliance, relations between Germany and Japan cooled considerably during the next two cabinets: those of Abe Nobuyuki and Yonai Mitsumasa. Not only was Ôshima's request to resign accepted in October, but the Foreign Ministry discharged several pro-German individuals. The cabinets of Abe and Yonai both set their sights on steering clear of intervention in the European war; making the settlement of the China Incident their top priority. To that end, they also made greater efforts to adjust their diplomatic dealing with Britain, America, and the U.S.S.R.\(^\text{76}\) For the Japanese, their "misbehaviour," particularly in China, had left them increasingly ostracised by the other world powers. "In all the world," stated a publication, then-current, "[T]he Japanese had only two friends—Germany and Italy—and such friendship as existed here rested on the very doubtful basis of expediency. It was only to these two totalitarian states, however, that Japan could look to for support in her ambitious efforts to attain the hegemony of East Asia and the mastery of the Pacific."\(^\text{77}\)

\(^\text{75}\) IMTFE, *Transcript*, pp. 6,133-34. See also *ibid.*, pp. 131-33.

\(^\text{76}\) NGS, 21: 41.

\(^\text{77}\) USWA, 1939: 265.
The Cabinet of Abe Nobuyuki was appointed on 30 August 1939, following the downfall of the Hiranuma Cabinet; Abe was to serve as his own Foreign Minister until the appointment of Admiral Nomura Kichisaburō to that post on 23 September, with Tani Masayuki serving as Vice Minister. The post of Army Minister went to General Hata Shunroku, while Admiral Yoshida Zengo took the post of Navy Minister.

Abe distrusted the Soviets, and just days after war broke out in Europe, he had declared his reluctance to become involved in the European conflict. Abe’s priorities were, as noted, to settle Japan’s problems with China, and to seek better relations with the United States. The day after appointing his Cabinet, Abe told the Japanese people—and the world—that his Cabinet “would take all necessary measures for the execution of Japan’s immutable policy in China [and] pursue an independent course in their dealings with foreign powers.” In line with these pursuits, the British, French, Polish, and German ambassadors were advised by the Japanese Government to “voluntarily” withdraw their naval vessels and troops from areas in China then under military control of the Japanese; the Japanese, saying that they “planned to avoid becoming involved in that war [in Europe] and to devote its energies to settling the China Incident.” The Japanese also tendered a copy of this motion to U.S. representatives.


A memo dating from this time by one Herr Knoll, the head of the Political Division of the German Foreign Ministry, observed that this recent warning, which came specifically from the chief of Japan's China Squadron, was evidence "that Japan would like to use the European war to remove the British and French troops and warships from China."80 In light of the fact that both Britain and France had declared war against the German Reich just ten days previous, Knoll's remarks may not have been far off the mark.

These attempts by the Japanese to take advantage of the turmoil in Europe, met with a sharp rebuke from the U.S. Government. The Japanese were promptly informed that attempts by them to compel the British and French to withdraw their military "would be interpreted in the United States as a definite step towards the elimination of Western influence and hence would have a prejudicial effect on Japanese–American relations."81 And the Americans refused to countenance any suggestion that their own military should be withdrawn.

Interestingly, the fact that Germany had no forces in China at that time, lends a certain amount of credibility to the theory that this was little more than a shallow attempt on the part of the Japanese to intimidate Western governments into abandoning their presence in China.82 Also in keeping with Abe's policies, certain of his Ministers drew up a plan entitled: "Outline for Foreign Policy" advising

80 Memorandum from Herr Knoll; dated 13 September 1939. See DGFP, series D, 8: 58.
81 Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 544.
82 Ibid., p. 570.
that Japan avoid, in particular, any infringements of the Nine-Power Treaty and refrain from placing any unnecessary pressure on American activities in China.83

Abe had many allies for his policies, including Konoe, Prince Saionji, and even the Emperor himself; and the voices in opposition to a proposed Japanese–German alliance had lately become more vocal, particularly after the news of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Saionji, the last of the genrō, or “elder statesmen,” was the most unequivocal in expressing his mistrust of Germany and Italy, of the Anti-Comintern Pact, and Japan’s alliance with the European Fascists. He is, at one time, said to have asked rhetorically: “What can we do tied to Italy and Germany; it is ridiculous and I am deeply suspicious. To think of Japan with America to the East and Britain to the West, is meaningful. But an alliance with Germany and Italy—what possible meaning could that have?”84

On 20 September 1939, the Abe Cabinet did receive some good news: the Nomonhan Truce ended the Japanese-Soviet border war in Mongolia: a short but bloody affair which had taken the lives of more than an entire Japanese division. As previously noted, that the Russo–German pact was announced while this conflict was at its height, was construed as a German betrayal by her Anti-Comintern partners in Tokyo, and called into serious question Germany’s dependability as an ally. Despite the welcome news of the truce, the Soviets remained a sinister and untrustworthy adversary in the eyes of the Japanese. On the other hand, one certainty which resulted from the conclusion of the truce, was that Abe was now afforded greater freedom to pursue an end to the conflict in China.

Yonai Replaces Abe

Abe’s renewed energies directed towards subduing China, were now evidenced by intensified efforts to overthrow Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists, in addition to Japan’s support for the puppet Government of the Nationalist defector, Wang Ching-wei. To go into detail on this affair would be an unnecessary digression; we may note, however, that the plan to establish a new Government in China under Wang’s tutelage was merely an additional element in Japan’s strategy to effect a solution to her habitual problems in China. Cordell Hull gave a cogent summary of the U.S. reaction, noting that the establishment of the Wang régime was “[A]nother stage in the Japanese programme of creating a political and economic hegemony over China . . .”

Despite the fact that the Government of General Abe had been conducting Japan’s foreign affairs with the minimum amount of friction which could have been expected under difficult circumstances, and preparations for the inauguration of Wang Ching-wei seemed well in hand, it was, in the end, domestic discontent arising out of Japan’s economic downturn which led to the Cabinet resignation. In the months leading up to the downfall of the Abe Cabinet, Japanese newspapers had been brimming with criticism of economic control provisions, shortages in specific commodities, and inflated prices. These problems were exacerbated by rice shortages which followed a crop failure in Korea, coupled with inevitable hoarding and black market prices which were well above fixed rates.

85 Toynbee & Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, vol. 11: 556.
Prime Minister Yonai Mitsumasa replaced Abe on 14 January 1940 and formed his Cabinet two days later, bringing back as his Foreign Minister, Arita Hachirō. Arita, who had been opposed to strengthening the Anti-Comintern Pact during the Hiranuma Cabinet, now broadened his efforts to settle the difficulties in China and to cultivate better relations between Japan, the U.S., and Great Britain. In this sense, then, the Foreign Minister’s agenda was not unlike that of his predecessor, Nomura Kichisaburō. On 17 January, he gave his first statement to the press in which he stated that he would attempt to normalise relations with the United States. And two weeks later (on 1 February) in a speech to the Japanese Diet, Yonai told his listeners that Japan’s basic policy for settling the problem in China would remain unchanged and they would soon establish a new central Government in China under Wang Ching-wei.

However, shortly after Yonai had taken over as Premier, he came under criticism from Japan’s pro-Axis elements for his failure to collaborate more closely with Germany, and the failure of his Cabinet “to take full advantage of the collapse of French and Dutch sovereignty.” During the Diet proceedings of 2 February 1940, the Government also came under attack from a leading member of the Minseitō party: Saitō Takao. Saitō asked sarcastically, how much longer the China Incident would continue, and what would be Japan’s return on the payments in sacrificed blood and treasure?

---

87 USWA, 1940: 153-54.
88 Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 554.
"The nation must cease questing after noble-sounding dreams and face reality," Saitō told the Lower House.90

Furthermore, Japan's failure to join the triple alliance, coupled with her recent efforts to improve her relationships with the U.S. and Great Britain, could conceivably have provoked Germany into laying the first claim to the Pacific colonies of the defeated nations of Europe. A flurry of diplomatic exchanges initiated by the Japanese at this time, appeared to indicate that the development of just such a possibility weighed heavily on the minds of certain members of the Japanese military and the Foreign Ministry. Shortly after the Germans invaded Holland and Belgium (10 May 1940), the Japanese made known their concerns. In discussions with Eugen Ott, Colonial Minister General Koiso Kuniaki inquired as to the attitude of Germany towards Japanese military actions in Indo-China and the Dutch Indies. Ott reminded Koiso of previous statements which had let it be known that Germany "was not interested in the Netherlands Indies question..." Ott also told Koiso that Germany probably wouldn't have anything against Japanese action in Indo-China "provided Japan pledged herself to keep America occupied in the Pacific area, possibly by promising to attack the Philippines and Hawaii in case America should enter the war against Germany."91 Ott had, in fact, been told by Ribbentrop in late May that "This German-Dutch conflict was an exclusively European affair and had nothing to do with overseas questions. Germany, therefore, had no interest in


91 Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 24 June 1940. See DGFP, series D, 10: 5.
occupying herself with such overseas problems, in which she continued to regard herself as disinterested."  

Ambassador Ott also described a meeting which took place between Lieutenant-General Mutô Akira, chief of the Military Affairs Bureau of the Army Ministry, and the German military attaché in Tokyo, during which Mutô had stated that "the Japanese Army would welcome German mediation to conclude the China War, and that Japan was much interested in Indo-China for that reason." However, because of the perceived "coolness" on the part of the Yonai Cabinet towards Germany, Mutô's entreaty was met with little enthusiasm.

Unfortunately for Yonai, his tenure as Prime Minister was short-lived. On 8 July 1940, Army Vice Minister Anami Korechika told Kido Kôichi: "The Yonai Cabinet was wholly unsuitable to conduct negotiations with Germany and Italy, and that its direction of affairs might even lead to a

---

92 Telegram from Ribbentrop to Ott; dated 20 May 1940. See DGFP, series D, 9: 386. After the war, Eugen Ott, former ambassador to Japan, told his interrogators at the Far Eastern Military Tribunal that Germany was concerned lest the Japanese should use the situation in Europe, following Dunkirk, to take a share of N.E.I. and Indochina. See Murakami Sachiko, "Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina, 1940–1945 (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1981), p. 207.
93 Quoted in Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 583.
94 Germany's desire to see an end to the Yonai-Arita duo is evident in a 19 June 1940 telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry, in which Ott states: "If the Government should evade an offer couched in appropriate terms of a free hand in Indochina, and if this were made public, it could at least be expected that its position would be severely shaken and that probably it would be replaced by a Government friendly to us." See DGFP, series D, 9: 617-18.
fatal delay." He then noted that "a change of Cabinet was therefore inevitable, and that it might be expected to take place within the next four or five days."95

Anami’s estimate was not far off the mark; the resignation of Army Minister Hata on 16 July led to the downfall of the Cabinet less than a week later. As noted above, the Army had been particularly annoyed with Yonai’s reluctance to conclude a military pact with Germany and to take advantage of the opportunities for expansion arising out of the war in Europe. After the war, Yonai testified to this, noting that Hata and the Army were in favour of an immediate alliance "to take advantage of the golden opportunities created by the German victories in Europe."96 Nor was Yonai’s reluctance to commit to the policy of southern expansion the only reason for opposition towards him. After the war, Admiral Kondô pointed out that "the preparations for the defence of Japan might be seriously threatened if she maintained her attitude of opposition to the Pact; that is, that a deepening of the

95 Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 1: 179.
96 Quoted in Iklé, German–Japanese Relations, p. 162.
Army–navy split would be a serious handicap to inter-service collaboration in time of a national emergency."97

The historian Akira Iriye has stated that he believes the criticism levelled against both Yonai and Arita was "unfair," as this duo had "already taken advantage of the European war to act in Indo-China, Burma, and the Dutch East Indies."98


CHAPTER III

THE TRIPARTITE PACT

The idea of putting some teeth into the Anti-Comintern Pact, was originally a German proposition. As far back as January 1938, Ribbentrop had held discussions with Ōshima Hiroshi, who was at that time Japan’s military attaché in Berlin. During these talks Ribbentrop had broached the idea of further solidifying German-Japanese relations. After Ōshima had passed this information on to General Staff Headquarters—which gave a cautiously favourable response—Ōshima continued to meet with Ribbentrop in an effort to develop Ribbentrop’s suggestion into something more concrete. The basis of Japanese apprehension and hence, caution, was rooted in the fact that Japan and Germany were in pursuit of separate interests. The Japanese were principally interested in an alliance directed against the Soviet Union, while Germany wished to focus on an alliance in which Japan would be militarily bound to oppose the Western democracies. Although the Japanese Government—as noted—was hesitant to enter into an alliance, they were nonetheless clearly intrigued by the idea.

During the spring and summer of 1938, the Japanese Government was sticking to its position that Russia should be the primary target and they “wished to limit mutual obligations of assistance only to the case of a war with Russia.” The pro-German duo of Ōshima and Shiratori had thought that introducing such a novel proviso would endanger ongoing talks and they even threatened to
resign if the Cabinet insisted on retaining this stipulation. Although they were to later inform Ribbentrop and Italian Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano of this new information, they refused to present it officially. Naturally, the resignation of these two pro-Nazi sycophants may well have sounded the death-knell for the Cabinet; historical precedent had already established the difficulties of survival the Japanese Cabinet could be expected to face without the support of the military. The position of the Cabinet had become so much more tenuous following the restoration of the practice of permitting only active members of the military services to fill the posts of Army or Naval Minister. By the summer of 1938, Ôshima was already telling the German Government, that it was the opinion of the Japanese Army, that the time had come to conclude an alliance between Japan, Germany and Italy. (underline added).

On 27 January 1939, the Hiranuma Cabinet met to discuss some of the preliminary proposals which had so far been put forward. At this same time, Ott was reporting to Berlin that he had been told by certain well-placed members of the Japanese Army that they were confident that an alliance would be worked out in two months which was “officially directed against Russia, . . . but containing secret protocols against other powers.” Shiratori was less optimistic than Ott’s unnamed Army

1 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,100.
2 This seems to be precisely what Ôshima and Shiratori had in mind. Count Ciano wrote in his diary entry for 8 March 1939: “Ôshima and Shiratori have refused to communicate through official channels. They asked Tokyo to accept the pact of alliance without reservation, otherwise they will resign and bring about the fall of the Cabinet.” See ibid., p. 6,096.
3 See ibid., p. 6,098.
sources; telling Foreign Minister Ciano on 6 February "that he had his doubts about the early conclusion of the triple alliance . . . ."  

In February of 1939, the Japanese dispatched a three-man mission to visit Rome and Berlin. It would be their duty to clarify concerns with regard to the possibility that "differences might arise" between Germany and Japan over the question of naming Russia as the principle concern and other nations as being secondary. Foreign Minister Arita was especially concerned about the possibility of countries other than Russia becoming the focal point of the alliance. He stated in a conversation with Saionji:

The purpose of the Anti-Comintern Pact, decided upon at the Five Ministers Conference [of 29 August 1938] was to regard the Soviets as hostile. However, the younger faction of the Army and those overseas contend that the real purpose of the program is to regard England and France as hostile. This point has become a problem. The Navy Minister has said: The decision at the Five Ministers Conference must not be changed. Finance Minister Ikeda and I agreed to that.  

The team which was sent to Europe in February '39 to discuss these serious matters, included Lieutenant-Colonel Oka Tatsumi of the Army General Staff, Captain Abe, as the Navy's representative, and Itô Nobufumi, an official with the Foreign Ministry. The trio went first to Italy, then on to Berlin where they were joined by Shiratori, who was then, the director of the Foreign Ministry Information Bureau. During their talks, the Itô entourage continually stressed the Japanese Government's desire that any alliance be directed primarily against the Soviet Union and that "the

---

5 Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 87-88.
other countries, while remaining secondary, would enter into the matter only if they had gone Communistic.” “In other words,” Ôshima was to tell the prosecution team at the Tokyo Trials, “[I]f Japan were to go to war with England, say, this pact would become effective only if England had also gone Communistic.” (underlined in the original).⁶ That there was little or no chance of Britain going “Communistic” might suggest a shallow attempt on the part of some Japanese to avoid being called upon to fulfill their end of an agreement. In any case, Ôshima and Shiratori both rejected this stipulation for fear of “rupturing” the talks, and when Ôshima cabled home to convey his reservations, he was told:

[The] matter of Russia remained the same” and regarding other countries, the Japanese were prepared to go beyond “simply stating that the pact would only be aimed at nations embracing communism, but this would only consist of military advice.” Ôshima further clarified this vagary by explaining that it meant trading intelligence and temporarily leasing bases if necessary—generally speaking, aid short of “actual participation.” ⁷

Not surprisingly, Foreign Minister Arita was greatly perturbed by the lack of constraint exhibited by Ôshima and Shiratori; so much so, that on 10 March 1939, he determined to bring them in line—hinting at the possibility of their recall when the time became convenient. The Emperor, too, was perturbed by this seeming usurpation of authority on the part of these ambassadors.⁸ In any case,

⁶ IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,063.
⁷ Ibid., pp. 6,064-65.
⁸ Quoted in Iklé, German-Japanese Relations, p. 94. At this same time, during the course of a Five Ministers Conference, the Emperor had asked Hiranuma what could be done should Ôshima and Shiratori fail to adhere to the Government’s directives. Hiranuma told the Emperor that should the
when the information pertaining to Japan's preference for an alliance aimed mainly at the Soviet Union was passed on to Ribbentrop, he expressed his satisfaction as far as Russia was concerned, but he wanted to get down to specifics relating to measures which would be taken and which countries were to be included. He also wanted the wording of the pact to be so general as to eliminate giving the impression that it was directed against Russia. In view of the fact that the plans to launch Operation Barbarossa—the invasion of Russia—were being secretly contemplated, it is not surprising that Ribbentrop wished to word the pact in such a manner as to avoid alerting the Soviets. Foreign Minister Ciano, on the other hand, when apprised of Japan’s reluctance to commit to the pact, waxed philosophic, stating:

News from Berlin confirms that the Japanese Government objects to the signing of the Tripartite Pact. Ōshima plans to resign. He says that the Cabinet would fall. And then what? I do not see clearly. Is it really possible to involve distant Japan in European political life, a life which is becoming increasingly complicated and uncertain, and which is subject to change, from one moment to the next, by a simple telephone call."

The two ambassadors disregard the Government’s instruction, they would be recalled and dealt with appropriately. See Harada Kumao, Saionji kō to seikyoku, 9 vols. (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1952), 7: 235.

9 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,066. Ribbentrop’s desire to “get down to specifics,” probably reflected his confusion over mixed signals emanating from the Japanese. He had received a telegram stating that the Japanese “are agreed to participate in a war against England and France, but with certain reservations by which Japan wishes to assure herself of the decision of the favorable moment for entry into war.” Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 5 June 1939. See also p. 6,711.

10 Quoted in Iklé, German-Japanese Relations, p.92.
According to information which Ribbentrop cabled Ott on 26 April 1939, secret talks had been continuing in Europe for some time and these talks had led to a draft of the proposed treaty being worked out by himself, Ciano, and Ōshima. The rough contents of this preliminary draft, as reported by Ōshima included the following three articles: (1) There would be consultations between the three powers if one of them should get into political difficulties; (2) there should be political and economic support in case one of the three powers should be threatened from outside; and (3) there should be an offer of help and assistance in case one of the three powers should be attacked without provocation by another power.\textsuperscript{11}

Ribbentrop noted in the same cable, that in addition to the three articles mentioned above, the draft also included “the obligation that in the event of war waged in common, an armistice and a peace treaty would be concluded jointly, and the duration of the agreement was set to ten years.” Finally, secret protocols were included which stipulated that immediate consultations would take place “on the execution of obligation of assistance in the various possible scenarios and special measures for dealing with propaganda and press related matters.”\textsuperscript{12}

It was also around this time, that some members of the so-called “Axis Faction” presented Arita with a proposal to convert the Anti-Comintern Pact into a military alliance with Germany; warning that a failure to do so would lead to popular unrest in Japan and a possible rapprochement between

\textsuperscript{11} Telegram from Ribbentrop to Ott; dated 26 April 1939. See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,098. See also DGFP, series D, 6: 337-39.

\textsuperscript{12} IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,099.
Germany and Russia.\textsuperscript{13} Apparently, Ribbentrop was becoming so impatient with Japan's constant hedging, that he had demanded a final answer from Japan by 28 April. Out of fear that the talks would collapse, both Ōshima and Shiratori took the liberty of informing Ribbentrop, on their own initiative, that Japan would "... definitely agree on participation in war, regardless of who the opponent might be."\textsuperscript{14}

Despite the difficulties the Japanese were having reaching a consensus on the matter, talks in Europe continued to move forward. Ōshima and Shiratori, who were both clearly enthusiastic about the idea of the triple alliance, had continued to meet frequently with Ribbentrop and Foreign Minister Ciano in an attempt to iron out a satisfactory draft agreement. As noted, they had already produced some preliminary drafts, the most recent of which, provided for setting up joint commissions to examine the extent of political, military, and economic aid which should be offered.\textsuperscript{15}

Two conferences, which were convened on 20 May and again on 4 June 1939, were held to discuss the various problems involved in fashioning a satisfactory pact. At these meetings there was still little agreement amongst the participants with regard to the formation of such an alliance. For the Japanese, the differences of opinion were manifested as a split between the Army and the Navy as to the advisability of forging a stronger pact with Germany (and to a lesser extent Italy). Admirals Yonai

\textsuperscript{13} Mark Charles Michelson, "A Place in the Sun: The Foreign Ministry and Perceptions and Policies in Japan's International Relations, 1931–1941" (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1979), p. 78. It will be recalled that Ribbentrop had already warned both Shiratori and Ōshima of such a possibility.

\textsuperscript{14} Quoted in Iké, German–Japanese Relations, p. 97.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 89.
Mitsumasa and Yamamoto Isoroku, for example, were both opposed to the idea because they hoped to avoid further antagonising the United States and Great Britain; powers they were not yet prepared to challenge militarily. Yonai, for instance, was to tell Finance Minister Ishiwata during a conference of 8 August 1939, that the naval forces of Japan, Germany and Italy would have no chance of winning a war against Britain, France and the U.S. "The Italian and German Navies would be no help at all," Yonai had stated. Yonai, in fact, had serious reservations over the ability of Hitler's "war machine" to defeat Britain and his doubts were further augmented by warnings from a former Foreign Minister, now-ambassador, Shigemitsu Mamoru, which noted the resolve of the British people. Foreign Minister Arita had received one such notice which stated: "Even if Hitler's success on land may be decisive, naval powers of Britain and France may remain strong enough. Or even if France may be overwhelmed, the war will not be ended. . . . If Hitler's successes on land will be kept in check, the powers of Britain and France will remarkably rally." For the time being, at least, these differences of opinion as to the propriety of forging a stronger pact, guaranteed that no concrete plans would be formulated through which Japan could work towards the realisation of a stronger alliance.

The basis for the later strengthening of the Anti-Comintern Pact was rooted in the dissatisfaction with which it was viewed by the Japanese Army. It had been the Army, who along with such "Germanophiles" as Ōshima and Shiratori, had pushed the hardest to bring about closer Japanese-

---

16 Quoted in Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies*, pp. 99-100.
17 Telegram from Shigemitsu to Foreign Minister Arita. See IMTFE, *Transcript*, p. 9,685.
18 Shigemitsu, *Japan and Her Destiny*, p. 169.
German relations. Although the idea of strengthening Japanese–German relations, as noted above, had arisen from the desire of both parties to neutralise the threat from the Soviet Union, as time passed and Germany’s secret plans for dominating Europe began to take shape, the focus of the talks had begun to centre on France and Britain as well.¹⁹ Shiratori, for example, had told the Johann Plessen, the following:

1) Shiratori had already come to realize the inevitability of a German–Soviet pact.

2) Shiratori was hoping for the conclusion of a Japanese–Soviet non-aggression pact as well, but he felt this could only be accomplished if Germany were to serve as the mediator.

3) Shiratori felt that during the time of the fashioning of the Anti-Comintern Pact, Japan’s and Germany’s main enemy was the Soviet Union, but at the present time (September 1939) he now believed that it was Great Britain which had become their main enemy.

4) Shiratori thought that from the German standpoint, this change of focus from the Soviets to Great Britain had resulted from the effects the changing international political situation were having on Europe.

5) Shiratori noted that the confrontation between Japan and Britain had arisen as a result of the blockade placed against the British concession at Tientsin by the Japanese military. In Shiratori’s opinion, it was clearly Great Britain, and not the Soviet Union which was Japan’s major enemy.

6) Shiratori was optimistic that even after Poland had surrendered to Germany, a peaceful compromise between Germany on the one hand, and Britain and France on the other, was still possible.20

The idea of concluding a stronger alliance with Germany and Italy had lost much of its momentum ever since the first Konoe Cabinet had fallen on 5 January 1939 as a result of its failure to settle the conflict in China and, as previously indicated, the sense of betrayal the Japanese felt following the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. There was also at that time, an increased preoccupation on the part of both Foreign Ministry and military officials with the planning and execution of the previously referred to campaigns against Hainan and the Spratly Islands.21

When Hiranuma Kiichirô took over from Konoe back in January 1939, Arita Hachirô had been persuaded to stay on as Foreign Minister by a pledge from Hiranuma that he would work hand in hand with Arita to defeat the Army’s proposal to strengthen the Anti-Comintern Pact. Specifically, he had told Arita: “I am of the same opinion as yourself. I am opposed to the strengthening of the Anti-Comintern Pact to the extent of waging war against Britain and France. Should the Army coerce us I shall resign together with you.”22

20 Miyake, Nichi-doku-i sangoku dômei, pp. 234-35.

21 According to Stahmer’s testimony, given at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East: “. . . towards the end of 1938 and especially after the change of the Japanese Cabinet from Konoe to Hiranuma at the beginning of 1939, Japan was slowing down the negotiations and Germany got the impression that the administration in Japan was not seriously interested in a closer relation [sic] with Germany and Italy.” See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 24,398.

22 Ibid., p. 6,096.
Because the idea of strengthening German-Japanese relations had originally been anti-Communist in its focus, Arita, for one, still thought it should be confined to targeting Russia. However, owing to the Army’s enthusiasm for an alliance, the opposition of Hiranuma and Arita alone, was insufficient to nullify the idea and over time, whatever doubts Hiranuma may have had as to the wisdom of strengthening the Anti-Comintern Pact, they began to dissipate. He began to feel ever more inclined to conclude a pact with Japan’s European partners.\(^{23}\)

By the time of the formation of the next Konoe Cabinet (22 July 1940), discussions relating to the formation of an alliance with Germany and Italy had, therefore, practically been ignored for over a year because of the confusion in the political situation; it didn’t take long for the concept to be revived under the new Cabinet. In Japan, the victories of the German Army during the spring and summer had caused a resurgence in the idea of fuller co-operation with Germany.\(^{24}\)

\(^{23}\) Hiranuma’s true feelings regarding the formation of the pact are enigmatic and it is thus difficult to offer a definitive statement in this regard. Iklé is of the opinion that Hiranuma was in favor of the pact. See, for example Iklé, German-Japanese Relations, especially, pp. 102-12. This, however, does not conform with the statement of support he offered Arita. Michelson cautiously seconds Iklé’s opinion, stating: “Prime Minister Hiranuma’s policy position was always uncertain, though he was suspected, by opponents of closer relations with the Axis, of favoring a military alliance.” See Michelson, “A Place in the Sun,” p. 165. Donald C. Watt has suggested that Hiranuma, at one time opposed the pact, but “From the beginning of May [1939] he moved over to full support of the army advocacy of the alliance . . . One factor in his change of heart may have been the unremitting pressure of the extreme nationalist Japanese-language press. Another may have been Ôshima’s and Shiratori’s demands to be allowed to resign their Embassies . . .” See Donald Cameron Watt, How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938-1939 (London: Heinemann, 1989), p. 346.

\(^{24}\) See SGS, 3: pp. 17-18.
Matsuoka becomes Foreign Minister

Matsuoka was the most conspicuous member of Konoe's new team. He was a highly intelligent individual: filled with self-assurance. Although a very capable man, he was also bombastic (this latter trait seeming to be his most outstanding feature). Ambassador Craigie said of him: "His chief outward characteristic was his extreme loquaciousness. I have never known anyone talk so much to say so little." Joseph Grew relates that during a two hour and fifteen minute conversation with Matsuoka: "As usual, Mister Matsuoka did about ninety-five percent of the talking because his continuous monologues can only be broken up by forceful intrusion." Matsuoka, however, seemed an especially appropriate choice as Japan's Foreign Minister since he would satisfy the Army, he was well-regarded in Germany, and he was not the sort of person who would be intimidated; just the type of negotiator the Japanese would need in their dealings with Germany. Being as self-assured as he was, Matsuoka preferred to carry out his negotiating independently. As a conciliatory gesture to the Army, Matsuoka chose to bring back Shiratori Toshio, who had been with the Foreign Ministry since 1910, as one of his two advisors; the other being Saitô Yoshie. The latter was to act as Matsuoka's main advisor on the Axis Alliance and subsequent issues. Other Cabinet members included Tôjô Hideki as Army Minister and Vice Foreign Minister Ôhashi Chûichi, who, along with Matsuoka, were all acknowledged "hard-liners" and pro-Axis advocates.

---

25 Craigie, Behind the Japanese Mask, p. 107; Grew, Ten Years in Japan, p. 344.
26 Michelson, "A Place in the Sun," p. 175.
Clearly the military expected greater things from the new Cabinet; Military Affairs Bureau Chief Mutô Akira sarcastically told the new Foreign Ministry advisor, Saitô Yoshiie: “If they can’t bring us the Triple Alliance, of what need are Konoe and Matsuoka? It should [rightly] spell the end of the Cabinet.”27 The new Cabinet was not about to disappoint, wasting no time in getting down to the business at hand.

Matsuoka was most anxious to get the discussions with Germany back on track, telling Ôshima: “The Army is not taking the initiative on the question, but I will do it at the risk of my job and complete it in one or two weeks.”28 One of Matsuoka’s first jobs was to “clean house”; that is, to recall or reassign a number of diplomats thought to be members of the “Anglo-American faction.” Nishi Haruhiko, a career diplomat and postwar ambassador to Australia and Great Britain, gave voice to the conviction that this “shake-up” represented, for Matsuoka, a symbolic tribute to the conclusion of a pact with the Axis. British Ambassador Robert Craigie likened the zeal with which Matsuoka carried out his “purge” to that of a combination “Foreign Minister and Ali Baba,” liquidating “no less than forty ambassadors, Ministers, and senior members of the service.”29

28 TSM, 5: 199.
In a joint conference of the Army, Navy, and Foreign Ministries, held on 12 July 1940, the conferees met to discuss a tentative draft entitled: “Strengthening of Harmony between Japan, Germany and Italy,” with the aim of strengthening the coalition between Japan and Germany. The need to do so was based upon the supposition that Germany would, in fact, conquer England and establish hegemony over Europe and Africa. It was suggested that an alliance with Germany might check the Soviet Union, while at the same time, it was further agreed, that it would be wise to avoid participation in the European war. In addition, it was determined that it would be necessary for Germany to recognise that the South Seas area was to be included in Japan’s new order “over which Japan would exercise political leadership to the exclusion of all others.”

The conferences of 26 and 27 July 1940; conferences to which we shall have occasion to return, set the tone for the policies which Japan was to pursue thereafter. Here we may say, that the policy decisions reached at the Cabinet meeting of 26 July and then approved at an Imperial Conference held on the following day, were aimed at settling the “China Incident” and solving the problems of the south. A policy paper which came out of these conferences, entitled: “Policy Outline for Dealing with the Changing World Situation,” provided for the use of military measures in the southern regions, particularly if the China conflict could be brought under general control, and if this could not be accomplished, but other important factors were considered favourable, military force would still be used. The use of force by the Japanese against their adversaries would not be limited just to Britain, so preparations were to be undertaken to oppose the United States as well. For these reasons, the

30 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,191-92 and p. 11,639.
Japanese continued to maintain their resolve to strengthen their political union with Germany and Italy.\textsuperscript{31}

Just days after the conclusion of these conferences, and at Minister Matsuoka Yosuke’s request, the Foreign Ministry drafted a proposal of 30 July 1940 entitled: “On Strengthening Co-operation between Japan, Germany, and Italy.” This paper offered a clarification of earlier proposals by expressing Japan’s willingness to join in military co-operation with the Axis nations against Britain while reserving the right to determine the timing and extent of Japanese participation in any war.\textsuperscript{32}

The German Foreign Ministry had already been made aware of Japan’s renewed interest in seeking closer alignment with the Axis. During the course of talks between Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop and Japan’s ambassador at Rome, held earlier, on 9 July 1940, the ambassador had pointed out that “... as Germany would now be establishing a new order in Europe, Japan for her part had been striving for 3 years to establish a new order in the Far East and the South Seas. Through this parallelism a very close co-operation between Germany and Japan seemed to be absolutely indicated.” Ribbentrop offered his appreciation with regards to Japan’s desire for co-operation, reminding the ambassador that without Germany having grown so powerful, “Japan could not have penetrated so deeply as she actually had into the British and other spheres of interest as she


\textsuperscript{32} This draft may have come from Mutô Akira of the Military Affairs Bureau and Oka Takasumi of the Naval Affairs Bureau. See Michelson, “A Place in the Sun,” pp. 176-77.
had.” He then went on to indicate his personal belief that future, friendly co-operation “would be possible within the framework of the new order now being established in Europe.”

During the early evening of 1 August 1940, Matsuoka met with Ott, to discuss some matters relating to the proposed Tripartite Pact which had been causing him some concern. Matsuoka indicated to Ott that he perceived the Japanese people and Government to be generally inclined towards a strengthening of the Axis Pact but, without knowing for himself Germany’s attitude and intentions, he was sure to face difficulties persuading Konoe and the Cabinet to move in that direction. Ott replied that Berlin was in no position to offer consolation to Matsuoka since they were unsure of future Japanese plans. Later during the same conversation, Matsuoka told Ott that Japan could manage the problem with China on their own. However, his real concern seemed to be ascertaining Germany’s attitude with regard to Japan’s southern advance. He asked Ott: “What will Germany want to gain in the South Seas? . . . What does Germany want, and what can it [Germany] do as regards Russo-Japanese relations?”

The Japanese were both uncertain and anxious with regard to this matter. When this very business had come up for discussion at a joint conference of Army, Navy and Foreign Ministry representatives, held just two weeks previously to discuss a paper entitled: “Intensification of [the] Coalition Among Germany, Japan, and Italy” those present were united in their determination to resist any postwar claims by Germany to either French Indo-China or the Netherlands East Indies.

33 Memorandum from Minister Paul Otto Schmidt of the German Foreign Minister’s Secretariat; dated 9 July 1940. See DGFP, series D, 10: 162-67.
34 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,286-88.
The Foreign Ministry representative, a certain Mr. Andô stated at this meeting held on 16 July, that if there was a German–Japanese dispute over these colonies, Germany might try to use Russia to check Japan from the north. He also brought into question the trustworthiness of the their German ally; asking: "... isn't it the intention of Germany to grasp the political leadership for herself and give Japan only the economic interest in regard to French Indo-China and the Netherlands East Indies" Mr. Ishizawa of the Foreign Ministry stated his complete agreement with such an assessment, while Major Tanemura Sakô of the Army General Staff, argued against the possibility of Russia permitting herself to be used as a pawn by the Germans; noting: "I don't think that even Soviet Russia would be a tool of Germany and carelessly meddle into this with the hope of securing the northern section of Manchuria."

On 5 August 1940, Matsuoka cabled the Japanese ambassador to Britain, Shigemitsu Mamoru, who was openly against an alliance, suggesting an alternate approach to developing Japan's relations with the Axis powers. According to the telegram, Matsuoka expressed his feeling that Japan should pursue, what he termed, parallel yet independent policies in her relations with Germany and Italy (keeping Italy relegated to a subordinate status). Matsuoka explained that the policy of remaining essentially neutral was based on the fact that Japan was—geographically speaking—in a very advantageous position.

Matsuoka's proposal is somewhat vague but what he seemed to be suggesting was that from a strategic standpoint, Japan occupied an ideal global location, affording her the opportunity to pursue her dreams of conquest in the southern regions, China, etc., without having to rely too heavily on the

---

other powers; thereby avoiding the difficulties which such an association might precipitate. An alternate view may be that he felt that Japan was in an advantageous position, geographically speaking, because she could, if she so chose, remain completely detached from the war in Europe. Matsuoka elaborated on this notion by pointing out that in order to establish her position in Greater East Asia, it would be necessary for Japan to consider those measures which gave her maximum benefits while taking minimum losses "preferably at the expense of small nations like France or Portugal [sic]. (Although indirectly, it may turn out to be at the expense of Britain and America) and by avoiding conflict with the other countries so as not to make many enemies at once but to dispose of them one at a time."36

Army and Navy officials met again on 6 August to discuss the proposals which came out of the conference of 30 July. During the discussion, only Navy Minister Yoshida spoke out against the Axis Pact. Although he had the backing of other senior Navy officers, his lack of support from the Army and lower-echelon Navy officers forced him to yield to pressure from those quarters. Yoshida's opposition to the Tripartite Pact reflected his apprehension that such an alliance could only lead Japan

36 Telegram from Matsuoka to Shigemitsu; dated 5 August 1940. See ibid., pp. 9,712-13. Matsuoka's statement is inexplicably reminiscent of a passage from a 7 February 1941 telegram, Shigemitsu was to receive from British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden, in which Eden said: "Geographically speaking, Japan is in an advantageous position, so that she can remain entirely aloof from the calamity of war if she so desires, and moreover she is not being threatened by any one [sic], certainly not by England." See ibid., p. 9,785. In the lead-up to this telegram being read aloud before the Tokyo Military Tribunal, it was inadvertently introduced as a telegram from Shigemitsu to Matsuoka; when, in fact, it was the reverse.
closer to a war with the United States. In expressing his opposition, Yoshida echoed the policy of his predecessor, Yonai Mitsumasa who, like Yoshida, had had little support within Navy circles. Unfortunately, this voice of relative moderation was silenced shortly thereafter by his sudden admittance to hospital; to be followed the next day by his resignation. Some speculation exists that Yoshida’s illness had been brought on by the stress resulting from his opposition to the Tripartite Pact.37 On 5 September, his position was assumed by Admiral Oikawa Koshirô, who, it was presumed, would be more supportive of the alliance than Yoshida had been.38 On 6 September, Navy

---

37 TSM, 5: 195. On 5 June 1948, during ex-Premier Tōjō’s cross-examination at the “Tokyo trials” by Justice Keenan, the following exchange took place:

Keenan: In your affidavit you make the statement that the Navy Minister Yoshida resigned, I believe, for reasons of ill health but that he did not give all of his reasons. Do you recall that?

Tōjō: Yes, I know that very well.

Keenan: What other reasons were you referring to?

Tōjō: Regarding the Triple Alliance.

Keenan: What about the Triple Alliance? You mean that he did not favor it, that he was so much opposed to it that he did not want to continue as a member of the Cabinet?

Tōjō: The surface reason was illness. I presume that his surface reason was illness, but actually he disapproved of the idea of bringing the relations among Japan, Germany, and Italy to the point of an alliance. Author and historian Yabe Teiiji also states that while Yoshida’s resignation was due principally to illness, it was as a result of his opposition to the Tripartite Pact. That is; the surface reason was illness, but in reality it was his opposition to the pact. See Miyake, Nichi-doku-i sangoku dōmei, p. 579. See also ibid., pp. 36,642-43.

38 See TSM, 5: 195. According to one historian, it was the appointment of Oikawa which “... tipped the balance in favor of the Tripartite alliance.” See Asada Sadao, “The Japanese Navy and the United States,” in Borg and Okamoto, eds., Pearl Harbor as History, p. 249.
Vice Minister Sugiyama Tokutarō was also replaced; his post being taken up by Vice Admiral Toyoda Teijirō.

According to Asada Sadao's summary of the prevailing thought within Japanese Navy circles, it was around this time that:

... the Navy's program of southern advance had shifted to a frankly opportunistic policy of taking advantage of the European war to realise longstanding goals. Carried away by the succession of German victories in the West, the Navy General Staff lost all sense of balance about the world situation and the policy [of southern advance] became a consuming obsession.\(^{39}\)

The notion of solidifying a pact with the Germans and Italians had received reaffirmation during a Four Ministers Conference of 4 September which was held at the official residence of Premier Konoe. At this meeting, Matsuoka suggested that Japan, Germany, and Italy co-operate in the establishment of blocs in Europe and Asia, leaving the conference participants to discuss the manner in which their goals might best be accomplished. The question of which areas Japan's "new order" was to embrace, the nature of future tripartite economic co-operation, the attitude the Japanese should adopt towards the Soviet Union, and Japan's approach to the problem of applying force against the United States and Britain were all topics of deliberation.

Knowing that a war between Japan and both the U.S. and Great Britain would be arduous, to say the least, Matsuoka was relying on a Japanese-German alliance to deter the U.S. from engaging in hostilities in Asia. If this proved not to be the deterrent he hoped for, Germany could be expected

\(^{39}\) *Ibid.*, p. 250
to assist Japan in her confrontation with America. Matsuoka's vision of the "new order" in Asia was far-reaching: encompassing not only China and Manchukuo, but Thailand, French Indo-China, British Malaya, British Borneo, the former German mandated islands, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, Australia, New Zealand and India. Interestingly, the Japanese were less precise in their later discussions with the Germans—who were to be told for the present—that the "southern region" was limited to an area east of Burma, including the Dutch East Indies, and New Caledonia northward.  

Actually, the territories which Japan intended to incorporate within their "new order" were fluid: the area encompassed would be dependent upon fluctuations in the military situation. A Japanese foreign policy statement of 4 October 1940, noted that the preliminary objectives of Japanese penetration to the south would, in the early stages, include the area to the west of Hawaii: French Indo-China, the Dutch East Indies, Burma, and the Strait Settlements. However, the Philippines and Guam might be included "depending upon the attitude of the United States Government."  

40 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,314-15; Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, eds., The Diplomats 1919-1939, 2 vols. (New York: Antheneum, 1967), 2: 626-27. There exists an anonymous document from the German Foreign Office which reported Kurusu as having stated that Japan "wants to organize the East Asia sphere, including the South Seas, on a broad basis." Kurusu also noted that Japan, Manchukuo, and China would be "the core" of the Greater East Axis [sic] Sphere. . . ." See IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,282-85.

41 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,977.
Stahmer Visits Tokyo

Face-to-face meetings between the German and Japanese representatives began shortly after the conference of 4 September. According to testimony given by Heinrich Stahmer (one-time ambassador to Tokyo), who was in charge of Far Eastern Affairs in the German Foreign Ministry, conflicting telegrams from Ott in Tokyo and verbal information from Kurusu in Berlin, created a picture so confusing, that the German Government was quite unclear as to the Japanese attitude with regard to negotiations on the (Tripartite) pact and what the Japanese had in mind.

Historians familiar with the period have acknowledged the seeming lack of coherence in the execution of Japanese foreign policy at this time. Langer and Gleason, for example, have written that despite the “huge stacks” of available material, they are insufficient “to solve the problem of Tokyo’s policy during Matsuoka Yosuke’s incumbency of the Foreign Office.” They attribute this, in part, “to the unsystematic way in which Japanese business was conducted.” They note specifically, that factionalism led to “widely divergent courses of action . . . .”\(^{42}\) It was just this sort of confusion which prompted Nazi Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop to send Stahmer to Tokyo to clear up some uncertainties. He left Berlin on 23 August and travelling via Moscow, arrived at his destination on 7 September. He had been authorised by Ribbentrop to negotiate on the following points: (1) To ascertain the true intentions of the Japanese Government towards Germany; (2) if it was Japan’s intention to enter into a new agreement with Germany, Stahmer—in the presence of

Ott—was to open negotiations without delay; and finally, (3) before continuing negotiations, all details were to be reported to the Government in Berlin for their approval.43

The day before Stahmer’s arrival, Matsuoka had presented a paper entitled: “A Draft Policy for Aims in Negotiating a Military Alliance” to the participants at a Four Ministers Conference. Although details of the conference are scant, we do know that Matsuoka indicated his approval of the idea for the formation of an alliance when he stated that in announcing the establishment of a pact of cooperation, Japan should show no signs of timidity or weakness which might invite ridicule or even danger.44

Two days after Stahmer’s arrival (9 September), he and Ambassador Ott had their first meeting with Matsuoka at the Foreign Minister’s private residence. During this meeting, Stahmer told Matsuoka that it was Germany’s desire that any escalation in the war be avoided and that Germany would do what it could to keep the U.S. from entering the fray. He also let Matsuoka know that Germany didn’t intend to do anything which might draw Japan into the war, and finally, he offered to

43 TSM, 5: 190. Ott’s confusion was understandable; Weizsäcker had been told by Ambassador Kurusu on 1 August 1940 that he had received no instructions from his Government and he was uncertain as to what Germany expected from Japan “and especially whether and at what time we would like to see Japanese power thrown into the balance in the present conflict.” On the other hand, Ribbentrop had occasion to ask the Japanese ambassador to Italy for clarifications on the path Japan intended to follow. Not surprisingly, he was most interested in “hearing from the Japanese how they conceived of collaboration with Germany—whether it was only to be in the economic field or was to take some other form.” It would appear that both Japan and Germany were waiting for the other to make a policy commitment. See also DGFP, series D, 10: 162-63 and 391-92.

44 TSM, 5: 197-98.
use Germany's good offices in an attempt to reduce Japanese-Soviet friction and to contribute to the settlement of the China Incident, if the Japanese so desired. According to Stahmer, "Matsuoka agreed wholeheartedly," and this information was duly cabled to Ribbentrop. When Ribbentrop was told of Matsuoka's enthusiastic response, Stahmer was instructed to begin negotiations on a pact.\(^{45}\)

According to the cable which Ott and Stahmer sent to Ribbentrop, Matsuoka recognised the need for co-operation between Japan, Germany, and Italy in order to "neutralise" the U.S. It was also noted that America should be the "objective and Matsuoka promised to see that the Cabinet made proposals in the very near future."\(^{46}\) Matsuoka wrote after the meeting that Stahmer had told him that Germany was respectful towards, and would recognise Japan's desire to establish themselves as the political leader in a new order in East Asia. He noted further that Germany was interested in those areas for purely economic reasons.\(^{47}\)

Stahmer had already held two preliminary discussions with Ōshima on 8 September. During their morning discussions, they attempted to pave the way for the upcoming negotiations by engaging in some preparatory groundwork. Stahmer had told Ōshima that Germany trusted the Japanese to take the initiative and that he was anxious to meet with Matsuoka, believing that they shared similar thoughts on the necessity of concluding an alliance. When Ōshina met with Matsuoka later that afternoon, he told him that Stahmer had been in a positive mood. Regarding the upcoming

\(^{45}\) IMTFE, *Transcript*, pp. 24,405-06 and p. 6,333. Ott was later informed by Matsuoka that: "Japan intended to settle the China Incident by herself by and by, and that Germany had no need to trouble herself."

\(^{46}\) DGFP, series D, 11: 57-58.

\(^{47}\) See *ibid.*
discussions, Matsuoka noted that the Army was not taking a leadership role on matters, and although it was better having Oikawa on board than Yoshida, Matsuoka himself was prepared to put his job on the line in order to tackle the problem, claiming that he'd put things in order within a week or two.\(^{48}\)

In the meantime, Matsumoto Shin’ichi had been recalled to Tokyo from his post as councillor of the Japanese embassy in China (Nanking) to take up the position of director of the Foreign Ministry’s Treaty Department. In this new capacity, he was to assist in the revision of a preliminary draft which had resulted from the Stähmer–Ott–Matsuoka talks of the 10th and 11th.

On the morning of 11 September, Stähmer and Ott met once again with Matsuoka. At this meeting, they presented a proposal which they told Matsuoka was a “private plan” of theirs and thus not binding the German Government. They had altered Article 3 of an original draft (Matsuoka’s draft) which said only that the contracting parties would co-operate and consult with one another as to the means for removing obstacles in the paths of their respective “new orders.” The Germans had revised it to read: “Japan, Germany and Italy agree mutually to co-operate and consult in their efforts on aforesaid lines and to assist one another with all political, economical, and military means when one of the powers concerned will be attacked by a power not included in the present European war or the Japanese–Chinese conflict.”\(^{49}\)

\(^{48}\) TSM, 5: 198-99.

\(^{49}\) IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 27,995-96.
The crux of Articles 1 and 2 was that, while Japan would recognise the leadership role of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a new order in Europe, those two powers would, in turn, recognise Japan's right to establish their own new order in East Asia.\(^{50}\)

On the 14th, Stahmer and Ott presented a slightly altered draft version which had been cabled to them by Ribbentrop. It now read:

Japan, Germany and Italy agree to co-operate in their efforts on the aforesaid lines. They further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three powers concerned shall either openly or in concealed form be attacked by a power at present not included in the European war or in the Japanese-Chinese conflict. (italics added).

A second amendment in this draft had been revised to include an Article 5, which read: "Japan, Germany and Italy agree that the aforesaid terms do not in any way affect the present political status between the three aforementioned powers and Soviet Russia."\(^{51}\) This version, then, clearly had the United States as its focus. The addition of the words "either openly or in concealed form" were directed at the possibility of any power (the U.S. was again the primary target) offering assistance—short of belligerence—to the British. This new variant was discussed at a meeting of 16 September and then again at a Liaison Conference held three days later. Because of strong opposition against the

\(^{50}\) Toynbee & Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, vol. 11: 593.

\(^{51}\) IMTFE, *Transcript*, pp. 27,996-97.
inclusion of this phrase from both the Navy and Matsuoka, it was subsequently dropped from the later revisions.\footnote{According to Matsuoka, he'd been told by Stahmer that the phrase meant that if any one of the three powers (Germany, Italy, or Japan) were attacked by America, “the other two would be automatically obliged to participate in the war.” Stahmer and Ott agreed to strike the phrase for the time being and await further instructions from Ribbentrop. When Matsuoka asked for a more precise explanation, he was told that the phrase meant such cases as the British permitting the U.S. to use their bases (such as Singapore) in the Pacific under a secret Anglo–American agreement. See \textit{ibid.}, pp. 6,336-37.}

On 12 September 1940, Prince Konoe had met with Kido Kôichi and informed him that Stahmer had already had three meetings with Matsuoka during which Stahmer had broached the idea of a military pact between Japan, Germany, and Italy. The Army had offered their immediate endorsement to such a pact, while the Navy planned to hold a Liaison Conference within a few days during which they would give the matter further consideration.\footnote{Kido Kôichi, \textit{The Diary of Marquis Kido, 1931–45} (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, Inc.), p. 253. (hereafter cited as \textit{Kido Diary}).}

Naval officials had shown a consistent reluctance to offer their support to the idea of strengthening relations with Germany and Italy. In addition to the previously alluded to opposition expressed by ex-Navy Ministers Yonai and Yoshida, Vice Minister Yamamoto Isoroku, Admiral Okada, and chief of the Naval Affairs Bureau Inoue Shigeyoshi had all been hesitant to endorse such an alliance. Admiral Yoshida was most reluctant to the idea of strengthening Japan’s relationship with Germany and Italy. Much of his hesitation was based upon an apparent lack of unity; that is, a split amongst Navy officials. However, Yoshida found himself in a difficult position owing to the
enthusiasm for the alliance on the part of the Army, the Foreign Affairs Department, and certain sections of the Navy.\textsuperscript{54}

These apprehensions were indicative of the attitude of caution which consistently prevailed within Navy circles. The fear of provoking a conflict with Britain—and to an even greater degree the United States—continued to have a tempering influence on the thinking of Navy officers in the higher echelons. Thus, Admiral Yamamoto gave voice to the following position:

> To take sides with Germany, which aims at the establishment of a new order, necessarily involves Japan in the war by which Germany is attempting to destroy the old order centred upon the United States and Britain. But for some years to come there is no hope that Japan could win a war against the United States with its existing naval force, particularly given the preparedness of its air force.\textsuperscript{55}

In a similar vein, Admiral Yamamoto was to tell the journalist Hashimoto Tetsuma: "... I believe that, should Japan fight the United States, Japan would certainly win in the beginning. ... Yet war must be averted, for the prospect of Japan’s final victory is thin, as there is no way of replenishing the shortage of materials."\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{54} TSM, 5: 194-95.


The “cooler heads” in the Navy, as represented by the Yamamoto–Yonai–Inouye triad, were opposed by certain middle-echelon Navy officers including the chief of the First Section of the Naval Affairs Bureau, Captain Oka Takasumi and some of Oka’s subordinates. However, unlike most other Japanese at that time, Yamamoto had a realistic attitude regarding the strengths of the American people. He also had first-hand knowledge of their industrial might and his familiarity with their capabilities and potential gave him no illusions about America’s strength of will—something which so many of his countrymen were certain was lacking in the American people. After the signing of the Tripartite Pact, Yamamoto was to tell Premier Konoe: “If, as is being said, war with the United States is inevitable, I will show you that for the first six months, we can certainly run wild. At the same time, however, if we should still be involved in two or three years, I can guarantee you nothing.”

Kido, too, thought an alliance would eventually bring Japan into conflict with the United States: a prospect he had discussed with both Matsuoka and Konoe. Matsuoka held that the main purpose of the Triple Alliance was to prevent America from being drawn into the war and it was his belief that if Japan didn’t join with the other Axis powers, their continued isolation in the Pacific might actually invite aggression from the Americans. He further indicated that the thought of joint military action by the signatories to the Tripartite Pact would prevent America from rash participation in the war in

58 Kurihara, Tenno, pp. 156-57.
It was also hoped that the pact would influence Britain and America to cease giving aid to Chiang Kai-shek and allow Japan a "free-hand" in East Asia.  

Not surprisingly, the U.S. viewed the signing of the pact with dismay and more than a little concern. In a telegram written two days after the signing, Grew cabled Hull to tell him that he'd spoken with Matsuoka and that he had told the Foreign Minister: "... Japan by tying herself to the Reich would become merely a satellite of Germany, however the war turned out." In Grew's assessment, there were obvious benefits to Germany and Italy, but the value to Japan was "certainly less clear." Insofar as the pact was aimed at the United States, the inclusion of Japan would, in some measure, hopefully divert America's attention away from Europe and toward the Far East. Matsuoka is reported to have responded that "... these things were matters of opinion."

Army–Navy Consensus

During a Liaison Conference on 14 September 1940, Navy representatives had reluctantly submitted to pressure from Matsuoka, Konoe, and senior Army officials. A number of suggestions might help explain the Navy's reversal in their opposition to the pact; briefly, they include: (1) The assurance from Matsuoka that Japan would be free to determine whether or not, and when she might decide to enter the war; (2) the argument that the pact would force the U.S. to act with greater

60 NGS, 21: 41.
61 FRUS, Japan, II: 170-71.
caution in her dealings with Japan; (3) Navy fears that the Army would continue to enjoy a position of priority over the Navy in the allocation of money and matériel; (4) the pressure of pro-Axis public opinion; (5) confidence on the part of the pro-German segments of the military that Britain would be defeated; and (6) the gradual feeling of familiarity on the part of the Japanese Navy with their German counterparts.

After the war had been over for several years, (on 17 February 1953), Admiral Kondō, the former Vice-Chief of Naval Staff, participated in a conference in which he spoke about this change in the Navy’s attitude. Much of what he said merely reiterated the above-mentioned reasoning. However, he also noted that “… because of the German Army’s successes in Europe, popular opinion desired the alliance, and there was a general tendency to disregard the Navy’s desire to retain good relations with the United States and avoid war.” Kondō also stated that: “… as it was unwise

---

62 As to the first point, Ott later told Matsuoka in a secret note: “Needless to say, the question, whether an attack within the meaning of Article 3 of the Pact has taken place, must be determined through joint consultation of the three contracting parties.” See Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies*, p. 120 and pp. 126-27. Matsuoka later told certain members of the Privy Council that if the U.S. entered the war in Europe, the military services would be first to discuss Japanese obligations, the Cabinet would then consult upon the result of these recommendations and finally, there would be further discussions conducted between Japan and their European allies. See IMTFE, *Transcript*, pp. 6,346-49. Regarding the 4th point, in sworn testimony Shiratori told the Military Tribunal for the Far East: “The sudden flaring up of public opinion in Japan in favor of the Axis powers, which occurred towards the summer of 1940, was solely due to the lightening successes of the German arms [sic] in the Western front and was in no way to be attributed to the activities of any individuals or groups in this country [Japan].” See also IMTFE, *Transcript*, p. 35,047. See also Kurihara, *Tenno*, p. 118.
to continue to rely on materials from the United States alone . . . . it was absolutely necessary to obtain resources from the Southern areas . . . . Under the circumstances, it was felt that the completion of the alliance between Japan, Germany and Italy would greatly strengthen Japan's bargaining potential within the Southern area." And finally, Kondô pointed out that Japan's Navy leaders lacked the courage to firmly maintain their opposition to the alliance.63 We should also add that the change in the Navy attitude was conceivably due in no small part to replacement of Yoshida Zengo by Oikawa Koshirô as Navy Minister on 5 September. At that time, Navy Vice Minister Toyoda was to tell Konoe:

To speak the truth, the Navy at heart is opposed to the Tripartite Pact, but since domestic political conditions no longer permit further opposition on the part of the Navy, the Navy unavoidably approves it. The Navy's approval is politically motivated; from the military standpoint the Navy has not yet got the confidence to turn around and fight the United States alone.64

Following the Liaison Conference on the 14th, Prince Konoe contacted Kido during the evening hours, to sound out his opinion with regard to Matsuoka's suggestion that Privy Councillors should be included at the proposed council in the Imperial presence to discuss the strengthening of relations between Germany and Italy. Both the Army Minister and the Navy Minister were against the idea because of the past obstructive history of that body. As noted above, the increasing inclination towards consensus between the Army and Navy had been facilitated at the time of Navy Minister

63 See Army Forces Far East, Military History Section, Monograph number 146, appendix 5 (Department of the Army: Washington, D.C. 1953), p. 53.
64 Quoted in Maxon, Control of Japanese Foreign Policy, p. 160.
Yonai’s passing from office in August 1939 as a result of the resignation of the Hiranuma Cabinet.\textsuperscript{65} Yonai had been convinced that Japan couldn’t possibly win a war against the United States and Britain and had told Hiranuma as much back in 1939. When asked by Ambassador Grew during a dinner in honour of Captain Richmond Kelly Turner and the crew of the ship \textit{Astoria} in April ’39 if Japan intended to fight the U.S., Yonai had answered: “[Japan] had consistently had no intention whatsoever since the days of the Washington Conference.”\textsuperscript{66} The Army–Navy agreement was a breakthrough for decision makers in the General Staff. Naval opposition to the pact had been based primarily on the belief that such an arrangement would require Japan’s automatic entry into the war under certain conditions.

A Liaison Conference of 19 September 1940 was convened to discuss several points relating to the proposed pact in light of the Navy’s more compromising attitude. Army Chief of Staff Prince Kan’in opened the discussion by questioning the likely effects closer relations between Japan, Germany, and Italy would have on the settlement of the China Incident. In answer to this question, Matsuoka stated that he hoped Japan would settle the China Incident “through her own efforts” and

\textsuperscript{65} The new Vice Minister was Sugiyama Tokutarô and the Naval Affairs Bureau chief was Abe Katsuô.

\textsuperscript{66} Tsunoda, “The Navy’s Role,” p. 263. See also Asada, “The Japanese Navy and the United States,” p. 248, in which Asada Sadao quotes Yonai as telling Grew: “[T]he Navy had no thought of ever fighting the United States.” The Japanese Navy wanted to avoid war with the United States, knowing that even if they were successful, their losses would be heavy. Kondô Nobutake and Prince Fushimi had reported this to the Emperor. See also Robert J. C. Butow, \textit{Tojo and the Coming of the War} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 164.
that he’d already informed Germany that this was the case. Because it was anticipated that the Tripartite Pact would result in a worsening of Japan’s trade relations with Britain and the United States, much of the discussion was devoted also to the problems this would entail for Japan in her efforts to secure necessary raw materials—particularly oil and scrap iron.

Premier Konoe acknowledged that Japan was dependent upon Britain and America for many of her principal war materials but went on to suggest that through increased domestic production and the judicious use of currently available stockpiles, Japan should be able to keep her military supplied even in the event of war with the United States. Hoshino Naoki, the President of the Planning Board then presented his projections for Japan’s production versus consumption in several categories of important metals. His estimates echoed Konoe’s optimism and he concluded: “. . . we should be able to meet our present military needs indefinitely.” He was slightly less optimistic with regard to Japan’s stockpiles of petroleum; acknowledging that it would ultimately be necessary to obtain oil from additional sources such as northern Sakhalin, the Netherlands East Indies, the Soviet Union and—with German assistance—from Europe.67

A week later (26 September 1940) Navy Minister Oikawa, speaking before a research committee of the Privy Council, reiterated Hoshino’s words, telling the gathering: “Japan would have to carefully conserve its oil consumption, but would have enough to fight for a considerable period of attrition.” He indicated that the Navy had been increasing its stores of crude oil and setting up facilities for the manufacture of artificial oil and the production of high-octane gasoline. “But,” he

noted, "artificial oil alone will be insufficient, but we expect [to obtain oil from] the Dutch East Indies and North Sakhalin."\(^{68}\)

Senior Navy officer, chief of Staff Prince Fushimi Hiroyasu, doubting the reliability of the Soviet Union as a source for oil, expressed fears (then current in the Navy) that current oil stockpiles would prove insufficient in the event of a protracted war. Matsuoka tried to allay these fears, maintaining that with German assistance, coupled with her (German) influence with the Soviets, Japan should be able to procure additional supplies of oil. The discussion continued to centre on the problem of securing alternate sources of raw materials but eventually the talk returned to the question of the strengthening of the relationship between Japan, Germany and Italy, with Viscount Ishii speaking out forcefully against the pact with Germany and Italy; said the ageing viscount:

> It is a conspicuous fact that there is not a single country that has gained any benefit from allying itself with Germany and her predecessor Prussia. Not only so, but there are countries which because of this alliance have suffered unforeseen disasters and have finally lost their national identity. Chancellor Bismarck of Germany once said that in international alliances one horseman and one donkey are required, and that Germany must always be the horseman.\(^{69}\)

It was at this point in the proceedings that the President of the Privy Council, Baron Hara Yoshimichi, stood up and uttered the following statement which revealed much about Japanese motives for participation in the Tripartite Pact: "[T]his Pact is a treaty of alliance with the United States as its target." This was an opinion which Matsuoka seconded, noting that the object of the pact

---

\(^{68}\) Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor*, pp. 218-19.  
\(^{69}\) IMTFE, *Transcript*, p. 6,386.
was to circumvent America’s policy of encirclement, and in their concluding remarks, both Prince Fushimi, speaking for the Navy and Prince Kan’in, who spoke for the Army, agreed with the proposal calling for a stronger Axis pact. However, Fushimi, in typical Navy fashion, showed himself to be the more cautious of the two; indicating that it was the Navy’s desire that “every conceivable measure be taken to avoid war with the United States and that the southward advance be carried out as far as possible, by peaceful means.”\(^7\)

The Alliance is Signed

Matsuoka was able to persuade his colleagues that he could be relied upon to work out a treaty which would be acceptable to all parties and would, at the same time, secure Japan’s independent discretion in making a military commitment.\(^1\)

At 3:00 P.M. on that same day (26 September 1940), a specially convened Imperial Liaison Conference took up deliberations relating to the formal approval of a decision in favour of the Triple Alliance. Kido wrote that prior to the Imperial Liaison Conference, there had been some discussion as to whether or not the matter should be submitted to the Privy Council for their approval. As previously noted, the Army and Navy Ministers were opposed to the idea. Now Matsuoka also wanted to bypass the Privy Council and had reported his feelings to the Emperor. Although the Privy Council was usually consulted on matters of such great importance, this had not been the case for the

\(^7^0\) Ike, Japan's Decision, pp. 10-13.

\(^7^1\) TSM, 5: 210-14.
Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902, nor the annexation of Korea. Matsuoka used these as precedents for his point of view but when the Emperor let it be known that he was in favour of consulting the Privy Council, Matsuoka dropped his opposition.

While the Japanese had been attempting to reach a consensus on the advisability of entering into a pact, the German representatives continued to work on specific details of the proposed agreement. On 21 September, Stahmer presented still another version which had once again been drafted in accordance with Ribbentrop's instructions. Since Ribbentrop had met with Premier Mussolini and Foreign Minister Ciano on the 19th and 20th, it is assumed that this particular version also reflected their input. This draft contained a further revision of Article 3, which now provided that if a power not involved in the existing conflict in Europe or the Far East "commits an act of aggression against one of the contracting parties, Japan, Germany, and Italy undertake to declare war on such power and to assist one another with all political, economic, and military means."\footnote{IMTFE, \textit{Transcript}, pp. 27,987-98.} Ribbentrop was convinced that the United States would be extremely loath to intervene in a war in Europe and he posited three reason which caused him to believe as much: (1) A general dislike for the thought of war; (2) the influence of American business interests, which were sure to speak out against participation in a war from which no economic interests could accrue; and (3) a fear of Japan.\footnote{See Iklé, \textit{German-Japanese Relations}, p. 176.}

A variation of Ribbentrop's revision to Article 3 was, in fact, agreed upon, and a pact which was found to be acceptable to all concerned was completed within a week. A draft of this pact was then
duly submitted to the Privy Council, which submitted its approval. The Tripartite Pact was finally signed in Berlin on 27 September 1940.\textsuperscript{74}

Both Germany and Japan believed that the pact would act as a deterrent to American interference in the Far East and Europe, and it was clearly aimed in particular at the United States.\textsuperscript{75} Its main articles were as follows:

(1) Japan recognises and respects the leadership of Germany and Italy in the establishment of a new order in Europe.


\textsuperscript{75} Foreign Minister Matsuoka lied to Ambassador Grew when he told him that the pact was aimed at no particular country. As noted, at the Liaison Conference of 19 September, Privy Council President Hara Yoshimichi stated that the pact had the U.S. as its target; an observation which Matsuoka had seconded. Vice Foreign Minister Ōhashi, on the other hand, was surprisingly forthright, telling some of Grew’s colleagues: “[T]he pact is aimed directly against the United States, which ever since the Immigration Act of 1924 and the Manchurian Incident has hampered Japan’s necessary expansion; . . . .” Grew further reports that Vice Minister Ōhashi had told him almost the same thing. See Grew, \textit{Ten Years}, p. 340. Takayama Shinobu also maintains that the pact was directed at the U.S., particularly Article III, which was designed to prevent them from entering the war. See \textit{ibid}. Kase Toshikazu offered a dissenting opinion saying: “The triple alliance between Japan, Germany, and Italy which was finally agreed to by the Konoe Cabinet was aimed primarily at Great Britain.” See Kase, Toshikazu ed., \textit{Journey to the Missouri} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 41.
(2) Germany and Italy respect the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia.

(3) Germany, Italy, and Japan agree to co-operate in their efforts on the aforesaid lines. They further undertake to assist one another with all political, economic, and military means when one of the three Contracting Parties is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European war or in the Sino-Japanese conflict.

(4) With a view to implementing the present Pact, Joint Technical Commissions, the members of which are to be appointed by the respective governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan, will meet without delay.

(5) Germany, Italy, and Japan affirm that the aforesaid terms do not in any way affect the political status which exists at present as between each of the three Contracting Parties and Soviet Russia.

(6) The present Pact shall come into effect immediately upon signature and shall remain in force for ten years from the date of its coming into force.

At proper time [sic] before the expiration of the said term the High Contracting Parties shall, at the request of any one of them, enter into negotiations for its renewal.

In faith whereof, the Undersigned, duly authorised by their respective governments, have signed this Pact and have affixed hereto their Seals.
Done in triplicate at Berlin, the 27th day of September 1940—in the XVII year of the Fascist Era—corresponding to the 27th day of the 9th month of the 15th year of Shôwa. The document bore the signatures of Ribbentrop, Count Ciano and Ambassador Kurusu.76

In Japan, the Tripartite Pact was elevated to the highest standard of legitimacy when the Emperor issued an Imperial Rescript which said in part:

In the stupendous crisis now confronting the world, it appears that endless will be the aggravation of war and confusion, and incalculable the disasters to be inflicted on all mankind. We fervently hope that the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of peace will be realised as quickly as possible. Accordingly we commanded our Government to deliberate on the matter of mutual assistance and co-operation with Germany and Italy which share in the views and aspirations of Our Empire. We are deeply grateful that a Pact has been concluded between these three powers.77

The day after the signatures were affixed to the alliance, the Japanese produced a document relating to their foreign policy. In this document, the goals which they set for themselves, in light of their new relationship with the other Axis powers, were to:

[P]romptly strengthen the coalition between Japan and the German–Italian Axis based on the world policy, and make, furthermore, a rapid improvement in and adjustment of the Japanese-Soviet diplomatic relations. At the same time we must make [an] effort to realise the peace between Japan and China by making use of the pressure of Germany and the Soviet Union, and, thereby, prompt the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Giving pressure in this way to the Anglo–American Axis, accompanying the intensification of Japan's diplomatic

76 Reprinted from DAFR, 3; 304-05, See also Morley, Deterrent Diplomacy, Appendix 7, pp. 298-99.
77 DAFR, 3: 278.
machinery, we should offer our good offices at a proper time in Britain in order that she make peace with Germany, and moreover we should carry out an epoch making adjustment of Japanese-American diplomatic relations. Thus we expect to establish a peaceful system among Japan, Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union, America and Britain for the reconstruction of world peace.  

Not surprisingly, the Allied powers saw the signing of the pact in a negative light, and the day before the Tripartite Pact was signed, the U.S. administration once again tightened the screws on Japan: announcing a twenty-five million dollar loan to the Chinese and issuing an order effective 15 October for a total embargo of all grades of scrap iron and steel except to the British Empire and the countries of the Western hemisphere. With the signing of the pact, Ambassador Grew privately noted: “At the present time Japan must be placed among the predatory nations. It has put aside all sense of morals or ethics and has become avowedly and shamelessly opportunistic, endeavouring on

78 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 11,719.

79 On 30 November, the U.S. authorized a further loan of $50 million to Chunking. At the same time, they announced a proposal to loan China a further $50 million. In response to this announcement, the Japanese lodged a protest that this was an “unfriendly act,” to which Cordell Hull responded: “If to act in self-defense is an unfriendly act—then we are proposing to do something which is unfriendly.” Langer and Gleason believe the loan was for twenty-million dollars. See Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 301. According to Ishikawa, the loan amounted to twenty-five million dollars. See Ishikawa, Hōisareta Nihon, p. 89. Shepardson and Scroggs are in agreement with Ishikawa as to the amount of the loan, as are H.F. MacNair and Donald F. Lach, Modern Far Eastern International Relations, (New York: Van Nostrand, 1950), p. 488. See also USWA: 1940, p. 179.
every occasion to exploit the weakness of other nations to its own profit. "

Cordell Hull was less bleak, saying the pact would cause no fundamental change in the international situation, that the U.S. had already considered its impact upon their foreign policy, and that they weren't surprised by news of the pact. 81

Since the pact necessarily implied a stronger relationship between the signatories, the Japanese would now feel less reserved in seeking German assistance in pressuring the Vichy Government for permission allowing Japanese forces to make use of military bases (and provide transit rights) in northern Indo-China. This accounted, not unexpectedly, in producing heightened enthusiasm on the part of the Army for the conclusion of the pact. Indeed, Japan had already begun to exploit their closer association with their European allies. Having just been informed that the Japanese military would march into Indo-China, Ott had cabled the German Foreign Ministry to relay a request from Matsuoka asking that the "Reich Government suggest to the French Government that the Governor-General [Decoux] be instructed not to make difficulties for the Japanese action." 82

80 Grew, Ten Years in Japan, p. 337.
81 Toyoda, Matsuoka Yósuke, p. 211. The Americans did, in fact, have an inkling that some sort of an alliance may have been in the offing; they appear to have been more surprised by the speed with which it had been carried out. See also Herbert Feis, The Road to Pearl Harbor: The Coming of the War Between the United States and Japan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), pp. 110-11.
82 Telegram from Ambassador Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 3 September 1940. DGFP, series D, 11: 10.
The Japanese were keenly aware of the fact that, as victors in Europe, Germany would have the first say regarding the future disposition of Europe’s Far Eastern colonies and in this connection, Ambassador Grew astutely observed:

The victories of Germany have intoxicated them [the Japanese] like strong wine. Their belief in the downfall of Britain has until recently been implicit. They have had complete faith in a rapid victory for Germany, and they believe it would be wise to consolidate the position in Greater East Asia of Japan while Germany is still acquiescent and before the ultimately expected strengthening of Germany’s power at sea might preclude far-flung domination of the Orient by Japan.83

Ambassador Robert Craigie summed up the matter even more succinctly, noting: “How... could Japan expect Hitler to divide the spoils with them unless she [Japan] had been actively associated in the work of spoliation?”84

Although the Japanese maintained that the pact was aimed at preventing the spread of war, they were clearly interested in reaping the rewards befitting their new-found status as an ally to the victors in Europe; and the ever-perceptive Ambassador Grew was now reporting to the State Department from his vantage point in Tokyo, on the “golden opportunity” seen by certain unnamed members of the Japanese Army “for expansion as a consequence of German triumphs in Europe.”85

---

83 Grew, *Ten Years in Japan*, p. 335.
84 Craigie, *Behind the Japanese Mask*, p. 106.
85 Telegram from Ambassador Grew to the State Department; dated 12 September 1940. See Grew, *Ten Years*, p. 468.
Opinion then-current in Japan—as elsewhere—was at that time also predicting that Britain, whose cities had been suffering a terrible pounding by the planes of Hermann Göring's Luftwaffe would—like France and the Lowland Countries—inevitably succumb to the German onslaught. It seemed, therefore, to Japan's advantage to strengthen her ties with Europe's prospective overlords. During a meeting held the previous month, a certain Captain Ōno, a member of the Navy's powerful First Committee on Policies, made the following pertinent observations:

After the conclusion of the war there may be occasions when Germany might carry out active economic operations towards the Dutch East Indies, French Indo-China, and China; and especially after Germany makes France and the Netherlands somewhat like subject states, it is probable that she will dispatch active members of the Nazi party to French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies and keep these two colonies under her political leadership. . . . Therefore, Japan's policy towards French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies must be hastened in order to prevent such movement on the part of Germany and she must endeavour to sever French Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies from European influence as soon as possible.  

As both Ambassadors Grew and Craigie had rightly observed, Japan was quick to exploit her opportunities. There was at this time, an ongoing border dispute between officials of French Indo-China and the Thai leadership. This dispute had been simmering in the background for many years, but with the outbreak of war in Europe, it had once again come to the forefront. The Japanese saw in this dispute one of these so-called "golden opportunities" in which to make further inroads in Southeast Asia; this time, by playing a role in arbitrating the border controversy.

---

86 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,197.
Japan's role in the Franco–Thai border dispute could only have been planned—and the term may not be inappropriate—after a coming together of certain conditions which were necessary, or at least very influential, in determining the later course of events. One such relevant condition in determining later events was, as noted, the outbreak of war in Europe. In this sense, then, it is consistent with the theme of the present thesis. When German forces were preparing to overrun her borders, the French found they could no longer afford to spare the resources necessary to defend their colonial holdings in Southeast Asia. Fears of German aggression also prevented the British from offering little more to the French than moral support, while the Americans, who had little that was directly at stake in that area of Southeast Asia, limited themselves to voicing their concerns about the necessity of preserving the status quo. French debility, then, acted as a catalyst inviting aggression from both the Thai and the Japanese. In the following chapter, we shall examine this border dispute and how the Japanese took advantage of it to push forward with their own plans.
CHAPTER IV

JAPAN, FRANCE, AND THAILAND

Japan's opportunistic and exploitative character, was very much apparent in the pressure she began to exert upon the French colonial authorities in Indo-China. Under the strain of military threats emanating from Japan, Paul Lépissier, the French Minister to Siam\(^1\) felt compelled to sound out the Siamese Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Luang Phibun Songkram, on the possibility of a non-aggression pact between their two countries.\(^2\)

Even before the war broke out in Europe, the French had been seeking assurances from the Siamese that they wouldn't assist the Japanese in the event war became a reality. Because of the stormy historical relationship which existed between their two countries, the French could easily envision a scenario in which the Siamese made common-cause with the Japanese in order to advance certain claims against France which related to the question of territorial reclamation.

---

1 Before December 1939, when the name was officially changed to Thailand, the country was known as Siam and the people were known as the Siamese. However, for practical purposes, the terms Siam and Thailand should both be considered appropriate appellations.

2 Luang Phibun Songkram was born Plaek Kittasangkha in 1897. He died in exile in Japan in 1964. Luang is an official title which Siamese Kings used to confer according to rank and nature of employment; it has no English-language equivalent.
Clashes between Siam and France dated back as far as the mid-nineteenth century and first centred on disagreements over the status of Cambodia. During the ensuing decades, there occurred a number of succeeding conflicts which resulted in the French gaining for themselves hundreds of thousands of square miles which the Siamese had claimed as their own.³

It was against this historical background that Thai Prime Minister Songkhram pondered his response to Monsieur Lépissier’s offer of a mutual non-aggression pact. Originally, Luang Phibun claimed to have seen no compelling reason why Siam should enter into such an agreement with the French. Regarding his initial reluctance to conclude such a pact, Phibun offered the following explanation:

Prior to the outbreak of war in Europe, France approached me for the conclusion of the non-aggression pact which was refused by me on the ground of inutility. Later, France submitted for my consideration the exchange of notes for the guarantee of non-military aggression. I again rejected the proposal for fear that misunderstanding might arise among other friendly nations. On the eve of war in Europe, France again requested for the conclusion of a non-aggression pact. In order to show that we Thai are lovers of peace, I accepted the proposal on condition that the frontier re-adjustment according to the principles of justice and equity be settled first.⁴


⁴ Vichitr Vadakarn, Thailand’s Case (Bangkok: Thai Commercial Press, 1941), p. 40.
The truth is, the Siamese had never resigned themselves to the loss of their territories to the French; particularly those areas in the upper reaches of the Mekong River. So, while Phibun may originally have voiced his unwillingness to enter into a non-aggression pact with the French, he also recognised France’s desperate situation in the face of the mounting European crisis and, more importantly, he sensed that this was Siam’s “golden opportunity” to redress the long-standing border dispute between the Siamese and the French.

It was with these thoughts in mind that the Siamese Government agreed to discuss the matter of a non-aggression pact. However, at the same time, Phibun made clear to the French that Siam’s desire to have parallel discussions concerning the return of these territories was to be considered a *sine qua non* for Siam’s participation in those discussions. Then, in an effort to maintain the appearance of neutrality, the Siamese approached the British Minister in Bangkok, Sir Josiah Crosby, to inquire as to whether or not his Government might also be interested in discussing a mutual non-aggression pact. Like the French, the British also had colonial territories in Southeast Asia (Burma and Malaya) which shared a common border with the Siamese. Phibun told Crosby that he was, in part, motivated by his worries over French mobilisation in Indo-China and his dismay at the ceaseless press speculations which cast doubts upon the direction of Siam’s future allegiance. The British expressed immediate agreement to the Siamese proposal.5

A representative of the Siamese Government also paid a 4 October visit to Minister Murai Kuramatsu at Bangkok’s Japanese legation to inform him of Siam’s ongoing talks with his British and

---

French counterparts. He also suggested a similar pact with the Government of Japan. Not only were the Japanese reluctant to enter into such a pact with the Siamese, but Murai was instructed to convey Japan’s disapproval of Siam’s border negotiations with the French, “in view of their long history of suffering at the hands of the latter.”

Minister Lépissier was sympathetic to the Siamese proposals for a border revision and the French agreed in principle to begin discussions on all such matters that were of mutual interest between the two nations. Lépissier, who was a representative of the Quai d’Orsay, was independent of the colonial authorities in Indo-China; therefore, although Indo-Chinese territory was involved in the talks, he was not obliged to consult in any way with Indo-Chinese officials who, in any case, had no diplomatic staff of their own.

This latter group was far less amenable to the Siamese proposals concerning border adjustments and (in their minds) any concessions favouring the Siamese would constitute a bad precedent. The French couldn’t afford to appear weak in the eyes of their colonial subjects in Indo-China or elsewhere. For this reason, the conservative authorities in Hanoi’s French Colonial Ministry opposed any talks concerning a non-aggression pact, or any discussions that were aimed at border revisions. Lépissier was of a different mind and he certainly didn’t mince his words when he described this conservative bastion in the following terms:


In the Spring of 1940, Marc Chadourne, a special representative of the French Minister of colonies, was passing through Bangkok on an intelligence-gathering mission. Chadourne, like Lépissier, was sympathetic towards Thai aspirations for a re-negotiation of the border areas. As a very influential figure, Chadourne was able to convince the Governor-General of Indo-China, General Georges Catroux, that at the very least, the Thai proposals deserved a hearing. So it was, that in April 1940, Phibun was informed by Lépissier that the French metropolitan Government now accepted Thailand’s proposal to discuss border revisions.

Late in the previous year, the Thais had also sent a draft of their proposal for a Japan–Siam non-aggression pact to the Japanese authorities. However, the Japanese had failed to even deliver a response. Therefore, on 11 April, Premier Phibun directed Deputy Foreign Minister Direk Jaiyanama to pay a visit to Minister Murai and see what, if anything, had been the opinion of his Government. Unable at that time to give any official response, Minister Murai was only able to offer his personal opinion as to the likely Japanese reaction.

The Japanese Minister didn’t anticipate a positive response because, as he explained to Deputy Minister Jaiyanama, the Thai and the Japanese didn’t share a common border and, even more importantly, the Japanese feared a misunderstanding on the part of their European partners if they

---

8 Aldrich, *The Key to the South*, p. 227
took what appeared to be joint action with Britain and France. In deference to German and Italian sensitivities, Murai felt the Japanese Government was likely to adopt a negative attitude. However, Minister Murai promised to inform his Government of the talks with Deputy Minister Jaiyanama.  

Deputy Minister Jaiyanama reported the content of his discussions to Premier Phibun who, on 13 April, ordered Direk to visit the American, German, and Italian legations and bring each of their respective Ministers up to date on the current state of progress in Thailand’s treaty talks with the other powers. Like the Japanese, the Thais wished to avoid any misunderstandings that might arise over their current negotiations with the French. However, all three Ministers were quick to indicate an understanding of the Thai position.  

On 22 April, Minister Murai finally received his Government’s official response to the Thai overtures. He went immediately to Deputy Minister Jaiyanama to inform him that the Japanese Government agreed in principle with the Siamese proposals for a pact. However, since Japan, unlike either France or Britain, had no territory that directly abutted Siam, a non-aggression pact between the two wouldn’t be appropriate. Instead, the Japanese suggested that it might be more appropriate if the two were to work together towards implementing a “Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Co-operation.”  

Acting upon the advice of the military and remaining cognisant of the potential blow to Japan’s image abroad and public opinion at home should they alone fail to conclude a treaty, the East Asia

---


Bureau of the Foreign Ministry now instructed Minister Murai to make clear to Phibun that the Japanese wished to sign a pact with Siam before the British or French had done so.

Deputy Minister Direk Jaiyanama expressed to Minister Murai a willingness to accommodate the Japanese. However, the Thai later balked at the Japanese request to sign their treaty before either the British or French treaties. Instead, the Thai asked that all the treaties be signed on the same day. Although the Japanese argued the point, the Thai refused to budge, insisting that it would be a violation of protocol since it was the French who had been first to suggest the idea of a treaty. The Japanese finally relented but insisted that their treaty be signed in Tokyo in order to avoid any impression that it was related to the pacts with the Western powers.  

Now that the signing of the Thai-Japanese Friendship Pact was all but a fait accompli, the Japanese were able to turn their full attention to other pressing matters. Following the news of the

---

11 Thadeus E. Flood, "Japan's Relations With Thailand: 1928–1941" (Ph.D. diss., University of Washington, 1967), pp. 256-59. As the Japanese had requested, their treaty was signed in Tokyo at the residence of Japanese Premier Yonai Mitsumasa by Foreign Minister Arita Hachirō and by the Thai Minister to Japan, Phraya Sriseena. Technically speaking, the Japanese did sign their treaty earlier than either France or Britain—by an hour and a half—due to the time difference between Bangkok and Tokyo. Edward Reynolds maintains that it was a time difference of two hours—just as it is today. See Edward B. Reynolds, "Ambivalent Allies: Japan and Thailand, 1941–1945" (Ph.D. diss., University of Hawaii, 1988), p. 163, n. 60. According to Santaputra, Murai had asked that the signing be carried out “on the same day with, or before, the British.” Later, on 23 May, Murai again asked Direk to sign the pact with Japan a day or two before the British and French; Direk declined. See Charivat Santaputra, Thai Foreign Policy, 1932–1946 (Bangkok: Thai Khadi Research Institute, Thammasat University, 1985), pp. 186-87.
German victory at Dunkirk, a staff conference was held to discuss the possibility of a quick disposal of the China Incident by taking advantage of the plight of France. Three alternatives were proposed: (1) Send in troops to cut off the route through Haiphong; (2) capture Kunming, thereby cutting off both the Burma Road and the French Indo-China route; and (3) try using diplomacy to have Indo-Chinese officials agree to close the French Indo-China route. However, for the time being, none of these ideas were acted upon.¹²

On 12 June 1940, Thailand simultaneously signed non-aggression pacts with Britain and France. On the same day, the Thai and Japanese signed a treaty pledging mutual friendship and respect for one another's territorial integrity. Actually, the treaty between Japan and Thailand differed little from those signed with the other nations. The only differences being an article in which the parties agreed to exchange information on matters of mutual interest and a second article in which Neither of the contracting parties was to offer "assistance" to any country which attacked the other contracting party. What the British and French treaties contained that Japan's did not, was a provision which allowed either party to immediately abrogate the treaty should one of the parties commit an act of aggression.¹³

¹³ Virginia Thompson, "Undeclared War Along the Mekong," Far Eastern Survey 10 no. 1 (Jan. 1941): 8; Santaputra, Thai Foreign Policy, p. 189. A complete version of the treaty between Japan and Thailand may be found in DAFR, 3: 268. On the occasion of the treaty's ratification, the Cabinet Information Board issued a statement, quoted in the Tokyo Nichi Nichi, which proclaimed: "The treaty is one that makes a valuable contribution toward the political progress of East Asia now that Japan is devoting all her efforts to the establishment of a sphere of common prosperity in Greater
On the day the treaties were being signed, Lépissier and Phibun also exchanged letters in which the former promised to send a diplomatic mission led by someone of ambassadorial rank to negotiate all aspects of the Thai irredenta. 14 A second secret agreement signed that day made clear Phibun’s pro-Japanese sympathies. In that agreement, Phibun promised the Japanese that should it become necessary, he would grant passage rights through Thailand for Japanese troops, offer them assistance, and provide them with needed provisions. 15

Japanese–Thai Relations in their Historical Context

Japanese efforts to forge stronger bonds of friendship with the Thais had begun to bear fruit following Thailand’s 24 June 1932 coup d’état. This revolt, which overthrew the absolute monarchy of King Prachatipok, brought to power a handful of mostly European-educated individuals comprised of both military and civilian members, including a pro-Japanese clique which included Luang Phibun.

Phibun first became known in Thailand as a leading participant in the 1932 coup and as the young protégé of Army Colonel Phraya Phahon Phonphayahasena, a fellow coup participant and the military officer who commanded the widest following within the Thai Army. Both men had decidedly

14 Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” p. 262.
pro-Japanese leanings and both sat as Cabinet members in the post-1932 Government of Prime Minister Phraya Manopakon.

Within a year of the new régime having assumed the mantle of power, the Japanese began to feel that perhaps their efforts to court the Thai were paying dividends. In a plenary session vote held on 24 February 1933, the entire assembly of the League of Nations—with the exception of the Thai delegate—voted to approve in toto the Lytton Report, which censured Japanese actions in Manchuria.16

After the votes had been cast, Japanese Minister Plenipotentiary Matsuoka Yōsuke is said to have rushed the seat of the Thai representative. Enthusiastically pumping the hand of his Thai counterpart, he told him cryptically that if the Thai were ever in need of a friend to help them shake the domination of the Europeans, the Japanese were already making preparation for the battle. The Thai abstention was widely interpreted as an expression of Thailand’s friendly attitude towards the Japanese. Back home in Japan, newspaper editorials, without exception, were parroting Matsuoka’s effusive praise of the Thai.17 Although the Thai abstention said more about their traditional inclination towards neutrality than it did about their feelings of camaraderie towards the Japanese, it was widely misinterpreted by the latter as a sign of pro-Japanese amity.18

The new Government of Premier Manopakon didn't last long. A second coup d’état in 1933 replaced his régime with that of Luang Phahon. Soon after assuming power, this new Government instituted a number of new programmes and policy changes that reflected the nationalistic/militaristic thinking of its Cabinet; they set out from the beginning to modernise all three branches of the Thai military. Phibun defended the new Thai nationalism in a 1934 radio speech in which he stated that the increased spending on a military build-up was necessary for the maintenance of Siamese independence.  

Many of the changes instituted by the Thai Government, particularly after December 1938, when Phibun became Premier, were reminiscent of the Meiji and Taishō Japanese, who had adopted western affectations as an outward show of their “enlightenment” and “equality” with the West. The Siamese Government forced upon the populace a number of edicts known as Rattha Niyom, or “cultural mandates.” It was supposed that these edicts would inculcate the masses with patriotic feelings while at the same time, they would strengthen their moral fibre.

---

19 Kenneth Perry Landon, Siam in Transition: A Brief Survey of Cultural Trends in the Five Years Since the Revolution of 1932 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 55. Phibun also delivered a 31 March 1937 radio speech in which he justified increased military spending by pointing to the successes of Germany, Italy, and Japan in defying the League of Nations thanks to their military machines. In reaction to this broadcast, four legations in Bangkok protested against Phibun’s fiery oratory. See Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” p. 175.

20 Phibun was now not only the Prime Minister, but the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Defense—a virtual dictator. See Judith A. Stowe, Siam Becomes Thailand: A Story of Intrigue (London: Hurst & Company, 1991), p. 113.
The first of these edicts—issued on 24 June 1939—officially dropped the country’s English-language appellation “Siam” and replaced it with the Thai words Meung Thai (literally, domain of the Thai). The name change was not so innocuous as it seemed, for it implied a pan-Thai mentality and the semantic monopoly of the Thai over other ethnic groups including those living in south China, Burma, Tonkin, and the ceded territories of Laos and Cambodia. The name change was also symbolic insofar as Meung Thai is a term of purely Thai derivation while Siam was the name used by foreigners generally. Phibun argued for the name change on the ground that it would signify that the country belonged to the Thai as opposed to the economically dominant Chinese.

In a further effort to kindle nationalistic feelings amongst the ethnic Thai, the Chinese were treated as scapegoats: the targets of a semi-official and quite blatant hostility. One authority on the subject of the Chinese in Thailand has made the following observation:

As the national leadership shifted from civilian to military men in the latter 1930s, and cultural nationalists like Phibun Songkhram came to the fore, a more aggressive and comprehensive anti-Chinese policy was instituted. Paradoxically, many of the high Government officials who directed the attacks against the Chinese were themselves of Chinese extraction. Having a Chinese father

---

21 Joseph J. Wright, The Balancing Act: A History of Modern Thailand (Oakland: Pacific Rim Press, 1991), p. 99. According to Santaputra, the name-change was actually passed as legislation by the Thai Assembly on 28 September 1939; Royal assent was issued on 3 October of that same year. He rejects the date given by Wright. See Santaputra, Thai Foreign Policy, p. 431, n. 59.

22 Ishii and Yoshikawa, Nittai kōryū roppyakunen shi, p. 252.

didn't prevent Pridi Phanomyong—one of the leading figures of the 1932 coup—from instituting a series of "Thailand for the Thai" economic policies. Nor did it prevent his brother Lui—a department head in the Ministry of Education—from ardently supporting the "Thai-ification" of Chinese schools.  

Other Rattha Niyom urged the Thai people to pay respect to the national flag, the national and the royal anthems; to buy only Thai goods, to find regular work, work hard, and support both agriculture and home industries. Certain Rattha Niyom even smacked of dictatorial control, such as those which announced mandatory guidelines for personal dress.

In addition to the new domestic policies which reflected the Thai's growing sense of nationalism, the Thai leadership also began a shift in their foreign policy: away from their traditional European allies—Britain in particular—and towards Japan. The Thai admired the fact that Japan was the first Oriental nation to free itself from European control, and more importantly, she was now seen by Thailand's new military oligarchy as a possible counterbalance to the powerful influences of the British and the French.

One indication of the growing affinity between Thailand and Japan was reflected in the development of their economic relations. Beginning in the late 1920s, trade between Thailand and Japan had begun to do an about-face. In 1928, this trade had resulted in an imbalance for the Japanese of 13 million yen; whereas, by 1934, Japan had an export surplus with Thailand of 26.5

---


million yen. Meanwhile, Japan's exports to Thailand jumped from 8 percent in 1929-30 up to 26 percent by 1937.26

Japanese penetration of the Thai market was conducted, for the most part, at the expense of the British. The 1923 British economic report noted that while British cotton sheeting exports to Thailand had shown a rapid decline from the previous year, there had been a significant rise in the Thai imports from Japan. The remarkable growth of Japanese exports of this product can be seen by the fact that in 1925-26, Japan had less than 12 percent of the Thai market; Britain had over 28 percent. By 1935-36, a decade later, Japan's total value of cotton-goods exported to Thailand gave her 70 to 75 percent of the market. The British, who were now the second largest cotton-goods exporters to Thailand, could only claim 6 to 7 percent of the market.27 While cotton-goods were the cornerstone of Japanese exports to Thailand, they exported other products such as enamelware, paper products, glassware, porcelain, and ceramics; less important exports included hemp and leather-goods, tin plate, and matches.28

Thailand and Japan had also taken steps to foster closer links in the cultural realm. In 1937, such newspapers as the *Siam Chronicle* put out special “Siam-Japan Cultural Mission” editions and the new *Mitsui* Shipping Lines annually invited “Miss Siam” on a free trip to Japan. In 1939, a Japanese


goodwill mission flew to Bangkok and again several dailies took the opportunity to put out whole editions celebrating Japanese–Thai friendship.29

In March 1938, the Japanese signed a treaty with the Thai under which Japanese subjects gained full liberty to reside in Thailand; own, lease, and occupy houses, factories, warehouses and shops; lease land for residential, commercial, industrial, or religious purposes. In short, the Japanese were permitted to carry on their lives in Thailand on much the same footing as native subjects.30

Unlike the relationship between the Japanese and the Thai, which had been growing closer over the years, the Franco–Thai relationship—which was never very close—now began to show a widening cleavage.

The Fall of France and Increased Pressure from Japan

On 14 June, two days after the treaties were signed in Bangkok and Tokyo, German forces entered Paris; on the 17th, France capitulated and the French Government transferred to Vichy. With the defeat of France and the Netherlands, and what appeared to be the imminent invasion of Britain, "all of Southeast Asia lay open to Japan."31

30 Kate Mitchell, "Thailand—A New Key Area," Amerasia 5 no. 9 (Nov. 1941): 382.
The Japanese wasted no time in seeking to take advantage of Germany’s victory in Europe by once again exploiting French discomfiture. On 18 June, Japan decided to “request” of the French that they discontinue giving aid to Chiang Kai-shek, and if this should be refused, force was to be employed. And just days after the French capitulation, Army Minister Hata was to proclaim: “We should not miss the present opportunity or we shall be blamed by posterity.”

What Minister Hata was of course referring to, was clear enough. On 19 June, as France lay prostrate, Shigemitsu Mamoru—who was at that time Japan’s ambassador in Britain—concurred with Hata, urging Foreign Minister Arita to make use of the war in European to strengthen Japan’s position in Asia. “It is needless to say,” Shigemitsu wrote Arita, “that it is quite advantageous to make use of the European war to strengthen the position of Japan in East Asia.” He then expanded upon this theme: “It is quite important,” he told Arita, “to watch the attitude of the United States, to say nothing of paying attention to the condition of France, in the case of taking positive policy for French Indo-China and others.” (italics added). And, if this were not enough, he then went on to spell out quite clearly what he thought the Japanese attitude should be: “As it is evident,” he wrote, “that the influence of Europe to [the] Orient will be remarkable [sic] reduced after the war, Japan had better, I presume, take advantage of this opportunity to establish our position in East Asia firmly.”

32 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,824.
34 Telegram from Shigemitsu to Arita; dated 19 June 1940. See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 9,691.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. 9,693.
So, while Shigemitsu suggested a cautious approach so as not to arouse the United States, at the same time, he believed that Japan should declare her determination to risk war if "a certain power" should attempt to encroach upon Japan's Lebensraum in Asia.³⁷

Neither the Japanese military nor Government needed any prompting from Shigemitsu. It was at this time, that the Japanese demanded that the Indo-China border be closed off in order to prevent fuel and other necessary military provision from being transported into China; this included both road, and rail traffic. The Japanese also indicated that they wished to have their own troops stationed along the frontier to guarantee adherence to their demand for the closing of the border. General Catroux, lacking the resources necessary to resist the Japanese, was forced to agree.³⁸

The Japanese sought from the start to solicit Germany's understanding and even approval for their plans to establish a foothold in French Indo-China. According to a telegram dated the 19th of June, the German ambassador in Japan, Eugene Ott cabled the German Reich Chancellery to inform the Foreign Ministry that the Japanese Government, through their ambassador in Berlin, was going to be sending a congratulatory message to the German Government on their recent successes. It was also known that he was going to use this opportunity to point out Japan's particular interest in the future fate of French Indo-China. Believing that Japan had assisted Germany by tying down American forces in the Pacific, Japan's ambassador to Germany, Kurusu Saburō would be asking for the

³⁷ Quoted in Murakami, "Japan's Thrust into French Indochina," p. 46.
Germans to make a friendly gesture to show their appreciation. Ott was pleased to accommodate the Japanese, suggesting that a “formula would have to be found which would commit Japan finally and unconditionally to our policy.” He also suggested that Japan “should be encouraged to take immediate possession of Indo-China.” Ott closed off the telegram with the following comment which reveals much about the German attitude towards the Yonai Cabinet: “If the [Japanese] Government should evade an offer couched in appropriate terms of a free hand in Indo-China, and if this were made public, it could at least be expected that its position would be severely shaken and that probably it would be replaced by a Government friendly to us.”

This suggests that Germany’s ultimate motive for encouraging the Japanese to take Indo-China was to humiliate the Yonai Government because of they perceived it as having been timid in executing a move southward.

The Nishihara Mission

After the governmental changes had occurred in France, the previously encouraging attitude the French had shown towards Thailand began to change. Although Lépissier had promised to send a diplomatic mission headed by someone of ambassadorial rank in order to discuss border revisions, the French now began to backtrack on that promise. On 22 June, the French cabled the Thai, informing

39 Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 19 June 1940. See DGFP, series D, 9: 617-18; IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,162-63. On 24 June, Ott told Koiso that Germany probably wouldn’t object to Japan taking action in Indo-China if she promised to attack America in the Pacific, perhaps in the Philippines or Hawaii, if America intervened in Europe. See also IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,162-63.
them: "Due to circumstances beyond her control, France is unable to send Government officials of ambassadorial rank for negotiations. France will therefore submit a list of names of officials from Indo-China who will come to negotiate instead."40 For the Thais, this was a major setback. There were apprehensions that the French were now trying to back out of their previous commitment to negotiate. Secondly, Phibun claimed that if the French were to permit Japan to station her troops in Indo-China, with the border line as it presently stood, Thailand's eastern border would be threatened. This, Phibun argued, would defeat the very reason for the Thai having signed a non-aggression pact with the French.41 The Thai were also wary of the Indo-Chinese officials' hostility towards them.

French Indo-China was now coming under pressure from two sides. As stated above, the Japanese had once more stepped up the pressure to try and force Indo-Chinese officials to shut down the railway from Haiphong to Yunnan as well as closing the border between China and Indo-China.42

Having just capitulated to Germany's military forces back home, the destitute French were in no position to refuse the Japanese. On 20 June, Governor-General Georges Catroux announced—on his own initiative—a suspension in the shipment of war matériel to the forces of Chiang Kai-shek via the

41 Stowe, Siam Becomes Thailand, p. 146.
42 According to Adrienne Doris Hytier, Two Years of French Foreign Policy: Vichy, 1940–42 (Paris: Librairie Minard, 1958), p. 215, these demands came on 17 June, while the Government of Marshall Pétain was suing for an armistice with the Germans. See also Dreifort, "Japan's Advance into Indochina," pp. 279-80. In truth, they were announced on the 17th, made known to Arsène-Henry on the 19th, and presented officially on the 22nd. According to IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,713, these demands were issued on 19 June. Santaputra, Thai Foreign Policy, p. 194, concurs with the latter date.
railway running from Haiphong to Yunnan. On 26 June, Catroux gave a forthright statement explaining the reasons why he had acquiesced to the Japanese demands:

I think that you will appreciate more correctly the reality of the Japanese menace weighing upon Indo-China if you consider the fact that a part of the Japanese fleet is directed toward the coast of Tonkin. This event will permit you to understand better the downfall which France’s capitulation has caused her in the Far East and to understand that it is no longer the moment for us to talk firmly to Japan. When one is beaten, when one has few planes and little anti-aircraft defenses, no submarines, one tries to keep one's property without having to fight and one negotiates. That is what I have done.43

At the same time (24 June), the Japanese demanded that the British close down the Burma Road; suspending the shipment of railway material, gasoline, trucks, arms, and ammunition for a period of three months.44 Clearly Britain, like the French, was in no position to antagonise the


44 On 22 June, a formal demand was presented to France’s ambassador to Japan, Monsieur Paul Arsène-Henry. It stated that the Japanese Imperial Government would be dispatching 30 military specialists as well as 10 members of the Foreign Ministry to oversee the cessation of shipments of war matériel to the Chinese forces. See Yoshizawa Minami, *Sensō kakudai no kōzu: Nihongun no futsuin shinchi* (Tokyo: Aoki shoten, 1986), p. 19.

On 17 July, Foreign Minister Arita and the British ambassador to Japan, Sir Robert Craigie, signed an accord suspending the transport of all war matériels, including oil and trucks, from Burma and Hong Kong into China. See Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor*, p. 71, n. 5. On 18 July, Churchill made a statement to the British House of Commons in which he addressed this suspension; excerpts
Japanese. In response to the pressure emanating from Japan, Britain's ambassador to the U.S., Lord Phillip Lothian, in the company of the Australian Minister to the United States, R. Casey, paid a visit to Secretary of State Cordell Hull to inform him of these latest developments and make an appeal to the U.S. for increased aid. Britain, Lothian explained, could not be expected to oppose the Japanese in the Far East when their hands were full in dealing with the situation in Europe. When Great Britain appeared hesitant to close down the road, their vacillation prompted Arita to warn Craigie that Britain should reconsider immediately their attitude. The Japanese were now bringing pressure to bear on the British by hinting that possible military action might be carried out against their outpost at Hong Kong. Following these latest veiled threats, the British acquiesced. Churchill defended the decision in a speech to the House of Commons by pointing out that the agreement was only temporary.

Back in Tokyo, the day after Catroux announced the closing of the Yunnan railway, a joint meeting between members of the General Staff and the Army Ministry was convened to discuss Japan's southern advance strategy and Indo-China's relevance to those plans. Chief of the Operations Division Tominaga Kyōji insisted upon a military invasion, while the Army Ministry called for a more cautious approach, and at a Four Ministers Conference held later that same day, Army Minister Hata Shunroku opined that Japan should only resort to force if the French failed to uphold their promise to

---

46 USWA, 1940: 172.
cut the supplies going to Chiang Kai-shek. The more aggressive voices at the meeting won out and the basis was laid for the later decision to launch a military invasion. Luckily for the French, these plans were put on hold—at least, for the time being—when Arsène-Henry officially informed the Japanese Foreign Ministry that the previous day the border between China and Indo-China had already been closed.47

On 29 June, a team of Japanese inspectors under Major-General Nishihara Issaku arrived in Hanoi to oversee the closing of the Yunnan railway. The team was comprised of thirty military personnel and ten staff members from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They began immediately to set up control centres in such various locations as Haiphong, Ha Giang, Lao-Kay, Cao-Bang, Lang-Son, and Fort Bayart.48

Almost immediately Nishihara developed a good rapport with Monsieur Catroux and during the course of their early conversations, Nishihara told Catroux that the Japanese had no territorial ambitions in Indo-China; on the contrary, Nishihara expressed positive statements about his desire to work in close co-operation with the Indo-Chinese officials, and the attitude of the Japanese members of the control commission are said to have left the Indo-Chinese with a good impression.49

Such impression must have been short-lived. Almost immediately the Japanese began squeezing concessions from Catroux. First he was pressed into closing the Chinese border to any traffic entering

48 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,713.
Indo-China from the Chinese side for a period of three months, and according to a cable from Nishihara that arrived at the General Staff Headquarters on 2 July, Catroux had also agreed to economic co-operation with the Japanese in exchange for Japan’s promise to respect the territorial integrity of Indo-China. Then on 9 July, Catroux granted the Japanese permission to bring their sick and wounded to Indo-China for convalescence; he was also quick to accept the establishment by the Japanese of an air liaison between Canton and Haiphong as well as agreeing in principle to the laying of a cable between those two cities.

Eventually, Catroux felt compelled to “draw the line” with the Japanese. In response to further demands from Nishihara for the granting of free passage for Japanese troops through Tonkin and the use of certain airfields, Catroux told the Japanese that he could not permit Japanese forces to be stationed in Indo-China, nor could he permit them to make use of any Indo-Chinese military facilities. That, he said, would be tantamount to allowing the Japanese to occupy Indo-China.

What the Japanese were now doing was asking Catroux to take sole responsibility for increasingly serious demands and one supposes that Catroux had been giving up on the smaller concessions with the hope of buying some time. Because he felt he could no longer be responsible for dealing with the Japanese alone, he announced on 11 July, that hereafter, negotiations would have to be conducted with Vichy.

---

51 Hytier, Two Years of French Foreign Policy, pp. 215-16.
Catroux had been advised by the French ambassador to Japan, Monsieur Arsène-Henry, that only by yielding to Japanese pressure, could France’s total defeat in Indo-China be avoided. Painfully aware of France’s hopeless situation, Catroux must have been grasping at straws when he asked General Martin, the supreme commander of the French Army in Indo-China, to report to him on the relative strengths of French troops against those Japanese troops currently stationed in near proximity to Indo-China.

Commander Martin’s response also convinced Catroux that effective resistance by the few French forces in the Far East was futile without foreign assistance. Despite France’s dire situation, Catroux still seemed to hold out some faint hope that the French might be able to maintain control in Indo-China.\(^\text{53}\)

Back on 19 June, in reaction to their dearth of military muscle, Catroux had directed the French ambassador to Washington, René de Saint-Quentin, to submit a request to the American Government for military hardware including aircraft and anti-aircraft guns. Saint-Quentin also inquired as to the likely American response to a Japanese invasion of Indo-China. Two days later, Catroux received a telegram from Saint-Quentin containing the response from Assistant Secretary of State Sumner Welles; the answer wasn’t encouraging. Welles had told Saint-Quentin that the Americans couldn’t risk getting into a war with Japan and were in no position to prevent Japanese attacks on Indo-China.\(^\text{54}\)

\(^{53}\) NGS, 22: 100-01.

\(^{54}\) Ibid., 100. In his “Private Diaries,” Paul Baudouin writes: Saint Quentin asked Welles: “What would be the American attitude in the event of a Japanese attack on Indo-China?” Welles is reputed
When Saint-Quentin indicated to Mr. Welles that the French would have no choice but to close the Indo-Chinese border, Welles was reported to have replied: “That is what I would do in your place.” The following day, Stanley Hornbeck, the State Department’s chief advisor on Far Eastern Affairs, told Saint-Quentin quite bluntly that no aid could be expected from the United States.\(^{55}\)

The French Indo-Chinese authorities sent another four-man mission to the U.S. under the authority of infantry brigade commander Colonel Henri Jacomy; they arrived in San Francisco on the 21st of July. They, too, were charged with the task of securing American assistance in their efforts to resist Japanese pressure. After it became known to the Japanese that the French were attempting to purchase 200 military planes and various types of weaponry, the chief of the Third Section of the Eurasia Bureau, Mr. Ishizawa, called in Mr. Fan, a councillor in the French embassy in Tokyo and warned him that “it is most unwarrantable for the French Indo-China authorities who are supposed to be under the control of the home Government, to conduct such anti-Japanese manoeuvres, so in the future ask them to refrain from such unfriendly acts.\(^{56}\)

Despite the appeals of Colonel Jacomy, the Americans were able to offer only the promise of a number of small aircraft, some World War I rifles and some other small arms. The State Department, did, however, make a request through the Australian Minister, Richard Casey, for a diversion of Australian weapons to be shipped to Indo-China. Unfortunately, the Australians were obliged to have replied: “The United States would do nothing, for in their view of the general situation, it was not in their power to go to war with Japan.” See Paul Baudouin, *The Private Diaries of Paul Baudouin*, trans., Sir Charles Petrie (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1948), p. 146.

\(^{55}\) Quoted in Dreifort, “Japan’s Advance into Indochina,” p. 280.

\(^{56}\) IMTFE, *Transcript*, pp. 6,866-67.
decline, noting that what arms they did possess would be needed for the defence of Britain and for use by their own forces.\(^{57}\)

With France having surrendered to Germany (the armistice was signed at Compiègne on 22 June), the British now found themselves fighting alone against Germany and Italy. Therefore, they too, had very little to offer which could console Monsieur Catroux. Obviously Britain was in no position to antagonise Japan, and what resources she did have, were necessarily devoted to the defence of the British Empire. This position had been laid out on 29 June, when, in response to requests from Catroux for economic, political, and military aid, the British consul-general in Hanoi had informed Catroux that he could rely on Britain for diplomatic and political support as well as some financial aid; however, he was not to expect military support.\(^{58}\)

\(^{57}\) Davis and Lindley, *How War Came*, p. 160.

\(^{58}\) Quoted in Dreifort, “Japan’s Advance into Indochina,” p. 281.
Between 21 and 25 June 1940, Army officers from both the Army Ministry and the General Staff met each day to confer on the best direction for military and diplomatic strategies in light of the changing situation in Europe. On the final day, they produced a draft paper: “Basic Principles for Coping with the Changing World Situation,” which summarised both domestic and international policies.

On 4 July, another meeting was held to discuss these policies. At that meeting, the Army revealed its aims to be freeing themselves from their dependence on America and Britain “through the establishment of a self-sufficient economic sphere” in Asia, with Japan, China, and Manchuria as its backbone. The common perception was that Japan should act before the end of the conflict in Europe, before the U.S. had built up its level of military strength, and while indecision on the part of Britain and America gave Japan the breathing space they needed to attack in the southern regions and expel Britain from the Far East. The Army’s draft continued: “When the entire world is experiencing historic change, Japan should not miss the opportunity to establish a self-sufficient economic sphere.”
The rapid changes taking place in the world do not permit a moments hesitation... We should grasp the favourable opportunity that now presents itself.¹

The more aggressive policies now being proposed, meant that the days of the Yonai Cabinet were numbered. Kido noted in his diary entry of 8 July, that he'd received Vice Minister Anami, who told him:

Within the next four or five days, a political change seems inevitable. Accordingly, the military is being doubly cautious in their attempts to respond to quickly changing world conditions. The character of the Yonai Cabinet seems highly unsuited to the task of negotiating with Germany and Italy. And there is the danger that it may move too slow. Under these circumstances, in order that this opportunity be dealt with, it seems a Cabinet change is required. Therefore, the Army is unanimous in their desire to see Konoye assume office.²

On 16 July 1940, following the announcement of Army Minister Hata Shunroku's intention to resign, the axe finally fell on the Yonai Cabinet as a result of their reluctance to accede to the proposition for a strengthening of Japan's relations with Germany and Italy.³ The way was now

³ The downfall of the Yonai Cabinet was engineered by the Army who, after having brought about Army Minister Hata’s resignation, refused to promote a successor. On 19 June, Ott had reported that the Japanese were seeking Germany’s acquiescence in allowing Japan a free-reign in Indo-China. In order to encourage the downfall of the Yonai Cabinet and its replacement with “one which would be close to us,” Ott had recommended that Berlin avoid any committing to the idea. See IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,164-65. On 10 May, Heinrich Stahmer cabled Ribbentrop from the German embassy in Tokyo. He’d also indicated that although the Yonai Government was continuing to strive
paved for the formation of Konoe Fumimaro’s second Cabinet which took office on the 22 July 1940. The formation of the new Cabinet signalled a changing of the guard; ushering in a new era in Japanese–German relations, with Matsuoka Yōsuke replacing Arita Hachirō as the Foreign Minister.

Japan Casts her Eyes still Further South

Germany’s successful campaigns, especially the campaign against France, had given new impetus to planners within the Army Ministry and the General Staff for the execution of broader military operations in French Indo-China, now including her southern provinces. On 20 June (1940), two days before the French signed the document of official surrender, members of the Navy’s Military Affairs Bureau and the Navy General Staff, met to discuss the implementation of concrete operational plans for the southern advance. At this meeting, the operational plans were thoroughly scrutinised, leading to the conclusion that it would be quite impossible for Japan to engage in an extended war after having been forbidden to import oil from other sources. In accordance with this judgement, it would therefore be necessary to gain access to the oil resources then under Dutch control; i.e., from the Indies. In light of the oil resources then available, Japan, it was estimated, could not continue to carry

for a settlement with England and America, such a settlement was unlikely. He further noted that the latest German successes had made “an extraordinarily deep impression here and have diminished England’s influence in the Far East. . . . A possible new Government which, as the faction friendly to us hopes, would be led by Prince Konoe will at first have to confine itself to a solution of the China conflict and to urgent measures of relief at home.” Memorandum bearing the names of Ott and Stahmer to the German Foreign Ministry, dated 10 May 1940. See DGFP, series D, 9: 310-11.
on in a state of war, for any longer than one year. After reviewing the reports, Navy Minister Yoshida pointed out the weakness of the plans located therein. The advance into the Dutch Indies might prove fruitless as there was no guarantee that the Japanese would be able to safely transport the resources. Obviously, transport vessels departing the East Indies, particularly those containing petroleum or other valuable resources, would surely be a primary target for Allied attacks. The content of these discussions were kept secret from the Japanese Cabinet and the Foreign Ministry was excluded from the process.\(^4\)

On 19 July, Konoe met with his top Ministers: Foreign Minister Matsuoka, Navy Minister Yoshida Zengo, and Army Minister Tōjō Hideki. There were, at this time, signs of growing cooperation between the two branches of the military services. At this particular meeting, agreement was reached to strengthen Japan’s relations with the Axis powers, build up the Army’s strength as a safeguard against the threat from the north [i.e., Russia], and further agreement to “take positive steps, in order to incorporate into the new order, English, French, Dutch, and Portuguese colonies and their neighbouring islands in East Asia.” The four Ministers additionally acknowledged that they would try and avoid a clash with America, but would, if necessary, be prepared to meet force with force.

Subsequently, on 26 July 1940, Government leaders and members of the Imperial General Staff met at a Liaison Conference to discuss two of the Cabinet’s aims: the strengthening of national defence and the establishment of the “new order” in East Asia. Out of this conference came a highly

important policy paper entitled: "Outline of the Main Principles for Coping with the Changing World Situation." The stated policies for Japan, according to this document, were to continue to push for a rapid settlement of the "China Incident," while at the same time, remaining alert to the possibility of seizing any favourable opportunity to settle the problems involved in the southern advance. Military measures were to be taken in the south, particularly if the problems in China could be brought under control. With regard to the policies for dealing with the situation overseas, efforts would be made to strengthen the political union with Germany and Italy, rapid adjustments were to be considered vis-à-vis Japan's relations with the Soviet Union and an attitude which was firm yet impartial was to be maintained towards the United States. If, however, American concerns over the implementation of Japanese policies should lead to greater friction between the U.S., and Japan, Japan should endeavour to reduce that friction. More specific ideas regarding the employment of military means in the southern regions were also discussed. It was believed that if steps were taken which led to a basic settlement of the conflict in China—keeping in mind the changes occurring in both foreign and domestic affairs—military action would be taken in the southern regions, at least to the degree that opportunity permitted. The use of force by the Japanese against her adversaries would, if possible, be limited just to Britain, but preparations were to be undertaken to oppose the United States as well. However, if Japanese military actions led to war, they would endeavour to limit the fighting to Britain alone.5 While it was recognised that these policies—which were deemed necessary to the Empire—would lead inevitably to a worsening of relations [with America and Britain] and possibly the resort

5 Satô, Daitôsa sensô, p. 95; Nagao Kazuo, Konoe Fumimaro, (Tokyo: Koyô shuppan kabushiki kaisha, 1979), p. 143. See also Kurihara, Tennô, 144; Tanemura, Daihon'ei kimitsu nisshi, pp. 48-
to force of arms, its timing, scope, and methods were to be decided in light of the situation prevailing at the time.⁶

The items in this draft were all considered central to Japan’s national policy and clearly necessitated greater political unity between Japan, Germany and Italy, and the need to adjust diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Japan would endeavour to pursue fair, yet firm policies vis-à-vis the U.S., and at the same time, the need to map out a course of military strategies to be pursued in the southern regions was also recognised. It was felt that whatever policies the Japanese pursued, particularly with regard to Britain, these policies should be charted with an eye to avoiding friction and a worsening of their relationship with America.⁷

Not surprisingly, these goals were to become overriding concerns for the Japanese and this fact was reflected in the discussion which took place during a Four Ministers Conference held on 30 July. In attendance, once again, were Minister Matsuoka, Prime Minister Konoe, Army Minister Tōjō Hideki and Navy Minister Yoshida Zengo.

The Japanese Solicit Indo-China’s Co-operation

It was decided at this conference that one of Minister Matsuoka’s first jobs would be to meet with Ambassador Arsène-Henry in order to begin discussions concerning a pact between Japan and

49.

⁶ Satô, Daitôa sensô, p. 95.
⁷ Ibid.
French Indo-China. He was to meet Monsieur Arsène-Henry the following day and present to him certain demands. However, due to Matsuoka's having been ill, the meeting was postponed until the following day. When the meeting did convene on 1 August 1940, Matsuoka presented Arsène-Henry an aide-mémoire containing certain Japanese demands including the following:

(1) Japan asked for the co-operation of the French Indo-Chinese Government in the establishment of a "new order in East Asia."

(2) With regard to military and political co-operation. . . as a temporary measure, and in order that they might pursue their strategy against the Chinese, the Japanese demanded that their forces be permitted to enter Indo-China and make use of certain airfields located therein. Further, the Japanese Government requested that the Indo-Chinese provide such military supplies and transportation facilities as the Japanese may require.

(3) With regard to co-operation in economic problems, the Japanese Government sought the abolition of all restrictions, so as to permit the free entry of Japanese nationals and Japanese products into Indo-China: Japan sought treatment equal to that given by Indo-China to French nationals and French goods.8

Matsuoka attempted to soften these demands by telling Monsieur Arsène-Henry that the Japanese would agree to respect the territorial integrity of French Indo-China and he also made clear that the steps to be taken by the Japanese were only for the purpose of bringing about a resolution to

8 Yoshizawa, Sensō kaku dai no kō zu, p.88. See also TSM, 6: 204. Nishihara had submitted basically the same demands to Catroux three weeks earlier. See Jan Plouvier, South-East Asia From Colonialism to Independence (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 112.
the China Incident and that the Japanese would only remain in Indo-China until that goal had been achieved.° Ambassador Arsène-Henry gave the following response: “While Japan had not declared war against China, the request was equivalent to asking a neutral country to declare war on China. As for the economic alliance, would Japan in return give equal treatment to French nationals in Japan?”10 Matsuoka then became indignant, declaring that the Japanese demands were based on military necessity and despite the fact that Japan hadn’t declared war on Indo-China, if French authorities failed to agree, the Japanese might have to violate Indo-China’s neutrality.11

It was, of course, the Navy which was the more interested of the two services in carrying out a move against French Indo-China. They were hoping to begin operations as early as November (1940) and French Indo-China would certainly offer ideal territory for bases which could then be used for operations against both British and American interests. At the same time, Japan would gain control over certain strategically imperative resources such as coal, rice, rubber, and iron. It was also clear, however, that the invasion of French Indo-China would likely invite a quick, and probably very stern response from the Allied powers. The Japanese judged that there would most certainly be an “increased probability of America tightening its embargo against Japan; an embargo of scrap iron and oil—the loss of which would create a life or death situation for the Japanese Empire.” This would result in Japan’s having “to make a firm decision to invade the Netherlands East Indies and seize her

---

11 TSM, 6: 204-05.
oil fields." If Japan were to act on this decision, it was deemed necessary that they should also make preparations for war against the United States.¹²

One of the French strategies for dealing with Japanese demands—from amongst a very limited field of options—had been to avoid making any commitments until military action against Indo-China seemed a certainty. A second option, which they had pursued concurrently, was to appeal to the U.S. Government for assistance in the form of weaponry and/or diplomatic pressure on the Japanese. In line with this latter strategy, the Vichy Foreign Office instructed Ambassador Saint-Quentin in Washington, to inform the American Government of the Japanese demands and to let them know that "the resistance of the French Government to the Japanese would necessarily depend to a large extent on the nature and effectiveness of the support which the American Government would be disposed to give it."¹³ An oral response was issued by Mr. Dunn, the political advisor at the State Department, which noted:

I told the French ambassador that we have been doing and are doing everything possible within the framework of our established policies to keep the situation in the Far East stabilised; that we have been progressively taking various steps, the effect of which has been to exert economic pressure on Japan; that our Fleet is now based in Hawaii, and that the course which we have been following, as indicated above, gives a clear indication of our intentions and activities for the future. I also raised with the French ambassador the question whether it would be

¹² TSM, 7: 44-46.

¹³ See Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 10.
practicable for the French to delay discussions with the Japanese with respect to Indo-China for a period.  

Saint-Quentin got little solace from the American response—which was not unlike the reply he'd received to the 19 June request he'd forwarded to the U.S. Government for military hardware. Little concrete assistance could be expected, and Saint Quentin relayed as much to his Government. However, Joseph Grew was instructed by the State Department to inform Matsuoka that the U.S. Government was “seriously perturbed” by the repeated demands made by the Japanese, and to warn him that the previous statements advising against intervention in the East Indies, should be considered as pertaining to Indo-China as well.

On 9 August, Vice Minister Ôhashi invited Arsène-Henry to pay him a visit. Upon his arrival, Arsène-Henry was given the draft of a new proposal for a Franco-Japanese agreement relating to political and military co-operation. The new draft proposal had used the term “Indo-China,” which Arsène-Henry complained was too vague. He asked for clarification as well as a guarantee of French territorial rights in French Indo-China and he then told Ôhashi that on the pretext of strategic necessity, the Japanese could continue to press for more and unlimited demands. There is a danger,

---

14 Ibid. On 21 August, Sumner Welles stated that “we [the U.S. Government] do not feel that we have the right to reproach it [the French Government] for according military facilities to Japan.” This forgiving statement was issued in view of the fact that the U.S. was unable to offer the French any substantive aid and was therefore in no position to castigate the French. Quoted in Dreifort, “Japan’s Advance into Indochina,” p. 290.

15 Ibid.

he continued, that the draft as it now stands, would permit the Japanese to make use of any Indo-Chinese airfields or station their troops anywhere in Indo-China including Saigon, in southern Indo-China and in Cambodia. The French ambassador was adamant in his opposition on these points, and the discussion ended in deadlock.17

If the truth were known, the French had already resigned themselves to giving in to certain of the Japanese demands. The only option left for them was to put up a strong front in the hopes of retaining some dignity and perhaps some control over their Indo-Chinese colony. Foreign Minister Paul Baudouin had already come to the following conclusion:

We must choose. If we refuse to let the Japanese through, they will launch an attack, preceded by bombing, and we shall certainly lose the whole of Indo-China. On the other hand if we try to come to an agreement with Japan, this will begin by recognizing our complete sovereignty over Indo-China and we shall only partly lose the colony. It is true that the Japanese troops might remain in the country and annex it, but they might also respect French sovereignty, and withdraw once the fight against Chiang Kai-shek is at an end. Between two evils one must chose the lesser, and I choose an understanding with Japan.18

The day after Ôhashi met with Arsène-Henry, ad interim Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Matsumiya Jun also met with him for additional consultations. He used the occasion to present him with yet a further revision of the Japanese proposals; proposals which now declared that designated

17 Yoshizawa, Sensō kakudai no kōzu, p. 92.
18 Baudouin, Private Diaries, p. 203. Also quoted in Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War, p. 192. An abbreviated version of this same quote may be found in Dreifort, “Japan’s Advance into Indochina,” p. 289.
areas for the stationing of Japanese troops would be limited to Tonkin province; the same held true for the use of airfields. This, said Matsumiya, was an attempt at compromise. However, Ambassador Arsène-Henry was still unable to agree to this latest proposal. This revision still wasn’t specific enough, and, said the ambassador: “To agree to the whole of Tonkin would be tantamount to issuing a blank cheque to the Japanese.”\(^\text{19}\) So, once again, due to a lack of specificity on the part of the Japanese, Arsène-Henry felt compelled to decline the Japanese proposals. At this point, Deputy Minister Matsumiya adopted a harsher tone. “Where the Japanese wished to station their troops and which airfields they intended to use,” retorted Matsumiya, “was a matter of military secrecy.” “For this reason,” he continued, “he absolutely could not reveal specific locations as this might jeopardise their China strategy.”\(^\text{20}\) Arsène-Henry, in the face of Matsumiya’s obvious displeasure, finally relented in principle, but under protest.

The French Cabinet had now come to the conclusion that resistance was futile, and Monsieur Baudouin told the American chargé d’affaires that “in the absence of any material support from Great Britain and the United States as distinguished from the enunciation of principles” France felt obliged to yield.\(^\text{21}\)

\(^{19}\) Yoshizawa, Sensó kakudai no kōzu, pp. 92-93. The record of the Military Tribunal for the Far East—obviously the more reliable source—is in disagreement with Yoshizawa; it states that this second meeting was also conducted by Ōhashi Chūichi. See IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,887-88 and 6,893-93.

\(^{20}\) Yoshizawa, Sensó kakudai no kōzu, p. 93.

\(^{21}\) Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 12.
On the 15th, during a visit by Arsène-Henry to further discuss matters with Matsuoka, he was asked by the Japanese Foreign Minister if it wasn’t true that Arsène-Henry had told him the other day “that France would, as a principle, accept Japan’s demands?” “I didn’t say that all Japan’s demands would be accepted,” responded Ambassador Arsène-Henry. Matsuoka, becoming slightly annoyed, insisted that he’d heard things correctly and Arsène-Henry then told Matsuoka: “I meant to say that Japan’s military demands would be accepted within the limits that France would be able to... France wishes to accept the Japanese demands which are acceptable to France, after having obtained security and a promise as to territorial integrity.”

On the night of 21 August, in an apparent effort to accommodate Arsène-Henry’s concerns regarding the lack of specificity about which he had earlier complained to Deputy Minister Matsumiya, the Japanese Foreign Ministry presented yet another revision of the draft proposals which now included some specific points; they were:

(1) There were three permanent airfields being considered. They were located at Hanoi, Phulan Thuang, and Plutho. Depending on how the situation developed, the Japanese might require the use of other unspecified airfields closer to the Tonkin-China border.

(2) For the purpose of guarding the airfields and for supply duties, units comprised of both soldiers and sailors and totalling no more than 5,000 personnel, would be required.

---

(3) In order to deal effectively with the China Incident, troop transit would be carried out along the two rail stretches of Haiphong-Hanoi-Laokay, and Hanoi-Langson. These troops would be in addition to those mentioned in article two and would have no such restriction in number.23

Meanwhile, United Press reports out of Hanoi, dated 17 August, stated that there was growing apprehension in that city as “great numbers” of Japanese were now filtering into Indo-China in the guise of officials attached to the Japanese inspectorate and other varied pretexts. According to these press reports, the Japanese were “engaged in a large-scale program of research work and were mapping military and naval bases and border areas.”24 Such press reports as these only served to contribute to the rising tension and to increase speculation that a Japanese take-over was imminent.

In the meantime, Matsuoka, frustrated by the seemingly endless stalling, was anxious for the Germans to use their influence in persuading Vichy to accede to Japanese demands. He had already, on two occasions, requested Berlin’s assistance, but it was not forthcoming, and as Ribbentrop was to tell Ott, Germany’s ability to influence Vichy was limited.25

23 Yoshizawa, Sensō kakudai no kōzu, p. 93. The previous day, Matsuoka had requested the assistance of the German Government in applying pressure on Vichy to accede to the Japanese demands. See Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 1: 340.


25 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,295-96. Telegram from Ott to Ribbentrop; dated 15 August 1940. Ott says Matsuoka: “... requests the German Government to support the Japanese demands by influencing the French Government ... but it was pointed out that ... our influence on French policy was limited.” See also Toynbee and Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 616. The demands referred to were for permission for Japanese troops to pass through Tonkin, for use by
On 21 August, Arsène-Henry met with chief of the Eurasia Bureau Nishi Haruhiko—a Matsuoka appointee—who handed him a draft which contained a minor revision to the second article. According to this latest revision, the number of troops needed for guard and supply duties could gradually swell but would not exceed 5,000–6,000 personnel; the other articles would remain unchanged.26

On the 25th, Arsène-Henry met yet again with Vice Minister Ôhashi. He took this opportunity to present some Indo-Chinese counter-proposals, to which Ôhashi made the complaint that it was the French who were now being less than specific. The French response was vague and it was unclear whether or not there was agreement to the previously proposed items. Ôhashi remonstrated against this vagueness and strongly urged Arsène-Henry to clarify the French response. A flustered Arsène-Henry replied that to accept the Japanese proposals as they presently stood, would be a blow to French dignity. However, despite the wound to French pride, Ambassador Arsène-Henry indicated his agreement to the Japanese demands with the stipulation that “no public announcement of the agreement be made.”27 Ôhashi readily agreed to this request.

the Japanese of certain airfields in that province, and for the Japanese to be furnished with facilities for transporting arms and munitions.

26 Yoshizawa, Sensô kakudai no kôzu, p. 94.

27 The translation of an article by Hata Ikuhiko indicates that Arsène-Henry informed Ôhashi that the seeming ambiguity on the French side was due to the fact that the French didn’t *officially* accept the Japanese demands. Owing to French pride, they would prefer not to have these things known publicly; they would, however, be accepted in the field negotiations. (italics added). See Hata, “The Army’s Move,” p. 174; Yoshizawa, Sensô kakudai no kôzu, pp. 94-95.
Arsène-Henry met again with Vice Minister Ôhashi on 29 August, after having first received instructions from his Government. During the meeting Arsène-Henry asked for some minor concessions: (1) That Japanese troops be stationed only in those Indo-Chinese provinces bordering China and that the facilities provided be limited to those related to military operations in the Chinese provinces adjacent to the Indo-Chinese border; (2) that the French were not to assume any expenditure for the maintenance of Japanese troops; and (3) that France would receive compensation if the Sino-Japanese conflict spread to Indo-China. Finally, Arsène-Henry indicated that Vichy would instruct Governor-General Admiral Jean Decoux, to negotiate with the Japanese commander in Hanoi on the military aspects of the agreement.\(^\text{28}\) All of these provisions were deemed acceptable and the way was now paved for Matsuoka and Arsène-Henry to conclude a pact the following day in Tokyo.\(^\text{29}\)

A copy of the text of this agreement was given to Ambassador Ott by Foreign Minister Matsuoka on 27 January 1941. According to the text, the French Government “recognise Japan’s paramount economic and political interests in the Far East and gives its consent in principle to the entry of Japanese troops into Indo-China subject to specific conditions.” In return, the French expected an assurance from Japan that French rights and interests in the Far East would be respected; in particular, the territorial integrity of Indo-China and “France’s sovereign rights over all parts of the

\(^\text{28}\) Georges Catroux was recalled on 25 June for having “given in” to the Japanese demands. However, it wasn’t until 20 July that he turned over his office to the new Vichy appointee, Vice Admiral Jean Decoux. This change no doubt reflected the tougher stance of the Pétain Government and their dissatisfaction with Catroux’s well-known sympathy for the Thai irredenta.

Indo-Chinese Union.” France was also prepared to enter into immediate economic negotiations and consider the ways and means: (1) To promote trade between Japan and Indo-China and; (2) to assure Japan and her nationals of the most-favoured position in Indo-China.\(^{30}\)

**Governor-General Decoux Refuses to Co-operate**

Back in Hanoi, just hours after Matsuoka and Arsène-Henry had affixed their signatures to the Matsuoka–Henry Pact, General Nishihara and chief of the Operations Division Tominaga Kyōji, presented Decoux with the draft of a military accord based upon the provisions worked out in Tokyo. Decoux, however, refused to discuss the matter as he had not yet been notified that an agreement had already been reached. An angry Nishihara demanded a response by 2 September—midnight at the latest. Decoux, who described the Japanese as “insolent, haughty, and angry,” responded to the ultimatum by insisting that he “needed time to decode the text of the Tokyo Agreement” and that he had “no instructions from Vichy.” Nishihara then warned Decoux sternly to “stop sleeping, to get busy, or take the consequences!”\(^{31}\)

By the evening of the 1st, despite Vichy’s agreement that Decoux would negotiate a military settlement, Decoux still refused to discuss the matter; it was only the refusal of the Navy’s

\(^{30}\) Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry, dated 29 January 1941. See DGFP, series D, 11: 1228-29.

representatives, Captain Yanagizawa Kuranosuke and Lieutenant-Commander Shirahama Eiichi, to agree to the use of force without Imperial sanction which prevented the Japanese from invading. On the 3rd, General Martin presented some counterproposals to Nishihara which served as a basis for further negotiations; they were:

(1) Movements of Japanese troops shall be limited to the area north of the Red River and they are prohibited from entering Hanoi.

(2) The strength of the Japanese troops engaging in operations in Tonkin shall be no more than 6,000 at any time.

(3) The expenses for stationing troops shall be paid in full by the Japanese Government.

(4) Haiphong is to be the only port for landing troops.

(5) The airbases available to Japanese forces shall be no more than three.

(6) The establishment of powerful wireless stations, except those on ships, shall not be allowed.

(7) Before signing the final agreement by the two parties (including the date of entry), the Japanese troops may not enter the territory or the territorial waters of Indo-China.

(8) The following shall be considered as acts of coercion: any attempts to violate the border; a concentration of troops in the proximity of Indo-Chinese territory; all the movement of warships and transport-ships off the coast of Indo-China; and all the flights over Indo-Chinese territories. Should Japanese forces violate any of these conditions, the commander of the French forces is entitled to break the terms of negotiations.32

---

The anxiety level brought about by Decoux's intransigence was lessened when, during the evening of the 4th, Generals Martin and Nishihara put their names to a preliminary agreement. It stipulated that the total number of Japanese personnel to be based in Indo-China would not exceed two-thirds of the 25,000 troops Japan had been seeking to dispatch; nor would any Japanese troops be permitted to enter Indo-China pending a final settlement of the agreement.33

Shortly after this agreement was signed, one of several border incursions occurred which threatened this arrangement. On the morning of the 5th, prior to his return to Canton, Satô Kenryô, who represented Japan's South China Army, received word at his hotel room from a Lieutenant-Colonel Arao, that a unit of the Japanese Army stationed in southern China, had crossed into French Indo-China. Telling Satô that he was the only one who could save the situation, he urged him to fly immediately to the scene. Having barely begun his morning shave, Satô, razor in hand, tore from the room, heading for the airport. Shortly thereafter he was making his landing at Langson. From there he headed by automobile to the site of the incursion at Dong Dang. Upon his arrival in the centre of the town, he was spotted by a French officer who stopped Satô's automobile. Satô's haste to reach the scene proved to have been unnecessary; the French officer told him that the incursion had ended without a shot being fired by either side, and the Japanese had already withdrawn.34

33 Dreifort, "Japan's Advance into Indochina," pp. 290-91. See also Hata, "The Army's Move," pp. 176-77. Ambassador Grew called upon Matsuoka on the 20 September (in Tokyo) to register a protest against the Japanese demands; calling them a serious infringement of the status quo. See Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 1: 341; IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,968.

34 Satô, Dai tôa sensô, pp. 100-01. The background to this incursion is most thoroughly covered in Murakami, "Japan's Thrust into French Indochina," pp. 154-60.
Despite the fact that this incident had quickly been brought under control, Decoux used the incursion as a pretext to break off further negotiations.\(^{35}\) When Ambassador Grew, who was as yet still unaware of the agreement reached between Matsuoka and Arsène-Henry in Tokyo, spoke with Matsuoka on 3 September at the behest of Cordell Hull, he offered only a mild reprimand concerning the unfortunate effect, if proven true, reports of Japanese behaviour in the Far East "would have on American public opinion from the point of view of Japanese–American relations."\(^{36}\) This mild rebuke was reiterated the following day by Secretary Hull, and Matsuoka responded with the admission that although "Japanese troops would pass through Indo-China... there would be no permanent occupation."\(^{37}\)

On 13 September, French Foreign Minister Paul Baudouin ordered Decoux to reopen negotiations with General Nishihara in Hanoi and on the 17th, Nishihara demanded the use of six

\(^{35}\) Quoted in Dreifort, "Japan's Advance into Indochina," p. 291. See also Toynbee & Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, vol. 11: 617.

\(^{36}\) Hull, *Memoirs*, 1: 903; Langer and Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, p. 14. During the month of September there were several cases of Japanese transgressions against Indo-China. For example: as described, on 6 September (in Hanoi), without justification, a Japanese battalion crossed the Tonkin border into Indo-China; on the 20th, more forces penetrated into the Indo-Chinese region of Dong Dang; on the 22nd, they began an attack on the Tonkin border, with one division storming isolated outposts and besieging the citadel of Lang-Son; and finally on the 26th, Japanese forces bombed Haiphong Harbor. See IMTFE, *Transcript*, pp. 6,716-17.

\(^{37}\) Ōhashi parroted Matsuoka's words, telling Grew that the Japanese intention was a matter of military necessity; there would be no permanent occupation of French territory; and that Japan would withdraw the forces in question as soon as the military necessity ceased to exist." See telegram, Grew to Hull; dated 4 September 1940 in *FRUS, Japan*, II: 292-93.
airfields and admission of the full 25,000 Japanese troops into Tonkin. When this latest demand was rejected by Decoux, the Japanese, by now frustrated and angry with the stalling tactics of Decoux, gave the French until midnight of the 22nd to yield to the Japanese demands. If they failed to do so, the Japanese threatened Decoux with a prompt invasion. Arsène-Henry asked for a three day extension, but the Japanese Foreign Ministry refused this request. During the next three days, the tension reached palpable levels as Japanese warships skirted the waters in the Gulf of Haiphong. Japanese nationals who had been residing in Indo-China began assembling at Haiphong Harbour on the 20th and two days later they were transported aboard two ships bound for Haikou. The evacuation of the Japanese seemed to instil even greater feelings of impending doom in the minds of the French Indo-Chinese authorities.

There does exist some evidence to show that if the French Indo-Chinese had been overdue in submitting to the Japanese ultimatum which Nishihara had presented them on the 17th, they might possibly have been forced into accepting even greater demands. At the Military Tribunal for the Far East, for example, an unsigned, secret German document which was read into testimony, reported a phone conversation from General Boyen, the French chairman to the Armistice Commission, to General von Steupnagel, the German chairman to the commission, which stated that, although a basic agreement had been reached between French Indo-China and Japan, "when the technicalities of this

38 According to testimony given at the "Tokyo Trials," Nishihara actually gave Decoux until 10:00 P.M. to accept his demands. See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,958; FRUS, Japan, I: 877-81.

39 Yoshizawa, Sensō kakudai no kōzu, p. 123. The Japanese Army had already begun its advance into French Indo-China at 2:30 P.M. of that same day (the 22nd). See Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 1: 341.
agreement seemed thus settled, the Japanese brought forth a series of new demands. . . the Japanese now demanded, as a matter of fact, the permanent stationing of 32,000 troops in Indo-China. The acceptance of this demand would actually amount to the military occupation of Tongking. . .” (italics added).40

Matsuoka met with Grew once again on the afternoon of 20 September 1940. At this meeting, Matsuoka gave a more detailed account of the background to the pact he had recently signed with the French ambassador. “On 6 September,” Matsuoka began, “for reasons not evident to the authorities of Japan,” the Governor-General [Decoux] refused to sign an agreement which would have implemented the Matsuoka–Henry Pact [of 30 August]. The Japanese made the determination that Decoux was not acting in good faith and Japan, having been apprised of the fact that Decoux had been boasting to other foreign consuls stationed in Indo-China that he was employing obstructionist tactics, felt it necessary to present their ultimatum.41

The so-called Matsuoka–Henry Pact had granted favourable economic privileges to the Japanese and they were quick to exploit the opportunity. The ink had barely dried on the pact and already

40 See IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,968-69. According to Baudouin’s diary entry of 20 September 1940, the number of Japanese troops to be permitted the right of entry into Tonkin had now been upped to thirty-two thousand. See Baudouin, The Private Diaries, p. 242; Feis, The Road to Pearl Harbor, p. 104, n. 7. This same demand had been presented to Decoux on the 17th, but he had rejected it as per orders from Vichy. See Dreifort, “Japan’s Advance into Indochina,” p. 293.

41 Grew, Ten Years in Japan, pp. 330-31. Kido reports a meeting with Matsuoka in which he (Kido) was told that French Indo-Chinese officials were going to be given an ultimatum. See Kido Diary, entry of 14 September 1940; IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,965-66. A similar, but more detailed version of Grew’s conversation with Matsuoka can be found in FRUS, Japan, II: 295.
approval of a plan for the economic development of Indo-China had been reached by the Japanese Cabinet. According to their plan, the Indo-Chinese Government would guarantee the export to Japan of minimum amounts of rice, rubber, manganese, zinc, industrial salt, tin, antimony, and other products. In the past, most of these had been sold to other countries and even after the Japanese occupation of northern Indo-China, the rivalry over these commodities continued.\footnote{Feis, \textit{The Road to Pearl Harbor}, p. 104.}

At this stage, time had run out for the French and they were left with no realistic option but to cave in to the Japanese demands. With only hours left before the deadline set for a Japanese invasion, General Nishihara and a representative of the French Indo-Chinese Army met aboard the Japanese warship \textit{Kawachi} to sign the agreement. The main terms of the agreement were as follows: (1) As of midnight on the 23rd, soldiers of the Nishimura Corps will commence with the "friendly occupation" [of Tonkin]; (2) airfields to be placed at the disposal of the Japanese shall be located at Gia Lam, Phu Lang Thuog (Laokay), as well as three other airfields—all located in Phu Tho; (3) troops to be posted for an extended duration in the Hanoi and Haiphong areas shall not exceed 6,000 in number. There shall be a provision such that troops in transit (entering China from Tonkin), shall not have this limitation in number; and (4) consultation regarding the specifics of transit rights for the Nakamura Corps shall be hastily conducted.\footnote{Yoshizawa, \textit{Sensō kakudai no kōzu}, p. 126. Although not expressly stated in point three of Yoshizawa's rendering, the number of troops was limited to no more than 25,000 personnel. The Nakamura Corp was under the command of Lieutenant-General Nakamura Aketo.}
Before the final settlement had been reached, however, overzealous elements of the Japanese South China (Canton) Army—which had been at the ready to invade Indo-China since June—once again crossed over the Indo-Chinese border.\footnote{According to Baudouin, \textit{The Private Diaries}, p. 227, this situation, like the incursion of the 6th, had been quickly brought under control and the Japanese had tendered an apology. It states further, that it was this incident which prompted Decoux to break off the negotiations. This, statement, however, does not accord with subsequent events; for example: it would not have been necessary for Baudouin to order Decoux to reopen negotiations on the 13th, had they not been broken off until the 22nd.} This proved to be bloodier affair than the incursion of the 6th, and the clash was not brought under control until two days later.\footnote{In David Bergamini, \textit{Japan’s Imperial Conspiracy} (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1971), p. 728, Bergamini labels Major-General Tominaga Kyōji as the “ringleader” behind this “unauthorized border crossing.” He also cites the involvement of Colonel Chō Isamu, Colonel Satō Kenryō, and General Nishihara Issaku. According to Kido, \textit{The Kido Diary}, p. 256, “The Nishimura Battalion, which was to make a peaceful advance into French Indochina, made a landing in front of the enemy and attacked the coastline with air support, despite having the naval guard commander’s instructions to the contrary.”}

Decoux was greatly disturbed by news of the signing aboard the \textit{Kawachi}; in a cable to Monsieur Lémery, the Minister for colonies, which was subsequently passed on to Paul Baudouin, he stated that “Indo-China could and should be defended. . . and even if we must run the risk of losing Indo-China, it is better to lose it in defending it than in betraying it.”\footnote{Baudouin, \textit{The Private Diaries}, p. 227.} Unfortunately, Decoux’s bravado masked the fact that his available resources were pitifully small: eleven modern planes, nonexistent anti-aircraft defences, limited munitions, and twenty old tanks which dated from the previous
war. What Decoux really needed was more weaponry and munitions; weaponry which he still hoped to procure from the United States. However, French appeals to the U.S. Government—as noted earlier—had met with little success.

The Roosevelt administration was unimpressed with Japanese promises that they wouldn’t violate the territorial integrity of French Indo-China. Nor were they persuaded that the Japanese move into Indo-China’s Tonkin province was predicated solely upon their desire to establish a quick settlement to their problems in China. Sumner Welles gave voice to this American scepticism, noting: “Obviously, the occupation of Indo-China was not really—as the Japanese claimed—for strategic operations against China. It could only be regarded as an immediate threat to the British position in Burma and Malaya, and as a thrust at the highly vulnerable position of the United States in the Philippines.”

Thailand goes on the Offensive

Like the Americans, but for very different reasons, the Thai, too, viewed with growing alarm the Japanese military pressure being mounted against Indo-China. They feared the Japanese would soon become the new voice of authority there, and Thailand’s subsequent chances of regaining the lost

territories would be greatly diminished.\textsuperscript{48} The Thai had already hinted earlier that they might be interested in working out some sort of a \textit{quid pro quo} between themselves and the Japanese. In early August, Phibun's Naval Chief of Staff Admiral Sinthu Songkramchai had secretly confided to the Japanese chargé d'affaires in Bangkok, Asada Shunsuke that the Thai were thinking of exploiting the pressure the Japanese were exerting on the French.\textsuperscript{49} By doing so, they hoped to advance their claims against the French. The admiral also stressed the Thai belief that it was essential for themselves and the Japanese to work in concert to accomplish these aims.\textsuperscript{50}

If the Thai were to make a definite commitment to relying on Japanese efforts on their behalf, the Japanese could certainly use this as leverage should the notion of southern expansion eventually evolve into open warfare in Southeast Asia. There was indeed a growing sense of urgency amongst the Thai. Clearly they believed it would be a much easier task to regain their lost territories from the nearly prostrate French than the more powerful Japanese. For this reason, they felt it best not to delay in pressing their demands for the return of the previously ceded territories; including the two Laotian enclaves lost in 1904 which lay opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse, as well as the Cambodian

\textsuperscript{48} During a 7 July meeting with British Minister Sir Josiah Crosby, Phibun told the Minister that he contemplates with alarm the prospect of a Japanese puppet state as a neighbor. Phibun also stressed that his preference was to obtain concessions from the weak Vichy régime. See Aldrich, \textit{The Key to the South}, p. 262.

\textsuperscript{49} Asada Shunsuke took over temporary charge of the Japanese legation in Bangkok when Minister Murai ended his three years of service in June 1940.

provinces of Battambang and Siem Reap. Such new demands would go far beyond their original requests for the French to simply re-negotiate their common border to make it conform to the thalweg of the Mekong.\footnote{Nishino, \textit{Nittai yonhyakumen shi}, p. 96.}

On 15 August, at the direction of Premier Phibun, Thai Deputy Minister Direk Jaiyanama had met with the American, German, British, and Italian Ministers in Bangkok. All were sounded out as to their feelings regarding the Thai efforts to retrieve their lost territories. Not surprisingly, both the Germans and the Italians were in agreement that the territories should be retroceded to Thailand. Naturally, it would have pleased them to see the elimination of both French and British influence in the Far East.

On that same day, Direk spoke with American Minister Hugh Grant concerning the probable American reaction to Thai efforts to regain their lost territories. Grant was unable to give an official response until he had relayed the contents of their conversation to his home Government. He agreed, however, to speak directly to Premier Phibun on the matter.

During a 17 August conversation with the Thai Prime Minister, Phibun was less than honest when he told Minister Grant that he was satisfied with the status quo. He said it would be necessary to seek the return of all ceded territories from France because he feared that Japan would soon attempt to seize control in Indo-China.

The Thai were clearly worried about Japanese intentions towards Indo-China, and Phibun emphasised his hope that both America and Britain would gear their foreign policies towards assisting the Thai in reaching a favourable solution as regards their efforts to regain the lost territories. Then,
as if to underscore his willingness to take aggressive measures to regain these areas, Phibun gave notice that the Thai were prepared to take unspecified steps to protect Thai nationals currently residing in Indo-China and to defend their right to the islands in the Mekong as well as the other previously ceded territories.  

On 20 August, Phibun directed his Deputy Foreign Minister to pay a call on Monsieur Lépissier. The Thai were becoming impatient because they felt the French were making very little effort to assemble their negotiating team and to dispatch them to Bangkok. The Deputy Minister now demanded a definite date for their arrival. Lépissier could only reply apologetically that the French Indo-Chinese Government was continually postponing the dispatch of their negotiators on the pretext that they had more important affairs to take care of.

Lépissier, who had always been more sympathetic towards Thai aspirations than officials in the upper echelons of the French Indo-Chinese Government, indicated that he, too, was distressed at the attitude of the Indo-Chinese régime. He also added that they had just received an ultimatum from the Japanese demanding that they admit Japanese troops into Indo-China as well as granting them the use of Indo-Chinese bases.

---

52 TSM, 6: 100. See also ibid.
54 Ibid., 228. Lépissier was referring to an ultimatum handed Decoux on 2 August by Colonel Satô Kenryô which demanded that Japanese troops be granted the right to enter Indo-China in order to help settle the China Incident. Colonel Satô also demanded the use of transport facilities, arms, munitions, and food. Decoux had refused saying it was up to Vichy to decide. See Hytier, Two Years, p. 217. Lépissier was also referring to a cable Matsuoka had sent to the French ambassador in Tokyo
On 21 August, in response to Deputy Minister Direk’s 15 August talks with Minister Grant, American Under-Secretary of State Sumner Welles expressed the hope of his Government that international problems would be solved through peaceful negotiations and co-operative dialogue. He also instructed Minister Grant to inform the Thai that American policy with regard to Thailand’s efforts to regain her lost territories would be considered in light of these general principles. Three days later, Grant informed the Thai Government of the content of his recent discussions with Mr. Welles. 55

Regarding Direk Jaiyamda’s recent talks with Minister Crosby, the British expressed the view that if the Japanese were planning to establish puppet governments over the Indo-Chinese provinces just as they had done in Manchuria, then they too would see fit to back the Thai claims. 56 Premier Phibun had, in fact, been told in confidence by the Japanese Army attaché in Bangkok, Colonel Tamura Hiroshi, that the Japanese were indeed planning to install puppet governments in the Indo-Chinese provinces. 57 Minister Crosby had his own cynical ideas as to what it was that motivated Premier Phibun to press the Thai demands. In a dispatch to his Foreign Office, he expressed the

which stated: “The Japanese General Headquarters considers as vital necessity [sic] the pursuit through French Indo-China of the hostilities against China. Consequently, the Republic of France is hereby requested to give assistance to the Japanese armed forces by agreeing to their passage through the province of Tong-King; the use of airfields in that province; the stationing of the necessary garrison of troops and also the provision of facilities for the transportation of arms and ammunition.”

See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,714.

55 TSM, 6: 100.
56 Nishino, Nittai yonhyakunen shi, p. 96.
57 Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” p. 286.
following view: "Phibun cannot resist the idea which has occurred to him of striking a slick bargain with the French; the notion of such a deal and the kudos which is [sic] likely to bring him in Thai circles, may have been too much for him."\textsuperscript{58}

Not surprisingly, the British had been content to have the French in Indo-China, with Thailand acting as a buffer zone between the French colonies and certain areas of Burma and Malaya which were then under British colonial rule. From the British point of view, if the French were forced to give up their colonies in Indo-China, it was a far sight better to have the Thai take over their previously ceded territories than it was to have the Japanese using them as a stepping-stone which brought them still closer to Britain's "island fortress" of Singapore.\textsuperscript{59} For what it was worth, on 21 August, Phibun gave his assurance to Minister Crosby that the Thai activities aimed at regaining their lost lands would not extend to former Thai territories now under British rule.

\textbf{Colonel Yothi's Mission}

On 4 September, while on his way to Tokyo, Thai Deputy Minister of Defence Colonel Prom Yothi's plane touched down in Hanoi for a two-day stopover. Colonel Yothi had been selected by Premier Phibun to head a goodwill mission to Japan and the timing seemed opportune for Colonel

\textsuperscript{58} Aldrich, \textit{The Key to the South}, p. 226.

\textsuperscript{59} The four Malay states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, and Trengannu had been given over to Great Britain under the terms of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909. See Stowe, \textit{Siam Becomes Thailand}, p. 148.
Yothi to meet Admiral Decoux and discuss with him matters of mutual interest between their two nations. During the course of discussions with Decoux, Colonel Yothi offered Thailand’s co-operation in opposing Japan if the two Laotian enclaves (Luang Prabang and Pakse) on the west bank of the Mekong were restored to Thai sovereignty. Decoux, who had nothing but contempt for Yothi, and had actually endeavoured to avoid meeting him at all, practically ignored Yothi’s offer, saying only that he would convey the proposal to Vichy.

Decoux was against the retrocession of any land to the Thai—a people he viewed with scorn. Colonel Yothi also informed Decoux that if the Government of Indo-China were to permit Japanese troops to be stationed there, a whole new situation would be created which would necessitate a reassessment of Franco-Thai relations. Perhaps Decoux took this as a veiled hint that the Thai were aware of imminent Japanese moves to seize Indo-China and consequently, only four days after Colonel Yothi had wrapped up his stopover in Indo-China, Monsieur Lépissier turned over to the Thai a list containing the names of those in the French Indo-Chinese negotiating party. Although

---

60 The idea of dispatching a goodwill mission to Tokyo with Colonel Yothi as head had been agreed upon in late July by Premier Phibun and Japan’s new charge d’affaires in Bangkok, Colonel Asada Shunsuke. Phibun reportedly told Asada that he wanted Yothi to head the mission “... in order to wean him away from his pro-European inclinations and make him more amenable to Phibun’s [sic] own pro-Japanese views.” See Flood, “The Franco-Thai Border Dispute,” p. 313.


unable to give a precise date for their anticipated arrival, Lépissier did say that he had urged them to hurry.63

In any case, soon after Colonel Yothi left for Japan, the French Government seemed more anxious than ever to bring into force the as yet unratified non-aggression pact between themselves and the Thai. On 11 September, Vichy cabled the Thai Government with the suggestion that the non-aggression pact be put into force immediately without waiting for its formal ratification. The Thai Government responded with a request that Vichy enter into an agreement based on the following:

(1) Fixation of the Mekong frontier at the deep water channel and the settlement of all other outstanding administrative questions as provided by the exchange of letters under the date of 12 June 1940.

(2) Adoption of the Mekong as the frontier between the two countries from the north to the south as far as the frontier of Cambodia, involving the retrocession to Thailand of territories on the right bank of the Mekong opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse.

(3) Return to Thailand of all territory in Indo-China which had been ceded to France by Thailand, in the event of a change in sovereignty over Indo-China.64

It was left to Monsieur Paul Lépissier to do what he could to persuade the Thai to make effective the non-aggression pact without waiting for its ratification. The Thai, on the other hand,

63 Ibid., p. 316. The Americans, too, were aware of rumors that a Japanese occupation of Indo-China was imminent. In discussing these rumors with Ambassador Horinouchi, Under-Secretary Welles had warned him that America would be forced to help China, just as she was now helping Britain. Quoted in Schroeder, The Axis Alliance, p. 28.

were intent on using French fears of Japan as a “bargaining chip” in their plans, and on 12 September, Lépissier was informed that not only were the Thai not going to ratify the treaty before a re-delimitation of the Mekong border had been concluded, but now the French would have to retrocede the two Laotian enclaves opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse, in addition to other regions in southern Laos that bordered on Cambodia. In a further demand, Phibun insisted that the French would have to provide a written guarantee that should they lose Indo-China as a result of military defeat, or should there be a voluntary withdrawal, the whole of Laos and Cambodia would revert to Thailand. In return, Thailand would make all efforts to protect any French nationals who chose to remain in the retroceded territories. Before receiving any official response from the Vichy authorities, Colonel Yothi boarded a plane bound for the Japanese capital.

Colonel Yothi met with Japanese officials in Tokyo on 23 September 1940. During the meeting, Colonel Yothi reaffirmed the Thai’s desire for Japanese support for their irredenta programme. “Without diplomatic support from the Japanese,” said Yothi, “the Thai would have no choice but to resort to force.” The Japanese were also hoping to gain the co-operation of the Thai. Already they were secretly predicting an Anglo-Japanese War in the not-too-distant future, and when the time came, Thailand—due to her geographical location—would certainly play a key role in Japanese plans.

Thailand had held an important place in the minds of Japanese military planners dating back to 1936. At that time, the strategists had worked out plans for southern expansion based upon the

66 Stowe, Siam Becomes Thailand, p. 150. See also Nishino, Nittai yonhyakunen shi, p. 97.
hypothesis that Japan would have to fight Britain. In the event of war, the invasion of Singapore was to be preceded by Japanese landings at the southern Thai coastal town of Singora (Songkhla) to be followed by an advance down the Malay Peninsula.

Even after the Japanese–Thai pact pledging “mutual friendship” had been signed, there remained a faction within the Japanese Army which—if a Japanese–Thai military pact could not be worked out—was pushing for an invasion of Thailand. However, based upon Thailand’s neutrality, Emperor Hirohito had insisted that before Japanese forces ventured onto Thai soil, the permission of the Thai Government had to be obtained through diplomatic negotiations. Regardless of the Emperor’s caveat, Ambassador Kurusu, in conversation with Ambassador Ott, had offered a very clear statement of Japanese intent when he said: “Japan cannot even consider her southern advance without the use of the Malacca [Malay] Peninsula as an overpass. For this purpose, it will be necessary to pass through Indo-Chinese territory and Thailand.”

The Japanese thought that the meetings with Colonel Yothi might provide an opportunity for them to reach an agreement on a military pact. They therefore insisted that Colonel Yothi be furnished with plenipotentiary powers enabling him to negotiate binding agreements. When Colonel Yothi wired his Government for these credentials, the message came back that he was to limit his discussions to those areas “within his own sphere of responsibility.”

---

68 Certain information in the above two paragraphs was drawn from NGS, 22: 264. See also TSM, 6: 246.
69 NGS, 22: 290.
70 Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” p. 306.
In truth, the Japanese had been naïve to think that any sort of a binding agreement of such major importance could have been arrived at with Colonel Yothi acting as plenipotentiary. It will be remembered that Colonel Yothi’s visit was ostensibly a “goodwill” mission and, he was simply not prepared to enter competently into any discussions which were aimed at so significant an agreement as a military pact between Thailand and Japan. In any case, without such powers, the Japanese refused to proceed with further discussions and the mission may be said to have ended in failure for both sides.

After this episode, Colonel Yothi did, however, meet with Foreign Minister Matsuoka for informal talks relating to the Thai irredentism. Colonel Yothi was told unofficially by Matsuoka that he (Matsuoka) was sympathetic to the Thai demands but that he couldn’t condone the resort to force which the Thai were now contemplating. Matsuoka cautioned Yothi to be prudent and told him that he “wished to calculate the best moment and then propose Japan’s mediation for a peaceful solution.”\textsuperscript{71}

We get some idea of the importance which the Japanese attached to the goal of aligning themselves with the Thai when we discover that during the middle of August, the Japanese Army attaché in Bangkok, Colonel Tamura Hiroshi, was asked to summarise his perceptions of the current climate in Thailand as far as Japanese-Thai relations were concerned. He was also asked whether or not, in his opinion, the timing seemed right to broach the idea of a military pact with the Thai. In response, Tamura stressed that he was unable to say that Phibun exhibited friendly inclinations

\textsuperscript{71} \textit{Ibid.}
towards the Japanese. Rather, he said, it was the British who still exerted a powerful influence in Thai circles owing to their long and steadfast relationship with the Thai. It was on 17 September, that the Vichy Government sent a note to the Thai Minister at Vichy which rejected the Thai demands of 12 September calling for the French to re-delimit the Mekong, retrocede the enclaves opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse, and provide a written guarantee that Laos and Cambodia would revert to Thailand in the event there was a change of sovereignty in Indo-China. The French indicated that their negotiating team was still prepared to meet with the Thai for discussion, but the negotiations would be restricted to the thalweg issue. Three days later, the Thais announced the names on their own list of dignitaries who would make up the Thai negotiating team. It was to be headed by Premier Phibun.

On 25 September, in response to Vichy's note of rejection, the Thai Government sent a conciliatory message to the French which attempted to point out the wisdom of making the Mekong River the Thai-Laos border over its entire length; if such were the case, it would mean the retrocession of those areas opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse which the Thai so coveted. The Thai also withdrew their previous request for a written guarantee concerning the fate of Laos and Cambodia should the French relinquish or lose control of Indo-China. And what happened next

---

72 TSM, 6: 246.
74 Ibid., p. 322. H. H. Prince Varnvaidyakorn (Prince Wan) actually ended up heading the Thai negotiating team.
75 Ibid., p. 320.
showed that the Thai had now reached a turning point in their campaign for the retrocession of the lost territories.

The Japanese were both surprised and elated when, on 28 September (The previous day the Japanese had entered into the Triple Alliance with Germany and Italy), Premier Phibun sent his emissary, Vanich Pananond, for top secret discussions with the Japanese naval attaché in Bangkok, Captain Torigoe Shin’ichi. In conversation, Vanich told Torigoe that Phibun had made a decision to rely on the Japanese: a cryptic comment which signalled the commitment the Japanese had been hoping for. Three days later, Torigoe met with Phibun to confirm Vanich’s disclosure and to lay the foundations for further discussions. Phibun told Torigoe that Vanich’s words were a true expression of his (Phibun’s) own feelings. Phibun then reaffirmed his offer to permit the passage of Japanese troops through Thailand if it should ever become necessary for them to do so. Phibun also made a commitment to provide provisions and other such assistance as might be required by the Japanese. In return, he asked for Japanese backing for his irredentist plans. After this meeting, Torigoe returned to Japan to report the details of his meetings with Premier Phibun and Deputy Premier Pananond. Back home, Torigoe warned that if the Japanese didn’t take advantage of the opportunity afforded them by Phibun’s secret disclosure, he feared the Thai might incline themselves more towards Britain and America as potential allies in their irredentist programme.76

76 NGS, 22: 268; TSM, 6: 106-07. Certain portions of the above paragraph were also drawn from TSM, 7: 90. See also Reynolds, Thailand and Japan’s Southern Advance, pp. 37-38; Santaputra, Thai Foreign Policy, p. 229-30.
During a 14 October meeting, Phibun was asked by the Japanese to put his pledge in writing since certain members of the more aggressive Army faction felt that a verbal declaration was insufficient. Phibun, however, declined to do this on the grounds that such secrets have a way of leaking out during Cabinet sessions. When Foreign Minister Matsuoka heard about Phibun’s refusal to put his pledge in writing, he said he “... well understood Phibun’s feelings about giving only a verbal statement. In Japan, as in Thailand, secrets have a way of being leaked during Cabinet sessions; a verbal promise would be fine.”\(^\text{77}\) Despite this precaution, the British were to later hear of this pledge through a secret telegram “to be burnt after perusal,” which condemned the agreement with the Japanese, who, for their part, would assist the Thai in their efforts to regain the lost territories.\(^\text{78}\)

The Thai now began a propaganda campaign directed towards regaining their lost territories in Laos and Cambodia. Pamphlets explaining the Thai version of history were published and then clandestinely distributed within Indo-China’s borders. According to reports in the international press, some of the planes used to drop the pamphlets had penetrated as far as 100 kilometers into Laotian airspace. These events prompted immediate protests from French Foreign Minister Paul Baudouin, who then asked the Japanese Government to exert pressure on the Thai to stop their anti-French agitation.\(^\text{79}\)

Premier Phibun seemed newly emboldened now that he ostensibly had the backing of the Japanese. He made it clear to the British and French Ministers in Bangkok that he was prepared to

---

\(^{77}\) TSM, 6: 107.

\(^{78}\) Quoted in Santaputra, Thai Foreign Policy, p. 230.

\(^{79}\) NGS, 22: 261; TSM, 6: 101. See also Hytier, Two Years of French Foreign Policy, p. 209.
use force if Vichy didn’t soon retrocede the west bank enclaves. The anti-French campaign also
continued to pick up steam, particularly in the Thai vernacular press and on the campuses of
Bangkok’s schools and colleges. Some newspapers, ignoring the Thai military build-up along the
Mekong, now vented their outrage at French counter-measures such as the digging of slit-trenches
and the emplacement of anti-aircraft guns along the Indo-Chinese banks of the Mekong River. Some
of the more inflammatory editorials even protested that the time for talking was over: now was the
time to fight!80

Both the British and the American ambassadors in Bangkok viewed with growing dismay the
heightening of tensions between France and Thailand. On 9 October, in reaction to these tensions,
Minister Grant reaffirmed to Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Jaiyanama, the American Government’s
belief in the preservation of the status quo in Asia. At the same time, Minister Grant urged the Thai to
be prudent in their use of force.

Just the previous day, the delivery of a shipment of ten dive-bombers—destined for Thailand but
off-loaded in Manila—had been cancelled by the Americans; the Thai were promised that they would
be monetarily compensated for America’s failure to make good on the delivery.81 And earlier in

80 Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 154. On 28 September—the day Vanich Pananond had told
Captain Torigoe of Phibun’s commitment to Japan—the Thai sent aircraft to bomb and strafe French
military installations inside Cambodia. See NGS, 22: 264.

81 According to Reynolds, the Japanese were able to ingratiate themselves still further with the Thai
by supplying them with tanks, planes, and other military equipment. This helped to offset the losses
they had incurred as a result of the American cancellations. See Reynolds, “Ambivalent Allies,” p.
133.
Washington, the head of the Far East Division of the State Department, Maxwell Hamilton, had called in the Thai Minister to Washington, Mr. Seni Pramoj, for talks. He was told, that as the Americans felt that it was necessary to stockpile certain matériel for their own defensive needs, they could no longer continue to export previously promised military hardware to the Thai. Ten days later, an order for six single-seat fighter planes and their accompanying hardware (which the Thai had previously ordered) was suddenly cancelled.  

By discontinuing the export of such military merchandise to Thailand, the Americans were taking their first positive steps intended to restrain the aggressive moves being adopted by the Thai. Naturally, the Thai responded negatively to the American actions; viewing them both as unfriendly and unsympathetic to the Thai cause.

The British, too, were concerned about the direction the Thai were heading. On 10 October, Minister Crosby spoke with Premier Phibun on matters relating to a message that he (Phibun) had been sent two or three days earlier by British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax. The message had indicated that, like the Americans, it was the desire of the British Government to see the status quo

83 TSM, 6: 105. British Minister Sir Josiah Crosby relates how, during a 28 October discussion with Direk Jaiyanama, Direk had spoken with bitterness about the unsympathetic attitude of the U.S. Government towards the Thai claims... and that the Thai people would always remember it. See Aldrich, The Key to the South, p. 279.
preserved in Indo-China. The British feared that the Thai might be inclined to conclude some sort of an agreement with the Japanese out of fears for their own vulnerability.⁸⁴

The Japanese, on the other hand, were not interested in the preservation of the status quo. They were now pressing forward with their efforts to strengthen Japan’s economic links with the French Indo-Chinese, hoping to entrench themselves further still in the affairs of the French colony. In early October, in accordance with the Matsuoka–Henry Pact’s articles pertaining to the promotion of trade between French Indo-China and Japan, the Japanese organised an economic mission which, under the command of Ambassador Matsumiya was to undertake the following: (1) Secure the import from Indo-China of such raw materials as rice, corn, crude rubber, coal and other mineral products; (2) find out ways and means by which Japan’s exports to Indo-China might be increased; (3) arrange that all accounts between Japan and Indo-China be settled in yen; and (4) obtain a grant of credit large enough to be used as funds for imports from Indo-China.

Since Indo-China was in need of markets in the Far East for its rice, corn, and coal there was some basis for congenial discussions between the two. In Hanoi, Matsumiya met with Decoux on numerous occasions and although Decoux was in agreement with Matsumiya on the general principle of economic co-operation between the two, when it came to specifics, agreement was much harder to reach.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ TSM, 6: 105.
CHAPTER VI

THE FRANCO–THAI BORDER MEDIATION

Back in Tokyo, at a Four Ministers Conference which convened on 5 November, the assembled Ministers had come to an agreement to invite Phibun’s Navy Chief of Staff, Luang Sin (Admiral Sinthu Songkhramchai)\(^1\) to Japan, and in the utmost secrecy, attempt to reach a verbal agreement with him on the following matters:

(1) At the most opportune moment in Franco–Thai relations, the Japanese would seek to mediate the dispute between the two nations. Japan would give favourable consideration to the Thai’s requests concerning the retrocession of the lost territories. The return of the previously ceded enclaves opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse would be given special attention.

(2) Discussions would be held with the Thai to ascertain their attitude towards actively co-operating with the Japanese in the establishment of a “New Order in East Asia.”

(3) A barter agreement and other forms of broad economic co-operation—including co-operation in the development of foreign industrial resources—should be established in order to

---

\(^1\) Quoted in Nagaoka Shinjirō, “The Drive into Southern Indochina and Thailand,” trans., Robert Scalapino, in Morley, *The Fateful Choice*, p. 218. In this passage, it says that the Japanese wanted to invite Vanich ( Wanit) Pananond to Japan. However, in the original Japanese, *Luang* Sin’s name appears. The latter is correct. See TSM, 6: 107.
guarantee Japan the delivery of needed resources.

(4) Ratification of the “Japan–Thailand Treaty of Friendship” should be hastened.²

Another meeting of the Inner Cabinet was held on 21 November (Tokyo time), during which Foreign Minister Matsuoka stated that the time was now ripe to make an official offer to mediate the Franco–Thai border dispute. Matsuoka was hoping that by doing so, he could forestall any meddling by either the British or the Americans in the affairs of Thailand and/or Indo-China.³ The following week, Matsuoka made an official overture to Vichy for Japan’s “peaceful mediation” of the border dispute with Thailand.

It seems likely that Matsuoka’s decision was influenced by a 14 November report sent to him by Asada Shunsuke, Japan’s chargé d’affaires in Bangkok. Asada, himself influenced by a “reliable” source in the Thai Government, had stated that Thailand, together with Britain and America, had already worked out a secret agreement for the defence of the South Pacific. He further reported that should America enter the war—which some Japanese now viewed as inevitable—Thailand would then either align herself with Britain and America, or she would break off diplomatic relations with the Axis countries. The report went on to declare that if Japan had to fight Britain and America, the Thai would permit Japan’s enemies the use of military bases and would also ensure that they received necessary food stocks. America would respond by agreeing to the recent loan requests which the

² TSM, 6: 107. An English-language translation is located in Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” pp. 337-38. Certain portions of the proceedings of the 5 November conference can also be found in TSM, 7: 90; See also IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,873.
³ Stowe, Siam Becomes Thailand, p. 161. See also Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” p. 346.
Thai had been seeking. British Malaya and Burma were also prepared, so the report continued, to conclude mutual-defence pacts with Thailand, while the Americans were to provide naval air power for coastal defence in emergency situations. Finally, as a gesture of understanding, the Americans would immediately extend to the Thai a credit of U.S. $20 million, for the purchase of military hardware.

Shortly after wiring his report to Tokyo, Asada was approached by a press reporter from the Dômei news agency who asked him to respond to rumours that the Thai had been discussing their irredenta problems with American officials. Although there is no record of Asada's official response, the newsman wired an extremely detailed report to his home office and the 18 November issue of the Asahi bore the bold headline: “Secret Anglo–American Military Treaty with the Thai Rumoured.” The article devoted six paragraphs outlining the particulars of the treaty and this led to a great deal of rumour-mongering and consternation in the Japanese Foreign Office.

On the same day that the Japanese newspaper headlines were ablaze with this story, Sumner Welles held a press conference in Washington to deny the allegations to the assembled news reporters and to attribute them to some far-sighted scheming on the part of the Japanese. The British, too, disavowed any knowledge of the rumoured military treaty and Premier Phibun also strenuously

---

4 TSM, 6: 107-08; NGS, 22: 270. The version in NGS also says the Americans would assist the Thai in regaining their lost territories and would provide them with munitions and technical advisors.

5 NGS, 22: 270-71.

denied any truth to the allegations.\(^7\)

In the midst of all this rumour-mongering, the necessity of securing Vichy’s agreement to Japan’s mediation offer took on even greater urgency. Although the U.S. was unlikely to offer her services as a peace-broker in an area where her assets were little affected, reports that the British were prepared to act as mediators were becoming more widespread. In order to avert such a possibility, Matsuoka was prepared to use any and all means available to the Japanese in an effort to induce the French into submitting a positive response. Thus, after Matsuoka’s urging of the extension of a mediation offer to the Thai and Vichy Governments had been accepted as official policy, Matsuoka asked the Germans to exert pressure on the French to accede to the mediation offer. He also indicated that as a gesture of solidarity with the French and a warning to the Thai, Japanese warships were being dispatched to Saigon. Phibun was quick to accept Japan’s offer of mediation—

\(^7\) TSM, 6: 108. See also NGS, 22: 271. Intercepted Japanese messages stated that Asada had reported the bogus “secret alliance” with serious concern. This suggests that the “reliable” Thai source was probably also the same one who’d fed the Dômei agency with the falsehoods rather than the Japanese having concocted them, as Crosby and Grant both believed. See Reynolds, Thailand and Japan’s Southern Advance, pp. 40-41. In his diary entry for 18 November 1940, Joseph Grew wrote that the Japanese vernacular press was full of stories alleging the conclusion of a secret pact between Britain, America, and Thailand. Grew attributed such articles to a Japanese attempt to build a case for bringing pressure to bear on the Thai for the use of air bases and other such facilities “which could be used for an eventual extension of their southward advance.” See Grew, Ten Years, pp. 354. On this same page, Grew expresses the view that the rumour-mongering was likely a Japanese-inspired ploy in preparation for bringing some sort of pressure to bear upon the Thai.
Vichy needed some time to consider her response.  

While Vichy was pondering Matsuoka’s offer, the French military attaché to Bangkok, paid a visit to Premier Phibun, warning him that while he was aware that they both had troops concentrations amased at their common border, if the Thai were to resist the French forces, the [French] tri-colours be flying over Bangkok within a week. The following day (25 November), in a show of contempt for French attempts at intimidation, the Thai military suddenly attacked across the border. And on 28 November, fighting also broke out in north-east Thailand and French aircraft bombed the Thai town of Nakhon Phanom—striking a police station. In retaliation, planes of the Thai airforce bombed Thakhek and Savannhaket on the French side of the Mekong River. As it turns out, the Japanese were secretly assisting the Thai side by providing them with ammunition and heavy weaponry including tanks and aeroplanes.

Although the skirmishes between the French and the Thai had so far been small-scale and localised, the Japanese military feared that should the conflict develop into a protracted war and the tide turn against the Thai, Phibun could possibly be ousted; if that were to happen, Japanese plans would be placed in great jeopardy.

8 Stowe, Siam Becomes Thailand, p. 161.
11 The Japanese were more than willing to supply the Thai with military hardware. They were then able to use the Thai currency (the baht) to purchase much needed commodities—especially tin, rice, and rubber.
On 19 December, the French Government finally informed the Japanese that although they appreciated Japan's "friendly offer" to mediate the border dispute, they were not prepared to enter into any negotiations which involved the retrocession of their territory. This would, in their consideration, be to negotiate on violations of their own territorial integrity.\(^{12}\) The French refusal to accept the Japanese offer of mediation raised the ire of the Japanese military, particularly in the General Staff Office, where Army officers harshly criticised Matsuoka's "lukewarm diplomacy."\(^{13}\)

In light of France's refusal, it was decided at a conference of 26 December, that the Japanese should move quickly to establish a more intimate relationship with Thailand and at the same time, should adopt a firmer attitude towards the Indo-Chinese. By the timely application of increased pressure, it was felt that the Indo-Chinese authorities could be forced to bow to Japanese demands. The discussions also centred upon taking some measures which were aimed at assuming greater control over the relationship between Thailand and Indo-China. Accordingly, it was decided that the following steps should be taken:

1) Japan should move quickly to open negotiations with the Thai on political and military affairs. Japan should also seek to commence negotiations with the Thai aimed at establishing closer economic co-operation.

2) After having moved quickly to open negotiations with French Indo-China, we should present them with our economic, political, and military demands. Moreover, we should work hard towards attaining the prompt acknowledgement of our economic demands and towards reaching a settlement

---

\(^{12}\) DSKK, 2: 89.

\(^{13}\) TSM, 6: 249.
of the Franco–Thai border dispute.  

Without warning the picture changed for all concerned when suddenly, at the start of the new year, the Thai launched a ground-offensive enabling them to successfully gain a military advantage along the Mekong from the town of Aranya Prathet in Thailand, as far as the Cambodian town of Sisophon. Thai forces then bombed the area around the temples of Angkor Wat just outside Siem Reap in north-central Cambodia. They also attacked the Laotian enclave at Pakse. A United Press report out of Hanoi quoted informed sources as alleging the participation of Japanese aviators—not only instructing the Thai airforce—but, in some cases, actually participating in some of the raids on towns located inside the French Indo-Chinese border. Even with the alleged assistance of the Japanese, the Thai were unable to keep control of Sisophon, although a French counter-attack on 16 January failed to dislodge the Thai from other positions which they had come to occupy.

However, on 17 January, the French were able to gain some measure of revenge as a result of a naval engagement in the Gulf of Thailand. During the evening of the previous day, a French spotter-plane had pinpointed a small Thai fleet at anchor off the island of Koh Chang. This information was subsequently relayed to the Captain of the Lamotte-Piquet, an ageing French warship cruising the waters off the Cambodian coast in the company of four French patrol boats. Acting on this

---

14 NGS, 22: 278-79.
15 Ishikawa, Hōisareta Nihon, p. 113.
16 The China Weekly Review, 95 no. 6 (11 Jan. 1941): 210. An American newspaper reporter filed a dispatch reporting that the Thai were flying Japanese-made planes and that the body of a Japanese flyer had been discovered in one of the downed aircraft. This story was subsequently picked up by the French Indo-Chinese press and duly reported. See Ishikawa, Hōisareta Nihon, p. 108.
information, the French strategy called for their small flotilla of craft to slip through the channels between the offshore islands and, under cover of the early morning mist, catch the Thai Navy by surprise, inflicting great damage before the Thai could weigh anchor. The strategy went just as planned and a Thai destroyer, the 2,265-ton, Japanese-built \textit{Thonburi} was set ablaze. Two of the Thai torpedo boats—the \textit{Songkhla} and the \textit{Chonburi}—were also sent to the bottom, and although the French Navy was the victor in this particular engagement, the Thai did manage to fire off several salvos, scoring direct hits upon—but failing to sink—the \textit{Lamotte-Piquet}.\textsuperscript{17}

The day of the Thai naval defeat, Phibun received the new Japanese Minister to Thailand, Futami Yasusato. Although Futami had come to discuss rumours of British and American “meddling” in the border dispute, Phibun had other things on his mind. After telling Futami that he’d been resisting both British and American overtures, he decided to try a psychological ploy designed to shame the Japanese into taking a more resolute stand against the French. Bemoaning the tragedy of Thailand’s naval defeat, Phibun predicted a major push by the French in order to “break the back” of the Thai. Premier Phibun then became dramatic; suggesting to Futami the possibility that he could be facing a major disaster in as little as three weeks. This performance was enough to persuade Futami to cable a

\textsuperscript{17} Information concerning this naval engagement was drawn from Stowe, \textit{Siam Becomes Thailand}, pp. 168-69; Ishikawa, \textit{Hōisareta Nihon}, pp. 113-14. See also Reynolds, \textit{Thailand and Japan’s Southern Advance}, p. 43. Santaputra writes that the Thai public was told that this naval engagement had been a resounding triumph when, in fact, it had been a disaster which cost the lives of over 800 of her citizens. See Santaputra, \textit{Thai Foreign Policy}, p. 231. In Ishikawa’s rendition, the French claimed to have reduced the Thai Navy’s strength by one-third after having sunk, not two torpedo boats, but three; they further claimed they had suffered no damage to their own ships.
dispatch to Tokyo noting Phibun's "sincerity" and urging the Japanese to hasten their support for the Thai in their quest to regain their lost territories.¹⁸

During the late hours of the 17th, Thai Vice Premier Vanich paid an unexpected visit to Minister Futami. He appeared upset, telling Futami that British Minister Crosby had been urging Direk Jaiyanama to accept British mediation in the border dispute. According to Vanich, Crosby had also revealed some information concerning a secret meeting held in Singapore during which Decoux's aide-de-camp, Captain Jouan of the French Navy, had told the British certain details of a French proposal. The idea was to offer the Thai the west border enclaves they'd been seeking, in return for a re-delimitation of the border in the area of Aranya Prathet and again, further south near the Thai-Cambodian coast. According to Vanich, Crosby had also indicated that the British were prepared to mediate the dispute on the basis of these French proposals. After asking for the opinion of the Thai side, Crosby had departed.

It's difficult to know whether Vanich was speaking the truth to Futami, or simply attempting to play the British and the Japanese off against one another. What we do know is that if it was an attempt to stir the Japanese into taking some prompt action, the plan had the intended effect.¹⁹ Just two days later, Matsuoka met with the civilian and service members, as well as the General Staff Chiefs for a Sunday morning breakfast meeting. The assembled members had gathered to discuss a

---

¹⁸ Reynolds, _Thailand and Japan's Southern Advance_, p. 44. See also Flood, "Japan's Relations with Thailand," pp. 415-16.

¹⁹ Flood, "Japan's Relations with Thailand," p. 420. Flood indicates the source of his information is a third-hand account of a cable from Futami to Matsuoka dated 18 January 1941. He was unable to vouch for the accuracy of the information. See Flood, "Japan's Relations with Thailand," p. 449, n. 7.
draft proposal which incorporated Army, Navy, and Foreign Office input. The draft contained the following items:

(A) **Aims**: While endeavouring to insure that Thailand will reject the British mediation offer, the Empire [Japan] shall, at the same time, put pressure on Indo-China for an immediate termination of hostilities.

(B) **Measures Relating to Thailand**: (1) In connection with the lost territories problem, Japan will urge the Thai to reject British mediation offers and to accept Japanese mediation based upon the proposals Japan has hitherto put forward. (2) By putting pressure on French Indo-China, Japan will guarantee [to Thailand] a halt to the present fighting. (3) As a condition for this guarantee, Japan will seek to obtain from the Thai, a general understanding on a new Japan–Thai pact; particularly a military pact.

(C) **Measures Relating to French Indo-China**: (1) Without delay, we shall make a request to both the French [Vichy] and the French Indo-Chinese authorities to put a halt to the fighting. (2) Regarding the aforementioned mediation proposals, the attitude of the Empire with regard to the current dispute shall be directed towards achieving stability in the Far East and the management of the China Incident. We cannot overlook the importance of these matters with regard to the self-preservation of the Empire. (3) As regards the aforementioned, we must commence immediately to put the necessary pressure on French Indo-China. The matter of using simple coercion or resorting to military force shall be decided separately.20

---

20 Sambô Hombu, *Sugiyama Memo*, 2 vols. (Tokyo: Hara Shobô, 1967), 1: 160-161. See also NGS, 22: 284. During a later conference, Matsuoka was able to have the phrase "By putting pressure
During the afternoon of the same day, Matsuoka met with René Robin to admonish the French for scheming to seek the mediation of the British and the Americans. Robin was told that it would be best for the French if they were to rely on Japanese mediation. Matsuoka then became threatening and reminded Robin that the French had declined Japan's first mediation offer; if they should decline the offer a second time, Matsuoka hinted that the Japanese would have no choice but to take some very firm measures.\(^\text{21}\)

Later that same day at a second conference, it was decided that a formal mediation offer would be conveyed to Ambassador Arsène-Henry in Tokyo, Governor-General Decoux in French Indo-China, and to the Thai Government through Minister Futami in Bangkok.\(^\text{22}\) The day after this had been decided upon, Matsuoka officially offered Japan's good offices to Arsène-Henry with the stipulation that a cease-fire was a condition for mediation. The ambassador responded by saying that if the retrocession of territory along the Mekong was also a condition, France would find it difficult to accept Japan's offer. When told that this would not be the case, Arsène-Henry promised to recommend acceptance of Japan's offer to both Vichy and to Governor-General Decoux.\(^\text{23}\)

It was now time to seek the opinion of the Thai side regarding Japanese mediation; they weren't expected to offer any opposition to the proposal. On 21 January 1941, Minister Futami handed on Indo-China. . . “amended to read: “By putting necessary pressure on both countries. . .” See Flood, “Japan's Relations with Thailand,” p. 429.

\(^{21}\) René Robin was a former governor-general of Indo-China. At the time of his discussions with Matsuoka, he was heading an Indo-Chinese economic mission, meeting in Tokyo.

\(^{22}\) Flood, “Japan's Relations with Thailand,” p. 430.

\(^{23}\) Nagaoka, “The Drive into Southern Indochina and Thailand,” p. 228.
Premier Phibun a memorandum proposing Japanese mediation of the border dispute. That he would accept the offer was a foregone conclusion as he'd already given his secret approval the previous fall. As expected, Premier Phibun was quick to accept Japan's offer of mediation.24

In a speech to the Japanese Diet the following day, Matsuoka reminded his listeners of the Thai abstention during the League of Nations voting which had condemned Japanese aggression in Manchuria. He then pointed out that the recent Japanese-Thai Treaty of 1940 had drawn the two countries even closer together. Then, speaking of Thai irredentism, he told the assembled members: "Japan, as the leader in East Asia, cannot afford to remain indifferent to such a dispute, which she hopes will be settled at the earliest possible date."23 During the same speech, Matsuoka told the Diet members:

The Netherlands East Indies and French Indo-China, if only for geographical reasons, should be in [an] intimate and inseparable relationship with our country. Therefore, the situation which has hitherto thwarted the development of this natural relationship must be thoroughly remedied and relations of good neighbourliness secured for promotion of mutual prosperity.26

On the 23rd (24 January in Tokyo), Matsuoka received some good news during a visit by Ambassador Arsène-Henry. Upon his arrival he handed Matsuoka a note upon which was written the

24 Flood, "Japan's Relations With Thailand," pp. 434-35. Premier Phibun kept his acceptance of the proposal a secret from the Thai Cabinet until a meeting held on 26 January—the day after the news had been made known via a Radio Tokyo broadcast.


26 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 11,740-41.
formal acceptance of Japan's mediation proposal. However, Matsuoka was also informed that acceptance did not signify the French were prepared to passively surrender the enclaves on the right bank of the Mekong (Luang Prabang and Pakse). On the other hand, the ambassador was prepared to concede the necessity of having the military forces of both sides withdrawn to positions within their own respective territories.²⁷

On 25 January, the Japanese Government sent directives to Minister Futami in Bangkok and to the resident consul-general in Hanoi, Hayashi Yasushi. Included in the cables were the preliminary cease-fire articles which were to be delivered to both the Thai and the Indo-Chinese authorities by the 28th. They contained the following terms: (1) The military forces of both Thailand and Indo-China must cease current military operations and return to the positions they occupied at 10:00 A.M. on 28 January [all times are Tokyo time]; (2) the Governments of both countries shall appoint members with full powers to conclude a truce and have them assemble aboard the Japanese cruiser Natori in Saigon Harbour by 12:00 M. of 29 January; and (3) negotiations on the border dispute shall begin in Tokyo after the conclusion of the cease-fire agreement. The instructions also listed the names of the Japanese members who had been appointed to comprise their mediation team. The chief representative for the Japanese was to be General Sumita Raishirō.²⁸

²⁷ NGS, 22: 292.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 294-95. See also The China Weekly Review, 95, no. 10 (8 Feb. 1941): 347.
The Mediation talks Begin

As a protest against the talks being held in Saigon as opposed to Bangkok, the Thai negotiating team arrived at the cruiser Natori several hours late for their commencement. Unexpectedly, it was the Thais who proved to be less flexible than the French: complaining about their lodgings and continually pressing Colonel Tamura Hiroshi to change the site of the talks to Bangkok. Although they could not have known it at the time, in retrospect, it would not have been worth the efforts involved in relocation since a two-week armistice was signed on 31 January (local time).

The basic points of the cease-fire proposal were as follows: (1) The military forces of both countries were to retreat to locations 10 kilometers back from where they had been situated at 10:00 A.M., 28 January 1941 (local time); (2) both countries were to move their naval vessels back from the coastline and out into the waters of the Gulf of Thailand to precisely specified points beyond the international boundary markers. They were to remain beyond that perimeter; (3) military aircraft of

---

29 Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” pp. 458-59. In “Thailand in Japan’s Foreign Affairs,” the authors have erred in recording that the participants carried out their negotiations aboard the Nagoya. See Christian and Ike, “Thailand in Japan’s Foreign Relations,” p. 214. On the same day, Grew noted in his diary that reports were currently circulating to the effect that the Japanese were insisting on the use of the naval facilities at Cam Ranh Bay as payment for their mediation efforts. This, Grew notes, constituted “evidence of her firm intention to acquire jumping-off facilities for an eventual attack on Singapore.” See Grew, Ten Years in Japan, p. 369. Ishikawa writes that this first meeting aboard the Natori was so strained that it adjourned after only ten minutes. When they again met aboard the Natori on the 31st, only a further ten minutes were needed for completion of the entire ceremony. See Ishikawa, Hōisareta Nihon, p. 121.
the two nations were not to violate the airspace of one another: They were to stay beyond the zones as indicated in Articles 1 and 2; and (4) the withdrawal of all military forces—as specified above—was to be completed within 72 hours of the signing of the armistice. Provisions were also made for extensions to the armistice should any future problems arise. In addition the Governments of Thailand and France were to faithfully accommodate the Japanese mediation team in their efforts to execute their mandate: to supervise not only the signing of the armistice, but the implementation of its provisions. Finally the Japanese were granted the right to station destroyers at the port of Bangkok and in Saigon Harbour for “communications purposes.”

In reaction to the agreement, a Saigon newspaper, *La Depeche*, printed a scathing editorial which stated that the French had been shamed, not by the Thai, but by the Japanese. Japan was no mediator; they had simply used their military strength to enforce their commands. “We knew now, for the first time,” noted the editorial, “the way of the samurai.” Now that the two sides had finally been brought together and agreement on an armistice had been reached, the scene shifted to Tokyo where mediation of the border dispute was scheduled to commence on 7 February.

While negotiations aimed at bringing about an armistice had been going on in Saigon, important developments had been taking place back in Tokyo as well. A Liaison Conference of major significance had been held on 30 January 1941, during which those in attendance had worked out a

---

30 NGS, 22: 294-95. Ishikawa has written that the troops of both sides were to withdraw, not 10 kilometers back, but 5 kilometers back from their *present* locations. (underlined in the original). See Ishikawa, *Hōisareta Nihon*, p. 121.

policy paper entitled “tai futsuin-tai shisaku yōkō,” or “General Policy Outlines for Dealing with Indo-China and Thailand,” the main points of which will be discussed below.

The Japanese had been doing their utmost to give the impression that they were playing the role of “honest broker” in their mediation efforts. This, however, did little to ease Western suspicions of Japan’s actual motivation. Press reports circulating at the time reflected the general feeling of mistrust for Japan which were felt in the West. The following excerpt from an American publication was typical:

Since last October, despite occasional rumours of demands for further military concessions, Japan has made no openly aggressive moves in Indo-China. Throughout this period, however, unsettled conditions have prevailed on the Thailand–Indo-China border. Recent events have suggested that Japan, unwilling to risk the consequences of direct moves on its own part in Indo-China, may be planning to take advantage of the growing warfare between Thailand and Indo-China... Thailand’s invasion of Cambodia is weakening the position of the French authorities in Indo-China and making it less possible for them to resist Japan’s demands, either political or economic.32

The British were particularly fearful of Japanese intentions in the Far East. On 31 January (1 February in Tokyo), the United Press quoted Governor of the Straits Settlement Sir Shenton Thomas, as saying that “war was never closer to the shores of Malaya than now.” Sir Thomas continued: “I am not exaggerating, I tell you plainly this country [Britain] may yet have to face a state

of war."\textsuperscript{33}

In that same report, a correspondent for the \textit{Singapore Free Press} prophetically warned that recent developments constituted an attempt to outflank the big guns of Singapore and a plot to enter through the back door. Still other reports, speculating on Japan’s true intentions in the Far East, indicated that—at least in some circles—Japan was “gearing up” for war:

At the peace conference, Thailand will undoubtedly be rewarded with slices of Indo-Chinese territory, but whether there will be more than the districts already occupied by Thai forces remains to be seen. The largest gains will go to Japan. Reports from Shanghai, as yet unconfirmed, outline a series of concessions which Japan is exacting from Indo-China. In the military sphere, they include an Army post at Saigon, a naval base at Cam Ranh Bay, garrisons on Indo-China’s northern border facing China, and free use of all Indo-Chinese air bases. In the economic field, Japan would obtain a virtual monopoly of Indo-China’s rice, rubber, and coal, and a free hand in the development of natural resources, especially minerals. Whether or not these points have been definitely conceded, they offer a good indication of Japan’s immediate aims.\textsuperscript{34}

According to a telegram concerning a 7 February 1941 discussion between British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden and Japan’s ambassador in London, Shigemitsu Mamoru, Minister Eden had also chided Matsuoka’s efforts to mediate the Franco–Thai border dispute, stating:

If the purpose of the mediation were merely to bring about a settlement of the conflicts, Britain would welcome it like all the other countries. But we have received the disquieting information that Japan had brought pressure to bear on Indo-China and Thailand, and we have come to entertain misgivings whether Japan were not using this mediation as a pretext to secure far-

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{The China Weekly Review}, 95, no. 10 (8 Feb, 1941): 347.

Shigemitsu had responded defensively, pointing out that it was Britain’s consistent offers of aid to Japan’s enemies that had led to the poor state of relations which currently existed between Japan and Britain.36 Ambassador Craigie had also informed the British Foreign Office that the prevailing wisdom in Japan thought that a crisis in the Far East would occur “within these two or three weeks.” Matsuoka later told Shigemitsu that Craigie’s fears were little more than a “ridiculous fantasy.”37

Matsuoka appears to have been accurate in the projections he had offered Ambassador Craigie on the probable status of their future relations when, on the occasion of their first meeting, Craigie had expressed his hope that the Japanese Cabinet would work to settle relations between their two countries by “friendly measures,” as the previous Cabinet had been inclined to do. Matsuoka had responded that the Cabinet was giving careful consideration to their future policy but unofficially, Matsuoka thought that a general improvement in Anglo-Japanese relations “could not be hoped for, and a strained situation between Japan and England in the future was inevitable.”38

The actions of the Japanese since the time of that meeting had been such as to have intensified, rather than reduced, Anglo-Japanese anxieties; and the level of mutual distrust had clearly been heightened as well. The words of Ambassador Craigie, Anthony Eden, and Sir Shenton Thomas

35 IMTFE, Transcript, 9,784. See also Grew, Ten Years, p. 369-70.
36 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 9,790.
37 Telegram from Matsuoka to Shigemitsu; dated 13 February 1941. See ibid., 9,794-95.
38 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 9,782-84.
unmistakably reflected the ever-increasing suspicion with which the British now viewed the Japanese.

In response to these heightened tensions in the Far East, the American's were also showing signs of increased anxiety. On 12 February 1941, President Roosevelt sought from the Congress, additional defence appropriations to the tune of $13,000,000, to be used for strengthening fortifications at Guam and Samoa. This request was granted within a week, and as a further precautionary measure, troop strength was increased in Hawaii and Manila, while additional air squadrons were dispatched to Alaska. 39

Although the voices of suspicion in the West could not have known the situation with exact certainty, their fears of Japanese conniving were well-founded. Back in Tokyo, the day after the negotiations began aboard the Natori, a document entitled: “General Policy Outlines for Dealing with French Indo-China and Thailand”—a document to which we have made earlier reference—was adopted at the 7th Imperial Headquarters Liaison Conference. The general policy agreed to, foresaw as inevitable, the need to step up military pressure against Indo-China and, by mutual agreement, both Government officials and the High Command accepted as a fundamental principle, the right to use force in an invasion of southern Indo-China. According to testimony introduced at the Far Eastern Military Tribunal, a document dated January 1941 indicated that the Finance Ministry, in co-operation with the Army Ministry, had already begun preparing military occupation currency to be used in specified areas of the south including the Philippines, Malaya, Thailand, the Dutch Indies, and Borneo. The first deliveries were to be placed in the vaults of the Bank of Japan in May of that year.

39 Brodie, Our Far Eastern Record, p. 24.
and to be withdrawn under orders of the War and Navy Departments to finance war expenditures.  

The goals of the policies worked out at the 7th Imperial Headquarters Liaison Conference were meant to secretly bind both Indo-China and Thailand to Japan in a military, political, and economic union; the ultimate reason being to insure Japan's self-preservation and strengthen her self-defence through the establishment of the "Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere." The Japanese also wished to speed up their timetable regarding their plans for both Indo-China and Thailand, and strengthen their resolve to bring about the accomplishment of these plans. In the case of Indo-China, the Japanese were to take increasingly coercive measures and not to shy away from the use of military force if necessary. The assembled members also agreed on the necessity of negating British and American influence in the region. The discussions then centred on the need to force Japan's mediation proposals upon both Indo-China and Thailand as well as the need to obtain from both nations, their recognition of Japan's leadership role [in Asia]. With regard to Thailand, at the earliest possible date, a new agreement was to be concluded. 

With regard to French Indo-China, the Japanese were prepared to enter into economic negotiations at the earliest opportune moment, while, at the same time, making efforts to promote a better general understanding between Japan and Indo-China. There was also some discussion of

---

40 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 9,287. See also Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 1: 338. A second document, also dated January 1941, included an annotated map of Kota Bharu and vicinity, entitled: "Aerial Military Maps of the East Coast of British Malaya, Section 1." This map had been furnished by the Naval General Staff in October 1941. See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 9,257.

41 Although not specifically stated, presumably this referred to some sort of a military pact, as agreed upon during the Sunday morning breakfast meeting of 19 January. See pp. 224-25 of this thesis.
securing a three-way military and political alliance with both the Vichy and the French Indo-Chinese Governments. Ultimately, the Japanese were aiming for permission to use specific harbours and airfields located within Indo-China.\footnote{On February 1941, Hasanuma Shigeru reported to Kido: "The Navy aims to use Camrahn Bay and the airbase near Saigon." Quoted in Tsunoda, "The Navy's Role," p. 24 In the version in IMTFE, \textit{Transcript}, p. 11,745, it says "\ldots airbases near Saigon." (emphasis added).}

Just before this Liaison Conference got under way, the Emperor's chief aide-de-camp spoke with Marquis Kido regarding the agenda on the table. Dispensing with the hyperbole inappropriate to an Imperial Liaison Conference, Hasanuma Shigeru was able to tell Kido in a more forthright manner, that the purpose of the "General Principles of the Policy Towards French Indo-China and Thailand," were as follows:

> To establish the leading position of the Empire in French Indo-China and Thailand by utilising the opportunity presented by their having accepted our arbitration, in order to contribute to the preparation for the southward policy. The Navy aims to use Camrahn Bay and the air bases near Saigon. But as this cannot be stated openly, it has been decided to represent the action taken as aimed at the preservation of trade and communications, and security against war between French Indo-China and Thailand. In case military force is to be used to attain the objective, it has been decided to ask the further approval of the Emperor.\footnote{IMTFE, \textit{Transcript}, p. 11,745.}

Adoption of the general policy outline didn't proceed smoothly: the time-frame for when to resort to the use of force was a source of heated debate between Foreign Minister Matsuoka and certain members of the High Command. The Army staff officers were looking for approval to take
over Indo-China and to force a military pact upon Thailand. Matsuoka argued against these ideas, saying that diplomatic ideas must first be tried. The Emperor later agreed with Matsuoka, indicating that Japan should not seek to profit from the Franco–Thai border dispute “like a thief at a fire.” In the end, all agreed to bide their time and see how events would unfold.44

**Settlement of the Franco–Thai Dispute**

On the morning of 4 February 1941, the Thai delegation, headed by H.H. Prince Vairnvaidyakorn (Prince Wan), took off from Bangkok’s Don Muang airport, heading for Tokyo. The peace conference opened with much ceremony on 7 February 1941. As was the case with the recent cease-fire negotiations, the Thai cast an early pall over the proceedings. On 8 February, the day after the opening ceremonies, the first closed-session of the mediation talks began. As their opening gambit, the Thai presented a “high-handed” memo expressing their belief that it was the Annamite Range which formed the most natural north-south boundary between Thailand and Indo-China. As

---

44 Stowe, *Siam Becomes Thailand*, p. 179; Minami, *Sensō kakudai no kózu*, p. 186; Hattori, *Daitōa sensō zenshi*, pp. 46-47; NGS, 22: 298-300. According to Butow, the Emperor was reported to have said: “Personally he did not like the idea of Japan’s playing the thief at a fire—of taking advantage of the weakness of the other side by making demands upon it. But if Japan were to cope with the tremendous changes occurring in the world, a policy of mistaken benevolence would not do.” The Emperor then offered his approval. See Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War*, p. 198, and n. 27. A later decision concluded that diplomacy would be the first option but, if by the beginning of April, the French still refused to conclude a military pact, military operations would be discussed. This decision received Imperial sanction on 1 February. See Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies*, p. 157.
such, this range should, according to the Thai, constitute the new border; with Indo-China controlling the territory east of that line, while Thailand took control of the territories west of the mountain chain.

The French representative, who was stunned by this unexpected demand, stated that at the time the border dispute had begun, the Thai had requested only the return of the two small enclaves opposite Luang Prabang and Pakse as well as a re-delimitation of the border to make it conform to the thalweg of the Mekong: these were the items which the French had agreed to discuss. Therefore, according to the French representative, it would be difficult for the French to now recognise the validity of Thailand’s demands.

The territory which they were seeking to regain had swelled to several hundred-times what it had been in their original proposal. Because the French refused to countenance such enormous demands, Matsumiya Jun requested that the Thai retract their opening demands and resubmit, in writing, a new set of proposals which might permit a resumption of the negotiations. And just to complicate matters further, while these negotiations were being carried out in Tokyo, rumours now appeared suggesting that the Japanese had landed a force at Songkhla in southernmost Thailand and that Japanese naval vessels had been spotted in the Gulf of Siam and at Cam Ranh Bay.

The following day, at a second closed-session meeting, the Thais submitted a revised set of proposals. As they did not differ substantially from the original Thai demands, the disputants remained at odds with one another. As a stipulation for further discussions, the French wanted it understood that they were only empowered by their home Government to discuss matters relating to the areas of Luang Prabang and Pakse as well as the riverine border along the Mekong. Obviously,
the Thai were not yet prepared to alter their stance and the meeting ended, once again, in deadlock. The representatives of Thailand and France were, however, in agreement that the cease-fire which was due to expire shortly, should be extended an additional two weeks. This meant that the cease-fire would now be due to expire at 12:00 M. on 25 February (Tokyo time).  

For Matsuoka, this was a disheartening first step into the world of international mediation. If he’d been hoping for a quick resolution to the negotiations, this was to be a bitter taste of things to come. Prince Wan was to later say that he’d bid high from the start sensing that if his demands had to be scaled-back (he surely knew they would be), then at the very least, the two enclaves would be returned to Thailand.

The Thai clung persistently to their extravagant demands, while the French were just as adamantly in their refusal to consider the Thai claims. The Japanese, sensing that such stubbornness on the part of both disputants would lead nowhere, decided that a new approach was necessary to get the talks back on track. They therefore opted to hold separate meetings with each side. At Matsuoka’s request, Special Ambassador Matsumiya Jun met with Prince Wan in an attempt to convince him to be more reasonable in his demands. Prince Wan responded that the best compromise he could offer was to limit Thai demands to the return of the areas lost in 1904: Battambang, Sisophon, and Siem Reap, as well as most of Laos. Unfortunately, this was still asking for more than the French were

---

45 NGS, 22: 302-03. In this version of events, the date of the second closed-session is inadvertently given as the second day of the ninth month, rather than the ninth day of the second month. (Tokyo time).

willing to concede and it became necessary for Matsumiya to engage in some feverish negotiating sessions with Prince Wan. Finally, through a mixture of cajolery and a secret promise that Japan would guarantee, at the very least, the return of the two much sought-after enclaves, Prince Wan agreed to rejoin the negotiations. On 13 February, Matsuoka related these latest developments to his Government and although Prince Wan hadn’t actually insisted upon it, Matsuoka also reported that the Thai would be satisfied if the three Cambodian provinces were also included.47

The third session convened on 17 February with Japan presenting to the Thai and French representatives a set of proposals formulated by Foreign Minister Matsuoka. Under the terms of the proposals, the two west bank enclaves which were lost to the French in 1904, as well as parts of north-western Cambodia, would revert to Thai sovereignty. In return, the Thai were to pay an indemnity to the French of 10 million Thai baht (15 million yen). The method of payment was to be determined as a separate matter. The deal excluded the return of the magnificent temples of Angkor in Siem Reap province.48

The Thai balked at the idea of paying an indemnity. For them, any payment would amount to them buying back from the French, land which they felt had been stolen from them in the past. In addition to this, much of the territory in question was currently being occupied by troops of the Thai military as a result of their successful January offensive. Although the French stated that they would not insist on an indemnity, neither were they prepared to give up such large tracts of land in Cambodia. Once again it seemed unlikely that the two sides could find common-ground, although

---

47 Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” pp. 480-82.

both agreed to send the particulars of the latest proposals to their home Governments.

Matsuoka, by now frustrated with the difficulties he was encountering, paid a visit to Germany’s Ambassador Ott, giving him a copy of the negotiating proposals and asking him to forward these to the Reich Government “with the request that it support its acceptance by the Vichy Government.” Matsuoka pointed out that it would also be in Germany’s best interests if Vichy were to accept the proposals. He cited the following reasons:

(1) Failure of the negotiations would mean “loss of prestige” not just for Japan but indirectly to the other signatories to the Tripartite Pact.

(2) Failure of negotiations would inevitably lead to resumption of hostilities.

(3) Hostilities would make it impossible for Germany to obtain strategic raw materials, especially rubber from Indo-China.

(4) Conclusion of the agreement is extremely desirable because of the danger that Thailand might otherwise switch over to the British camp and in that circumstance a new theatre of war, and one undesirable for the Axis powers, might come into existence. He finished off by saying that Britain was doing all it could to cause the negotiations to fail.49

Certain officers in the Army General Staff were angered with Matsuoka over the fact that this latest set of proposals had been presented without the inclusion of a deadline. Their displeasure was reflected in an advisory paper which they drew up and which they wanted incorporated into the next round of negotiations. The document was essentially a threat to use force if the French refused the

49 Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 18 February 1941. See DGFP, series D, 12: 115-16.
articles of the mediation proposal. If, on the other hand, the Thai refused, the French were to be persuaded to offer the Thai more favourable terms. A deadline of 23 February was included—or, at the very latest, the 25th.50

This document was the source of some heated debate during a Liaison Conference which convened the following day. The Chiefs of Staff were all in favour of the deadline, while Matsuoka was on his own in taking a more flexible stance. The General Staff officers—particularly in the Army—were searching for any pretext to move en masse into Indo-China, but Matsuoka was worried that such a move might provoke a conflict with Britain and America. Army Minister Tōjō Hideki expressed the opinion that if they were to just continue adding two-week extensions to the cease-fire agreement, it would be difficult to reach some sort of a compromise. In addition, the French, he feared, were using delaying tactics and simply put, the Japanese were being “taken in.” Matsuoka responded by saying that if the Japanese were to attach a deadline, problems would just get worse; not just for the Thai, but the Indo-Chinese as well. “Is that what you want,” asked Matsuoka. Chief of the South Seas Bureau Saitō Otoji expressed the opinion that the disputants had to reach some sort of a compromise as soon as possible for fear that the present problems could evolve into a wider war if they weren’t quickly settled. “And if we can’t get anywhere by the 25th . . . what then?” fired back Matsuoka. “We must make the 25th our goal,” offered the chief of the Army General Staff, Sugiyama Hajime (Gen). “Anyway,” he continued, “. . . in the end we may have to extend the

50 For a complete text of the document, see Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” p. 488. A Japanese-language version can be found in Sambô Hombu, Sugiyama Memo, 1: 182.
deadline, so we could even aim for the 23rd."\textsuperscript{51} In any case, the disagreement remained unresolved—at least for the time being—because the meeting adjourned early to allow the participants to attend a state funeral.

The official Thai response to the 17 February proposals came on the 21st and, as expected, they refused to pay an indemnity for land which they felt was rightfully their own. They also wanted to take control of the town of Siem Reap as well as Khong Island in the Mekong, and the ruins of Angkor Wat which France had acquired from them in 1907. The Thai further indicated that they reserved the right to demand the return to Thailand of certain "remnants" of Laos and Cambodia at an appropriate time. The Thai plenipotentiary, Prince Wan, also stated that if they didn't have to pay an indemnity, they could be satisfied with the border as it was defined in the mediation proposals. However, if the Thai were expected to pay the indemnity, he'd received a Government directive indicating the Thai would want a larger slice of Cambodia.\textsuperscript{52}

By the following day, the situation was becoming increasingly tense because the French had yet to give their response despite Matsuoka having pressed René Robin for an answer two days earlier. Matsuoka knew that it was not going to get any easier to keep the more aggressive officers in the Army General Staff pacified if the French were to continue delaying matters. During the early evening of the 22nd, Bureau Chief Saitô visited both Arsène-Henry and René Robin to inform them that the Thai side had already given an affirmative response and to remind them that the present cease-fire agreement was due to expire at 12:00 M. on the 25th. He also warned them that the Thai opposed

\textsuperscript{51} NGS, 22: 306.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 307.
any further extension. Obviously the threat of a resumption of hostilities was meant to hasten a French response. Saitô also gave notice that by the middle of the following day, the Japanese mediators were going to have to make some sort of decision about what their own attitude would be and that it would be a regrettable development if the French reply was too late in coming; he then requested a response by the following day.53

At the 12th roundtable Liaison Conference of 23 February, Matsuoka began by giving a brief outline of Japan's position on the primary points of mediation. He stated that the thalweg, or deep-water channel of the Mekong—in keeping with generally accepted international practice—should represent the natural border, although he conceded that the return of certain islands in the river was likely to prove problematic. Matsuoka still believed that a compensatory sum of 10 million Thai baht should be paid to the French, although he was also considering an alternate sum totalling 15 million baht. Matsuoka also expressed the belief that it would be necessary for the Thai side to resign themselves to the loss of Angkor Wat (the ancient temple structures in Siem Reap province), and the island of Koh Khong in the Mekong River. Finally, Matsuoka indicated his desire to reach some sort of a secret agreement with the Thai concerning the future of Laos. Army Minister Tôjô then spoke up, expressing his view that they should consider relying on Germany [to put pressure on the French]. Despite having already approached Ambassador Ott about German help in pressuring Vichy, Matsuoka inexplicably responded by saying that it would be better if they first exhausted all other options.54

53 Ibid.
54 Ibid., pp. 307-308. See also Sambô Hombu, Sugiyama Memo, 1: 182.
While the conference was still in progress, Arsène-Henry arrived to deliver the French response
to the mediation proposals of 17 February. Just after the noon-hour had passed, Matsuoka left the
conference room to meet with the ambassador. The message from Arsène-Henry stated that the
French Government couldn’t accept the mediation proposals as they presently stood, but they
indicated that they were tentatively willing to concede the areas gained under the 1904 treaty (the
Luang Prabang and Pakse enclaves), as well as relinquishing control of certain areas along
Cambodia’s northern border. Arsène-Henry also revealed that the French Government wouldn’t
oppose the dropping of the indemnity clause. Arsène-Henry then went on to explain that when the
French had originally consented to having the Japanese mediate the border dispute, only the problems
of Luang Prabang and Pakse were in question; then the Thai had suddenly expanded their list of
demands. The ambassador also pointed out that some of the areas in Cambodia they were being
asked to retrocede, were inhabited solely by Cambodians: a people who had no connection with
Thailand nor with the Thai people. Therefore, the French simply couldn’t agree to retrocede these
areas. Matsuoka then asked the French ambassador to explain what he had meant when he indicated
that the French were prepared to “relinquish control of certain areas along Cambodia’s northern
border.” The French Government, replied Arsène-Henry, had absolutely no problem with
Battambang province but they were only prepared to redefine the border to traverse the southern
slope of the Dangrek mountain range (the watershed of this mountain range already formed part of
the existing border), which lay along the northern edge of the Cambodian provinces of Siem Reap
and Kompong Thom.55 Matsuoka responded that no matter what, the French were always finding

55 NGS, 22: 308.
some reason to avoid a compromise. Then, just as Saitô had done, Matsuoka resorted to the use of a subtle threat by reminding Ambassador Arsène-Henry that at the latest, the cease-fire was due to lapse at 12:00 M. on the 25th, after which hostilities could once again break out. The ambassador remained silent: unable to respond. Matsuoka picked up where he had left off; this time with an emotional appeal. Although the area of ceded Cambodian territory in question constituted tens of thousands of square kilometers, said Matsuoka, if the French were to take a closer look at the general situation, couldn’t they understand that in terms of relative importance, it would be better if the French were to just satisfy themselves with matters as they presently stood, rather than risk jeopardising the peace and tranquillity of Southeast Asia. In any case, continued Matsuoka, the Japanese would study the French response and as the nation in charge of the mediation process, they’d make a decision as to what their own response would be.56

The discussion ended on that note and Matsuoka returned to his seat at the Liaison Conference. He appeared determined not to give up on the French and he told the others in the meeting that he wished to extend the cease-fire agreement an additional ten days. Once again, chief of Staff Sugiyama expressed his displeasure with what he perceived to be French “delaying tactics.” Sugiyama was obviously suspicious of the French and he stated that additional extensions to the cease-fire might be a good diplomatic technique, but there was the danger that the French could just be “buying time” in order to carry out further military preparations. Sugiyama’s observation betrays how poorly he was informed as to French Indo-China’s situation, for they were in no position to seriously augment their military capabilities. In any case, he was only prepared to extend the cease-fire for one week beyond

56 Ibid., 309.
the 25th. General Sugiyama then drew Matsuoka's attention to the fact that it had already been decided that military force would be used if both sides couldn't reach some sort of a compromise. Naval Minister Oikawa Koshirô then offered his opinion: “Since the time of the decision to use force” [made at the 30 January 1941 roundtable Liaison Conference], said Oikawa, “the situation in Britain and America had changed.” “The same could also be said for the situation in both Thailand and Indo-China.” Oikawa continued: “The decision to use military force, therefore deserved further study.” Vice-Chief of the Navy General Staff Admiral Kondô Nobutake agreed with Oikawa saying: “Military force is a measure of last resort. At this time, I would like to avoid taking a stance against Britain and America.” Admiral Kondô then went on to say: “If we were to make a comparative study of whether to use military force or to back down, I think it would be less damaging to back down.” Again, Sugiyama voiced his opposition by saying that further delays were giving the British and Americans more time to manoeuvre behind the scenes.57

After further discussions, those present at the conference were able to agree upon a set of proposals entitled: “Steps to be Taken Henceforth in Mediating the Thai–French Indo-China Dispute.” The articles included a further extension to the cease-fire (until 7 March), provisions for further mediation proposals, and the use of German pressure on Vichy.58 At 5:00 P.M. on the 24th—

57 Ibid., 93. In the Japanese version of Kondô’s statement, the admiral uses the expression “te wo ageru”—literally: “to raise the hands,” figuratively: “to surrender.” The Japanese author has added parenthetically that he assumes the admiral’s meaning was to draw back or retreat from the use of force. Portions of this conversation can also be found in TSM, 6: 128.

58 Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” pp. 500-01. According to a 27 February telegram from Ambassador Ott to the German Foreign Ministry, in conversation with Matsuoka, the Foreign
after first having presented the proposals to the Emperor for his approval—Matsuoka informed the Thai and the French of the contents of the latest mediation offer. These latest proposals dropped the idea of an indemnity, but included a proposal for the demilitarisation of the ceded areas in Cambodia. These proposals were to be agreed upon by the 28th. 59

At 11:30 A.M. on the 26th, the Thai plenipotentiary, Prince Wan, paid a visit to Matsuoka to inform him that the Thai had accepted Japan’s “final” mediation proposals. However, at 2:00 P.M. on the following day, when Matsuoka met with Arsène-Henry, he was informed by him that the French were unable to agree to these proposals. Then at 12:00 M. the following day—the 28th—Matsumiya Jun requested a meeting with the French representative, René Robin. At the meeting he urged Robin to accept the proposals and, if he were unable to do so, Matsumiya suggested he present some sort of counter-proposals.

Matsumiya and Robin met again at 5:00 P.M. that same afternoon. Robin took the opportunity to request an indefinite cease-fire arrangement as had been provided for according to the provisions of the cease-fire agreement signed in Saigon; this Matsumiya rejected outright. Robin made no protest against Matsumiya’s rejection. Instead, he passed him a set of proposals, prefacing them with the declaration that they represented certain of his own ideas. All four of the alternatives which Monsieur Robin presented included the return of the Luang Prabang and Pakse areas. The first alternative also

included the retrocession of an area contained within a line running from Poipet to Sisophon, Northeast to 14° north latitude, then east to the Mekong. The second alternative—in addition to the two enclaves—included an area of Laos between China and the Thai border. The third alternative offered up Khong Island in the Mekong and a strip of land along the southern Cambodian coast near Khompong Som, while the final alternative—which could hardly have been given serious consideration—offered the return of an unspecified “lump” of territory, in addition to the two enclaves.60

At 10:30 A.M. on 2 March, Arsène-Henry met with Matsuoka to inform him of five additional conditions which the French Government wanted included. He also made it known that the French were acting under duress resulting from Japanese intimidation. The five conditions were as follows:

(1) All territory retroceded to the Thai was to be demilitarized. The people residing in the said areas were to be accorded equal treatment whether they were Thai or French nationals.

(2) A triangular zone of territory fronting Luang Prabang was to remain under French Indo-Chinese sovereignty.

(3) The land-zone fronting the Cambodian territory of Stung Treng was also to remain under French Indo-Chinese sovereignty.

(4) Even if the border was redefined to be the thalweg, or deep-water channel of the Mekong, the two islands of Khong and Khone were to remain French territory.

(5) The Japanese Government was to provide the French Government with a guarantee stating that

60 NGS, 22: 311.
the results of Japan's mediation would be immutable.\textsuperscript{61}

Matsuoka's first reaction was to express his disagreement with Arsène-Henry that the Japanese were intimidating the French into compliance. Although he would have liked to discuss the point in greater detail, he explained that, for want of time, he would have to refrain for the present. Matsuoka then expressed his doubts as to the possibility of demilitarising all the retroceded territory. However, as to the other conditions, they'd be given consideration following a thorough study.\textsuperscript{62}

Although Matsuoka was making every effort to ward off military actions being taken against the French, it was, ironically, the unyielding attitude of the French themselves that was compounding his worries. Japan's "final" mediation proposals of 24 February were to have been decided upon without further qualifications or considerations. The French, however, continued to seek both—much to Matsuoka's consternation.

To a certain degree, Matsuoka's dignity was at stake in this, his first effort at mediating an international dispute. He had also to avoid jeopardising the Japan–Indo-China economic talks which were currently taking place in Tokyo. Consequently, he continued to make an extra effort to accommodate the French; even going so far as to allow René Robin to suggest proposals of his own. In essence, then, Matsuoka had not only to placate the French officials, but the Japanese military as well.

Little did the French realise the potential disaster they were inviting as a result of their intransigence. So long as the mediation process was still underway, perhaps the French felt they had

\textsuperscript{61} Flood, "Japan's Relations with Thailand," pp. 517-18.

\textsuperscript{62} Ibid., pp. 311-12.
some “breathing-space.” Surely the Japanese were not prepared to move militarily, at least for the time being. To have done so, would undoubtedly have exposed them as both treacherous and untrustworthy in the eyes of the world; that is, as supposedly “impartial” mediators, for them to suddenly attack one of the parties to the mediation process, would have brought only great shame upon them, and in this knowledge, perhaps the French could take some solace.

However, unknown to Vichy, on 28 February, certain officers of the Army General Staff and the Army Ministry had drawn up a joint plan proposing measures to be taken in the event the French authorities failed to accede to Japan's “final” mediation proposals. This paper, which bore the cumbersome title: “Futsugawa ga waga saigo chôteian wo ōdaku sezaru hœai no sochian,” or “Steps to be Taken should the French side Fail to Accede to our Final Mediation Proposals,” became the topic of discussion at a 1 March roundtable Liaison Conference. The plan, as discussed, was to begin with the evacuation of Japanese residents from the Saigon area. The intimidation factor of such a move was not likely to be lost on the French. The Japanese were also to make preparations to begin troop movements by March 8th. The military was, however, prepared to suspend operations if the French bowed to the terms of Japanese mediation. After 8 March, Japan would also recognise Thailand’s right to seize any Indo-Chinese territory which they would have been rewarded by the terms of Japan's “final” mediation offer of 24 February. The Japanese were also prepared to furnish the Thai with military assistance in the forms of weaponry, munitions, and military advice.63

During the morning of the day that Arsène-Henry delivered his five conditions to Matsuoka (2 March), Bureau Chief Saitô Otoji had ordered the Japanese Minister in Bangkok, Futami Yasusato,  

63 TSM, 6: 128-29.
to pressure the Thai leadership into agreeing to one of René Robin's counter-proposals. The Thai were not interested in any of these proposals for a number of reasons: The second alternative would have resulted in the Thai sharing a common border with China in the retroceded area; this the Thai wished to avoid. None of the areas mentioned in the Robin proposals were considered prime territory and—with the exception of the two enclaves—none of the territories offered represented areas which the Thai had previously lost to the French.

Matsumiya Jun met with Robin late in the evening of 3 March. During the meeting, Matsumiya reminded Robin that the final deadline would soon be upon them and the French should leave any reservations they had [about accepting the "final" proposals] up to the Japanese mediation team. In other words, to put their faith in the Japanese to arrive at an equitable—perhaps even a favourable—resolution to the current deadlock. If that seemed to Robin to be unreasonable, Matsumiya suggested a temporary agreement. Since the general principles for mediation had already been agreed upon, Matsumiya suggested the French temporarily put aside their reluctance and submit to a provisional agreement indicating general accord. The minor problems could be worked out at a later date.

Robin didn't oppose the idea of an interim agreement. He did however, seek once again, to have the cease-fire deadline extended; this was again rejected by Matsumiya. Robin then picked up on Matsumiya's original thought and suggested that they might announce a joint communiqué indicating agreement on the main points—points on which both sides were of a like-mind. The details could be worked out at some time in the future.

---

64 Flood "Japan's Relations with Thailand," pp. 522-23 and 526.
At 11:00 A.M. on the 5th, Matsumiya Jun met with Arsène-Henry, who expressed his disapproval over the provisional agreement being considered by Matsumiya and René Robin. However, on the morning of the following day, Ambassador Arsène-Henry received a directive from his home Government indicating a sudden change of heart. He was instructed to inform Matsuoka that Vichy now agreed to the proposals as outlined in what had come to be known as “Plan A”—the mediation proposals put forth on 24 February.\(^6\) The French Government indicated that they’d had no choice but to accept because of the “force” they had come under from the Japanese. The French Government also indicated that they wanted this written into the official documents the countries would exchange; that is, the documents indicating French agreement to the mediation proposals. Not surprisingly, Matsuoka was against the inclusion of any such clause. “The inclusion of such an expression [force] in the official documents of exchange was unjustifiable,” said Matsuoka. Arsène-Henry then told Matsuoka that he would be happy with some sort of a compromise between “Plan A” and “Plan B.”\(^6\) Matsuoka indicated that he would like to accommodate the French, but he had his own proviso: the French should provide a written guarantee that they wouldn’t engage in hostile acts, nor would they enter into any hostile agreements directed against Japan. “The French weren’t likely to have any objections to such a provision,” responded Arsène-Henry.\(^6\)

Although it now appeared that agreement to the Japanese proposals was imminent, Matsuoka

\(^6\) NGS, 22: 315.

\(^6\) “Plan B” refers to the counter-proposals put forth by René Robin, which the Thai side had already rejected. See *ibid.*, pp. 314-15.

still seemed inexplicably dissatisfied with recent events. One may reasonably speculate that French expressions of coercion at the hands of the Japanese were a blow to Matsuoka's pride. While the Japanese military were interested in furthering their own designs, whether through aggression, manipulation, or any other means by which they might achieve their desiderata, Matsuoka was still a man of some integrity, and as a diplomat, he tried to present himself as being fair-minded. So perhaps it was as a sop to the French that he sought to reach a more equitable arrangement. Consequently, Matsumiya Jun was directed by Matsuoka to meet with the head of the Thai delegation, Prince Wan, to see if the Thai plenipotentiary could be persuaded to accept some sort of an agreement based upon the Robin counter-proposals. Despite some harsh words from Matsumiya, the Thai delegate refused to be swayed from the Thai's earlier agreement to the 24 February proposals.

At the same time, Matsuoka was meeting once again with Arsène-Henry and presenting him with a revised version of the 24 February mediation plan. This particular version was rejected by the French ambassador on the grounds that it didn’t include the demilitarisation of all the ceded areas.69 Meanwhile, Matsumiya Jun continued to debate with Prince Wan well into the early hours of the morning on the conciliatory merits of the proposals as put forth by René Robin. Prince Wan felt, however, that the Japanese were showing a flagrant bias towards the French and he argued just as forcibly against the acceptance of any of Robin’s motions. The Thai delegate remained adamant in his refusal to consider the Robin proposals when he met with Matsuoka the following morning.

At 3:30 P.M. that same day, Matsuoka met again with Prince Wan. During the meeting, Matsuoka revived the proposals by which France would retain the river bank opposite Stung Treng.

---

69 Flood, "Japan’s Relations with Thailand," pp. 533-34.
and all of the retroceded areas would be demilitarised. According to this revision, the thalweg of the Mekong would be the demarcation line of the Thai-Laos border but the large islands of Khong and Khone would be jointly administered, with France retaining all of the facilities located on the islands. Prince Wan appeared amenable to this new revision and Matsuoka left quickly to inform Arsène-Henry of a breakthrough in the deadlock. Arsène-Henry then had a hastily conducted meeting with René Robin during which he related the latest news. Robin believed these revisions should be sent to Vichy along with a recommendation that they be accepted. He further opined that Vichy was unlikely to reject them.\textsuperscript{70}

Although, during a subsequent meeting, Prince Wan protested that his position had been misconstrued, Matsuoka simply brushed him off. The following day he was informed by Matsuoka that the French had given their approval to the revised mediation proposals and therefore, there was nothing more to be said. Reluctantly, Prince Wan consented to the revised proposals after having spoken with Premier Phibun via the international telephone. He relayed the latter’s approval to Matsuoka at 6:00 P.M. on 10 March 1941, and the mediation plan was signed the following day.\textsuperscript{71}

The essential items in the mediation agreement, as recorded by Vadakarn, were as follows:

(1) France cedes to the Thai the district of Paklay, which is mentioned in Article II of the convention between France and Siam of February 13th, 1904, and the region lying to the north of the boundary

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., pp. 546-47. See also NGS, 22: 317-18. Prince Wan was later to say that his views had been misunderstood. According to information in Flood, \textit{ibid.}, pp. 551-52, when Prince Wan met with Matsuoka at 10:30 A.M. on 9 March (10 March in Tokyo), he asked him “.precisely what had been agreed upon” See also Reynolds, “Ambivalent Allies,” p. 147.

\textsuperscript{71} Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” p. 552.
line between the provinces of Battambang and Pursat and the region lying on the right bank of the Mekong river bounded in south [sic] by the line running northward along the longitude from the point touching Grand Lac\textsuperscript{72} and the southernmost end of the boundary line between the provinces of Siem Reap and Battambang to the crossing point of that longitude and the line of the 15th degree G. of the latitude and then eastward along that line to the latitude to the Mekong River. However, a small area lying opposite to Stung Treng is reserved to French Indo-China.

(2) All of the above-mentioned ceded territories are to be made demilitarized zones, and French nationals and the people of French Indo-China are to enjoy an absolutely equal treatment with nationals of Thailand throughout these areas with respect to entry, domicile, and occupations, and their pursuit.

(3) The Government of Thai will respect the mausolea of the Luang-Prabang Royal House situated in the triangular zone lying opposite to Luang-Prabang, and afford facilities for its preservation, worship, etc.

(4) The Mekong frontier will be fixed in accordance with the principle of the deep water channel, but the two islands, namely, Khong and Khone, will, under the sovereignty of Thailand, be jointly administered by France and Thailand, and the existing French establishments on the islands shall belong to France; (5) Thailand and France agree to renounce all financial claims against each other, arising out of the transfer of the said territories, but Thailand will pay France a sum of six million Indo-Chinese piasters [This was for a French railway line].\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{72} Cambodia's Grand Lac, or "Great Lake" is frequently known today by the name Tonlé Sap.

\textsuperscript{73} This text is reprinted verbatim from Vadakarn, \textit{Thailand's Case}, pp. 108-09. An English-language
Japan also exchanged letters with both the Thai and French Governments in which Japan guaranteed the settlement would be irrevocable, in exchange for guarantees that neither of the two countries would enter into any pact(s) with any third power or powers which could be deemed hostile towards Japan. In response to this second point, Arsène-Henry wrote Matsuoka telling him in part:

[B]eing desirous of avoiding all kinds of engagement which will involve their possessions in the Far East in a conflict between third powers, the Government of France hereby declare that they have no intention of entering into any agreement or understanding with a third power or powers regarding French Indo-China envisaging political, economic or military co-operation aimed either directly or indirectly against Japan.  

Ambassador Craigie was to comment cynically:

After the announcement of the award [to Thailand in the border dispute] Mr. Matsuoka pointed out to me triumphantly that my apparent apprehension lest Japan should exact a price for her exertions had been proven to be groundless. I replied that in the most expensive shops the price was seldom marked in plain figures.

Only Premier Phibun and the Japanese seemed to celebrate the outcome. The Asahi Shim bun, Tokyo’s leading daily, bore the headlines: “A Brilliant Page in the Empire’s Diplomatic History” and


74 DAFR, 3: 297.

75 Craigie, Behind the Japanese Mask, p. 114.
“Our Pre-eminent Position Firmly Established.”

A few days later Prime Minister Konoe made a speech to the House of Peers in which he hailed the mediation’s successful conclusion as a diplomatic victory for Japan earning her prestige as a stabilising element in the Far East and paving the way to the establishment of the “Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.”

Not surprisingly, the French found no reason to celebrate. Throughout the mediation process they had sought to forestall and resist each new initiative the Japanese had put before them. Their willingness to resist the Japanese was evident well before the mediation process even got under way: using such means as they could to prevent Japanese encroachment in Indo-China. The French were a proud people and, but for the intimidation of the Japanese, seem unlikely to have given serious consideration to Thailand’s calls for a re-delimitation of their borders. But they could only avoid the inevitable for so long, and when the final terms of the mediation process had been agreed upon, France had lost much and gained nothing.

76 Asahi Shimbun, 11 and 12 March 1941, 1. Quoted in Flood, “Japan’s Relations with Thailand,” p. 564.
77 Murakami, “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina,” p. 255.
78 There is some discrepancy in the literature as to how much land the French actually returned to the Thai. In The China Weekly Review 96, no. 2 (15 Mar. 1941): 46-47, the figure given is 18,000 square miles. In T.A. Bisson, Foreign Policy Bulletin XX, no. 22 (21 Mar. 1941): 2, the figure given is 21,750 square miles. Mitchell gives a similar figure of 21,000 square miles. See Mitchell, “Thailand—A New Key Area,” p. 388. In Landon, “Thailand’s Quarrel with France,” 41, a much higher figure of 43,000 square miles is given. Testimony given at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East stated: “The solution imposed by Japan represented a cession of 69,000 square
Like Premier Phibun, Matsuoka was a “man with a mission.” According to Horinouchi et. al., it would be difficult to understand Matsuoka without knowing something of his personality. His Vice Minister, Ôhashi Chûichi, noted that Matsuoka was above all, a complicated man; he could be impulsive, and seemed to be a man of many contradictory faces. He could be both loquacious and secretive; he gave the impression of being scheming and ambitious when, in truth, he had a sincere side as well.79 In any case, when the idea of Japan assuming the role of arbitrator was first considered, Matsuoka had shown some pro-Thai inclinations. This situation began to change when he sensed that the mediation process was in jeopardy of failure. With each new hurdle, his attitude towards the French became more accommodating until, in the end, he was advocating the merits of René Robin’s counter-proposals. This apparent shift in Matsuoka’s allegiance seems to have been born of his determination to bring the mediation process to a “successful” conclusion. Whether the Thai or the French came out on top became less important as the mediation talks dragged on.

Any gains which the Thai received through the mediation process have to be considered modest. Although they had, over the decades, given up approximately 300,000 square miles of territory to the French, to their dismay, the amount of land they were able to recover probably constituted less than 15 percent of this number. With the recovery of Battambang and Siem Reap provinces, the Thai did, however, receive some of the most valuable rice-producing lands in Indo-China as well as a large kilometers and 334,000 people, while claims by Siam previous to February 7 did not exceed 23,000 square kilometers and 64,000 inhabitants. See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,721.

79 NGS, 21: 275.
sapphire mine located near Pailin in south Battambang. The counsellor at the U.S. embassy in
Japan, Eugene Dooman was to tell Vice Minister Ôhashi that it was his opinion that "the award by
Japan to Siam of the provinces of Laos and Cambodia would undoubtedly lead to the most serious
disorders in Indo-China, as the French are strongly opposed to any substantial cession of territory to
the Siamese." Joseph Grew revealed his own suspicions concerning Japan’s motives in mediating
the border dispute. On 10 April 1940, he wrote:

The net result seems to be that Japan gets a stranglehold on Indo-China and at least a semi-
stranglehold on Thailand for use in such time in the future as it suits the purpose of the Japanese
to prepare to attack Malaya, Burma, or Singapore. The southward advance is, however, marking
time pending developments in Europe, and [mean]while the Japanese have at least one eye
cocked toward the United States.

The British were entertaining fears similar to those expressed by both Grew and Hull, and Hull’s
perceptions were likely to have been influenced by a conversation he’d had previously with Lord
Halifax. Lord Halifax had informed Hull on the 8th, that Britain feared that the Japanese—as
mediators in the border dispute—might attempt to exact from the Thai, supplementary allotments of
tin and rubber, a share of which could then be re-exported to Germany.

80 The China Weekly Review 96, no. 2 (15 Mar. 1941): 46. Reynolds has indicated that in the official
Thai view, they had lost 467,500 square kilometers of territory to the French. See Reynolds,
81 See FRUS, Japan, II: 142.
82 Grew, Ten Years, p. 378.
83 Quoted in Miner, "United States Policy Toward Japan," pp. 185-86.
After the conclusion of the mediation talks, Matsuoka wasted very little time before heading off to Europe. However, before he could depart, it was first necessary that he receive some input from his Foreign Ministry advisors as well as hearing some recommendations from the military authorities with regard to his scheduled meetings with the European heads-of-state.

The record of the 3 February 1941 Liaison Conference indicates that at that particular meeting, the Japanese discussed thoroughly the matter of Matsuoka's upcoming sojourn to Europe. A draft paper entitled: “Outline for Negotiations with Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union” was the product of those discussions. The decisions reached in the “outline” were only meant to be a working plan and were not intended to be taken as formal instructions for Matsuoka. The central objective of the upcoming negotiations with the Soviet Union, according to the outline, was to obtain “harmonious relations” between Russia and the Axis powers for the purpose of keeping the peace and enhancing Japan’s international position. It was further hoped that this would ease Japanese relations with America and enhance the possibility of the Soviets cutting off aid to Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists.84

Apparently, easing the strained relations between Japan and America was going to be a difficult task. Coincidentally, on the same day that this draft paper was produced, the American Government tightened the noose on Japan once again; this time, adding copper, brass, zinc, nickel and potash to the embargo list.

One of the difficulties which arose in connection with the draft of 3 February, was the question

84 Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 347.
of Germany's reaction regarding Japanese efforts to curry favour with the Soviets. The general consensus was that Germany would welcome this attempt at rapprochement since they themselves had already concluded a non-aggression pact with Russia. Logically speaking, however, one would presume that the Germans would have preferred to have the Soviets and Japanese do nothing which would tend to ease the tension between these two arch-rivals. It would seem to work to Germany's advantage if the Soviets had always to be wary of an enemy on their eastern front. In fact, after the German offensive against the Soviet Union began, Germany very much wanted the Japanese to attack the Soviets in the east—a topic to which we shall return later in the paper.85 On the other hand, a Japanese assault against the Soviet Union would be less likely to divert the attention of the U.S. away from Europe; at least to the same degree than would further Japanese moves southward.86 The Japanese also decided at this time, that they might entice the Russians by offering to restore fishing rights reserved to Japan under the Japan–Soviet Fishing Treaty and "the rights to the oil fields in northern Sakhalien." This latter concession was of great concern to the Japanese Navy and the conference participants spent some time addressing these concerns.87

85 According to information which Grew received from "an entirely reliable source," Germany would have preferred to see Japan attack the Soviets rather than continue with her southern advance. See Grew, Ten Years, pp. 408-09.

86 Matsuoka had apparently told his colleagues that Hitler had advised him that the Japanese should attempt to improve their relations with the Soviets through some sort of a pact. If this were true, then Hitler would knowingly have tried to influence Japan into entering into a contract which would undoubtedly have left them in a quandary should Germany then attack Russia. See Grew, Ten Years, p. 402.

87 This information is taken from Tōjō's testimony. See IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 36,213-15.
During a conference which took place on 13 February, the participants once again spent some time on the subject of Matsuoka’s upcoming trip to Europe. Some specific proposals which Matsuoka was to present the Russians were formulated during the course of this conference. They were as follows: (1) Seek Soviet co-operation in the defeat of Britain by subscribing to the Ribbentrop plan; (2) seek to improve Japan’s relations with the Soviet Union by concluding a pact of friendship, preferably a non-aggression pact; (3) attempt to purchase North Sakhalin by using Germany’s good offices; (4) attempt to secure a five-year guarantee of oil deliveries from Sakhalin, after which the coal and oil concessions would be returned to the Soviets with the stipulation that for the following five years, Japan would be permitted to purchase the same amount of oil; (5) secure an agreement under which Japan would recognise the Soviet Union’s position in Sinkiang and Outer Mongolia in return for Russian recognition of Japan’s position in north China and Inner Mongolia and; (6) request that the Soviet Union end its aid to Chiang Kai-shek.\footnote{Kase, \textit{Journey to the Missouri}, pp. 156-57.}

After discussions relating to the Russia leg of Matsuoka’s journey, some time was devoted to the matter of his visit to Berlin. As it was anticipated that Singapore would be a major topic of discussion, it is interesting to note that Shigemitsu Mamoru indicates it was made clear to Matsuoka by the Supreme Command “that he should enter into no undertaking to attack Singapore. . .”\footnote{Shigemitsu, \textit{Japan and Her Destiny}, p. 215.}

As a prelude to Matsuoka’s anticipated arrival, the Germans had been doing some preparatory planning of their own. The nature of these preliminary undertakings made clear enough those things which weighed most heavily on the minds of the Germans. For some time, German pressure had been
mounting on Japan to take some concerted action against Britain. On 27 February, for example, in response to earlier conversations between Ambassador Ott and Matsuoka, Ribbentrop had cabled the former in Tokyo, telling him to “work with all means at his disposal to the end that Japan takes possession of Singapore as soon as possible by surprise.” In addition, military specialists at the German embassy in Tokyo had already reached the conclusion that the chances of a Japanese attack against Singapore were “favourable.” And they further concluded that it should be carried out in steps: occupying Saigon and making landings on the Malayan Peninsula. Still others, however, were less confident of Japan’s resolve. Admiral Raeder, for one, was to tell Hitler on 18 March that, while Japan should attack Singapore immediately, there had been some indication from certain unnamed Japanese officers, that she would do so only if and when German forces landed in Britain.

---

90 Quoted in Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 346. See also Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 628. On 10 February, Matsuoka had informed the German ambassador that during his trip to Berlin, he wished to discuss with the Germans the matter of a preventative attack on Singapore. Ott had then cabled Ribbentrop with this information, adding: "Matsuoka is endeavoring to prevent America’s entry into the war in the spirit of the pact. To this end he has instructed Ambassador Nomura to dwell most emphatically on Japan’s unconditional loyalty to the pact. . . in talks with President Roosevelt and point out the senselessness of an American entry into the war." Matsuoka had also told Nomura that if the Japanese and Americans could find no basis for mutual understanding, “Japan had to join with others to prevent the United States from declaring war on Japan or from participating in the European war, and Japan had therefore to contract an alliance with Germany and Italy. See Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 2: 895.

91 IMTFF, Transcript, pp. 6,983-84.

92 Quoted in Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 628. See also Sanborn, Design for War, p. 285. There is a variation of this quote in Presseisen, Germany and Japan, pp.
Ernst von Weizsäcker also appears to have come to much the same conclusion. In a memorandum dated 24 March, he indicated to Ribbentrop that it was his belief that Japan was waiting upon further German victories before committing herself to any aggressive moves.93

In the spring of 1941, Matsuoka began his six-week tour of Russia and Germany. He and his entourage began their journey on 12 March (Tokyo time) aboard the Trans-Siberian railway, arriving in Moscow on 23 March. Matsuoka was to discuss with the Soviet Government those items which the Japanese had deliberated upon during the conference of 13 February and outlined above. Unfortunately, the record of his talks with Stalin—who hadn’t received a Japanese diplomat since 1928—are scant and rely mostly on the personal reports which Matsuoka gave to a few foreign diplomats in Moscow, and later to Ribbentrop and Hitler. According to these accounts, the day after his arrival, Matsuoka first met with Stalin and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov. Matsuoka began by telling his Russian hosts that it was his desire to bring about a non-aggression pact. Molotov, however, rejected this suggestion, proposing instead a neutrality pact. Matsuoka then told Stalin he believed that the “liberalism, individualism, and egoism” of the West had undercut the “moral communism” of Japan and he continued, now telling his hosts that it was the Anglo-Saxon races which were responsible for introducing such thinking into Japan. In order to reintroduce the Japanese people to their [moral philosophy] of former times, the Japanese would therefore have to fight the Anglo-Saxons and construct a “New World Order.” for it was the Anglo-Saxons who

---

93 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6476-77.
remained the impediment to the implementation of this “new order.” When his polemic had come to an end, there followed some discussion relating to outstanding matters between the two countries, but the talks appeared to be going nowhere and so the decision was made to postpone anything definite until after Matsuoka had returned from Germany.

Matsuoka arrived in Berlin on 26 March, where he engaged in several long talks with Hitler and Ribbentrop between the 27th of March and the 4th of April. The day after his arrival, Matsuoka was Ribbentrop’s guest of honour at a luncheon celebrating his arrival, and later that same day he met privately with Adolf Hitler for a two and a half hour tête-à-tête. During the course of these talks, the Germans tried to convince Matsuoka that they were in complete control of the situation in Europe and that the battle with Britain was reaching its final stages and only American support was sustaining the British. In an attempt to reassure Matsuoka that he would be backing a winner, Reich Minister von Ribbentrop went into some detail on the number of divisions and the quantity of weaponry which the Germans had at their disposal. In sum, Matsuoka received a fairly detailed outline of the present war situation in Europe as seen from the German perspective.

Not surprisingly, the subject of Japan launching an attack against Singapore also came up during Matsuoka’s talks in Berlin. Matsuoka took the opportunity to tell Hitler that he’d been in favour of the Tripartite Alliance long before war ever broke out in Europe, that he’d tried to bring this goal to

---

95 Langer and Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, p. 348. The Japanese ambassador in Moscow, Tatekawa Yoshitsugu, had already been working on the idea of a non-aggression pact but had met with no success. See also Shigemitsu, *Japan and Her Destiny*, p. 212.
96 Sontag and Beddie, eds., *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, especially, pp. 281-298.
fruition but without success, and that Japan should have attacked Singapore because "he did not favor the idea that Japan should join the alliance [Three Power Pact] without having made some contribution toward bringing about the collapse of Europe." However, as Matsuoka explained to his hosts, his own ideas had been overridden by others and although he was certain that, given time, he could bring these persons in "influential positions" to submit to his own point of view, at present he could "make no pledge on behalf of the Japanese Empire ..."97 He did, however, tell Hitler that: "Japan will act, and that decisively, when she has the feeling that she would otherwise lose a chance which might only return after a thousand years; and that Japan will advance regardless of the condition of her preparations."98

This was not exactly the sort of language which the Germans were hoping to hear from Matsuoka. What they really needed were some specific references as to the timing and tactical strategies of such an attack; for these were more likely to instil faith in the Germans than some indefinite proclamations which merely conveyed Matsuoka's personal sentiments. At the same time, Matsuoka was also sending mixed signals: promising on the one hand to act "decisively," while telling Hitler that he could make no promises. In regard to these seemingly contradictory statements, Ernst Presseisen has astutely observed that while Matsuoka was telling Hitler he could make no commitments without the Cabinet, "... when presented with the opportunity to sign a neutrality pact, the Tokyo Government had moved with unusual dispatch and by-passed both Cabinet and Privy

97 Ibid., p. 294.

98 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 6,489-90.
Council upon the direct authorisation of the Emperor.

Although the U.S. had little direct knowledge of what had transpired between Matsuoka and his hosts, Ambassador Grew (upon receipt of information from the American ambassador in Moscow, Laurence Steinhardt) reported to the State Department the gist of statements purported to have been made by the Japanese Foreign Minister to the Chiefs of the German and Italian diplomatic corps in Moscow. According to the information provided by Mr. Steinhardt, Matsuoka had apparently reiterated to these statesman, a pledge of solidarity not unlike that which he had given Adolf Hitler: informing them that "Japan was behind the Axis one hundred per cent." Ambassador Ott had also cabled the Foreign Ministry in Berlin to say that in response to queries Steinhardt had put to Matsuoka regarding Japan’s probable reaction to America’s entry into the European war, Matsuoka had replied: "Japan would certainly enter the war on the Axis side."

Matsuoka may have been taken in by what he’d heard from Herr Hitler and Foreign Minister Ribbentrop concerning Britain’s imminent defeat. During the same meeting, he’d assured his European colleagues: "After Britain’s collapse, there would be no continuation of the struggle by the United States, but that country would withdraw and would give its attention to its own affairs and interests."

99 Presseisen, Germany and Japan, p. 293.

100 According to Grew, Ten Years, p. 431, upon his return from Moscow, Matsuoka had also told certain ambassadors in Tokyo “… that he felt confident that the Japanese Government would decide, in almost every conceivable instance, to enter the war on the side of Germany.

101 DGFPC, series D, 12: 723.

102 Telegram from Joseph Grew to the State Department; dated 29 March 1941. See FRUS, Japan,
Satō Kenryō’s summary of Matsuoka’s thinking at this time—if accurate—lends support to the assumption that Matsuoka had surmised that a disheartened America would lose its will to fight once Great Britain had been vanquished by German military power. Reflecting on this matter, Satō expressed what he believed were Matsuoka’s convictions:

(1) Germany shall no doubt force surrender upon Great Britain. After the British surrender, America will not fight; (2) our own national policy shall—with justifiable resolve—remain unchanged. If we continue with our present course, we shall likely come into conflict with the U.S. Therefore, if [by maintaining the present course] we threaten the U.S., we should move cautiously; (3) America can be expected to take a stand only after we have gained a foothold in the southern regions; for the present, we need to avoid a conflict with the United States. Once we have gained that foothold, war with America will likely be unavoidable; (4) the reason that the “China Incident” has not yet been settled, is a result of American assistance to Chiang Kai-shek. Therefore, America is the key to settlement of that affair. Furthermore, peace between America and Japan is dependent upon direct diplomacy and any mediated negotiations between Japan and America would not be well received by the Japanese people; and finally; (5) as the above indicates, Japanese–American relations are at an exceedingly difficult stage. Perhaps the U.S. can be persuaded to have a change of heart towards Japan if he (Matsuoka) were to make a personal trip to America in order to express Japanese sincerity. It would be beneficial if he (Matsuoka) were to quickly wrap up his European tour and make a stopover in America.103

At this same time, Adolf Hitler had heard from several sources including Admiral Raeder and Ambassador Ott, that Matsuoka had high-hopes of reaching some sort of an agreement with Moscow and wasn’t likely to engage the British until he had some inkling of the Russian attitude. Raeder as

---

103 Satō, Daitōa sensō, p. 130.
well as Ernst von Weizsäcker had earlier recommended to the Führer that Matsuoka be told of Germany’s plans to attack Russia. By doing so, they had hoped to spare him from being caught off guard at some later time. During the course of his conversations with Ribbentrop and Hitler, Matsuoka was, in fact, told with bold frankness that Germany might soon attack Russia, but Matsuoka took this to be some sort of bluff.104

In a memorandum from Ott to Ribbentrop, dated 25 March 1941, Ott indicated that according to inquiries made of chief of the Navy General Staff Admiral Kondô, the Navy was preparing vigorously for an attack on Singapore and expected to be ready by May. Chief of the Army General Staff Sugiyama said the Army was also laying plans for an attack on Singapore—they too, were expected to be prepared by May. The condition necessary for execution of the plans would be a “free rear” towards Russia. The type of attack envisioned was not a naval attack, but by the airforce after establishing a base on shore.105 In light of Matsuoka’s professed designs on Singapore, the Germans concentrated their efforts on trying to convince him that the Japanese must occupy Singapore as quickly as possible.

104 Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 349. See also Sambô Hombu, Sugiyama Memo, 2: 62. On 6 June, Matsuoka also received a cable from Ōshima which reported that Hitler “seemed to be thinking of waging war against the Soviet Union.” See Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War, pp. 208-09. Weizsäcker had prepared a memorandum for Ribbentrop which stated: “... A clear statement which course our relations with Russia may take is unavoidable in order to protect him [Matsuoka] from surprises, and in order to control Japanese foreign policy through him after his European journey.” Quoted in Presseisen, Germany and Japan, pp. 289-90.
That the Germans would make such a suggestion should have come as no surprise to the Japanese. Back on 22 February, Weizsäcker had cabled Ribbentrop reporting that he had told Ōshima:

In her most personal interest she [Japan] should attack as soon as possible. The decisive blow would be an attack on Singapore, to eliminate England’s key position in East Asia and to secure for Japan a position in East Asia which it could only win in war. The occupation of Singapore must take place with lightening speed, if at all possible without a declaration of war and in the middle of peace, to contribute to a speedy termination of the war and to keep America out of the war (underlined in the original).  

Ambassador Ōshima had responded to Weizsäcker’s suggestion concerning an attack on Singapore, by telling him that preparations for the occupation of Singapore would be completed by the end of May—just as Admiral Kondō had told Ott—and that Japan would also be prepared to go to war with America as well. It was further noted that the timing for the occupation of Singapore should be co-ordinated with operations in Europe. Finally, he stated that in case of need, provisions had been made for the occupation of Hong Kong and the Philippines. In addition, and as already

106 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,463.

107 Ibid., pp. 6,463-64. In a telegram dated 27 February 1941, Ribbentrop had asked Ott: “to work with all the means at your command to the end that Japan takes Singapore by surprise as soon as possible. See DGFP, series D, 12: 183. A telegram from Ambassador Ott to Ribbentrop stated: “Activistic [sic] circles in Japan demand [a] preventative attack on Singapore as the key position in the Western Pacific Ocean.” See ibid., p. 6,983. Military specialists at Germany’s Tokyo embassy believed that such an attack had favourable prospects of success if it were carried out in stages beginning with the occupation of Saigon and landings on the Malay Peninsula. In his memoirs,
indicated, on 10 February, Matsuoka had told Ott that he'd wanted to discuss an attack on Singapore during his visit to Berlin.

On 28 February, Ribbentrop sent a follow-up cable to Weizsäcker in which he gave three reasons why he thought that speedy action was essential: (1) The occupation of Singapore would be a decisive blow to the British Empire; (2) America wouldn't enter the war since she wasn't yet prepared and wouldn't risk her fleet; and (3) Japan must secure for herself (for the coming new order in the world) the position which she hoped to have when peace was concluded.108

Matsuoka agreed that the lightening seizure of Singapore was essential and that it should be undertaken.109 In fact, "he had not the slightest doubt that the South Sea problem could not be solved by Japan without the capture of Singapore." However, as noted previously, he could make no definite commitment; promising only to do his personal best.110

During the course of the talks between Matsuoka and his German hosts, Ribbentrop revealed that he was clearly set against closer relations between the Tripartite powers and the Soviet Union

Ribbentrop wrote: "I cannot imagine that Ōshima told me in February, 1941 that the plan to attack Singapore would be ready by the end of May, 1941. In the first place Ōshima would hardly have known. If Ōshima had known, he most certainly would not have told me because the Japanese never tell such things." See Ribbentrop, Memoirs, 210.

108 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,464. See also Presseisen, Germany and Japan, p. 285.

109 In a 22 February 1941 telegram from Ernst von Weizsäcker to Ribbentrop, Weizsäcker noted that Ōshima had said he considered it necessary to take Hong Kong first, "which should not be very difficult" and that "Singapore had to be seized in grand style from the sea and from the land." See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 6,436.

110 Sontag and Beddie, eds., Nazi-Soviet Relations, p. 295.
because of the deterioration in German–Soviet relations. When Matsuoka asked Ribbentrop whether or not he should attempt to reach an agreement with the Soviets on a neutrality pact or a non-aggression pact, Ribbentrop told him "not to go into things too deeply with the Russians."¹¹¹

Although Matsuoka wasn’t made privy to specific German plans for invading Russia—which had been in progress for four months—Ribbentrop, as noted, had hinted strongly at the possibility of such an occurrence. During one stage of their discussions, he had told Matsuoka that he “... didn’t think Stalin was inclined toward adventure, but it was impossible to be sure. The German armies in the east were prepared at any time. Should Russia some day take a stand that could be interpreted as a threat to Germany, the Führer would crush Russia.”¹¹²

The Russo–Japanese Treaty of Neutrality

After wrapping up his talks in Berlin, Matsuoka then returned to the Soviet Union, arriving on 7 April. He immediately resumed his talks with Stalin and Molotov, picking up where they had left off when he was previously in Moscow. As per his instructions, Matsuoka was still eager to sign a non-aggression pact. The Russians, on the other hand, remained cool to the idea, telling Matsuoka that they were only prepared to enter into a treaty of neutrality with Japan. Believing it might help get the non-aggression pact he was seeking, Matsuoka (although he thought they’d been bluffing)

¹¹¹ Miyake, Nichi-doku-i sangoku dōmei, p. 434.
¹¹² Ibid., p. 285. Ribbentrop had also told Ôshima on 10 April that Germany might attack Russia. See Presseisen, Germany and Japan, p. 300.
contemplated telling Stalin that Hitler and Ribbentrop thought that a war with the Soviet Union was by no means out of the question, but he resisted the temptation and in the end, a neutrality pact was signed just hours before Matsuoka's 13 April departure. Ratification of the pact, which consisted of the following four articles, were exchanged in Tokyo on 20 May:

(1) Both contracting parties undertake to maintain peaceful and friendly relations between them and mutually respect the territorial integrity and inviolability of the other contracting party.

(2) Should one of the contracting parties become the object of hostilities on the part of one or several third powers, the other contracting party will observe neutrality throughout the duration of the conflict.

(3) The present pact comes into force from the day of its ratification by both contracting parties and remains valid for five years. In case neither of the contracting parties denounces the pact one year before expiration of the terms, it will be considered automatically prolonged for the next five years.

(4) The present pact is subject to ratification as soon as possible. Instruments of ratification shall be exchanged in Tokyo also as soon as possible.  

Simultaneous with the announcement of the pact, a statement was issued proclaiming that Russia would “respect the integrity and inviolability of the territory of the Manchou Empire” and “Japan . . . promised to respect the integrity and inviolability of the territory of the Mongolian Republic.” The Japanese also promised to liquidate their concessions in North Sakhalin within a few months.  

At his send-off—to everyone’s surprise—Stalin appeared at the train station where, in an

113 Gantenbein, ed., *Documentary Background of World War II*, p. 1,032.

114 Kase, *Journey to the Missouri*, p. 158.
attempt to show his feelings of solidarity, he embraced Matsuoka, telling him that both Japan and Russia were Asian nations.

The treaty of neutrality came as a great shock, especially for the Roosevelt administration which had been trying to solicit the Russians into joining them in an anti-Axis alliance. Nor was it lost on the Americans that this pact could be an invitation for the Japanese to proceed with their southern advance.\textsuperscript{115}

By the 22nd, Matsuoka was back home in Tokyo. Upon his return, Shigemitsu Mamoru recorded scornfully that: "he [Matsuoka] behaved just as though he were another Hitler. Some people indeed supposed that he planned to take over the Government in order to realise his own theories of statecraft."\textsuperscript{116} The new situation which had thus come about was the topic of discussion in several of the Liaison Conferences of 1941.

Not surprisingly, news of Matsuoka's coup was greeted in Tokyo with much joy. Japan had secured from her historic adversary a neutrality pact and no little reduction in the tensions between their two nations. Stalin, too, could breathe a little easier with the knowledge that he'd reduced the threat against his Far Eastern flank.\textsuperscript{117} However, the Japanese Government also needed time to take stock of this changed relationship between themselves and their traditional enemy. After having secured the neutrality pact with Russia, the Japanese military were given some leeway in their options

\textsuperscript{115} Shigemitsu, \textit{Japan and Her Destiny}, p. 213.
\textsuperscript{116} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{117} Apparently, the U.S. Government had already twice warned Stalin about the possibility of an attack by Germany against his Western front. See Hull, \textit{Memoirs}, 2: 993.
and thus they directed their attention once again towards the southern regions. Despite the clear implications created by this new state of affairs, during cross-examination at the "Tokyo Trials," Tōjō Hideki stated that there was no connection between the Japan–Soviet Neutrality Pact and Japan's policy towards the South Seas and, he added: "The strength of the defensive force in the north against the Soviet[s] was not reduced because of the pact."118

The thinking in the Navy—whose role in a war with the Soviets would have been secondary to that played by the Army—now came more into line with their colleagues in that branch of the service. The Navy, however, still possessed no air or naval bases in southern Indo-China from which they could launch an attack against Malaya and Singapore and they were still reticent about any aggressive moves which might invite a confrontation with Britain and/or America. In the meantime, however, perhaps buoyed by their neutrality pact with the Soviets, the Japanese began discussions with the U.S. in order to alleviate some of the tension existing between their two nations.

118 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 36,218.
CHAPTER VII

THE HULL-NOMURA TALKS

Concurrent with Foreign Minister Matsuoka's European junket, Admiral Nomura Kichisaburō had been dispatched to America after having been assigned the unenviable task of trying to mend Japan–U.S. relations. Nomura, who had been an early proponent of strengthening the Axis Pact, had also advocated strengthening the ties of friendship between Japan and America. However, he later on came to recognise the incompatibility of these seemingly antithetical objectives; or, to put it in his own words: the pursuit of these twin goals would be like “chasing two rabbits at once.” Nomura was therefore reluctant to take on the role of ambassador despite the vote of confidence he'd received from his Foreign Minister. Matsuoka had thought Nomura to be the “perfect man for the job” and had selected him partly because of his amicable associations with certain highly-placed Americans, including Roosevelt. Conversely, in America, it was thought that Nomura’s chances of success in patching up relations between Japan and the U.S. were extremely slight: Cordell Hull estimating them at odds of one hundred to one.¹

Although there were considerable expressions of honourable intent and numerous platitudes

¹ Kurihara, Tennō, p. 156
² Hull, Memoirs, 2: 985.
expressing a sincere desire for a peaceful solution to the ill-will between all concerned, the Roosevelt administration embraced the maxim that actions spoke louder than words; and while Nomura appears to have been an honourable man with honourable intentions, in reality he was, however, little more than a glorified messenger. His powers of discretion were minimal and he appears to have been incapable of speaking with the eloquent Secretary Hull on equal terms. In fairness to the ambassador, his lack of facility in the English language—at least in discussing matters of such gravity—put him at a definite disadvantage. And, unknown to Nomura and his taskmasters, the U.S. had an additional advantage, in that they were decoding messages emanating from the Tokyo to their diplomatic and military representatives abroad. Quite often, the Americans were well aware of the latest Japanese proposals even before they had been officially presented. The U.S., therefore, was privy not only to what they Japanese were saying to them, but what they were saying to one another. The difference between what the Japanese professed to be striving for, and what their actions would otherwise indicate, has led one historian to observe: "Japan’s actions . . . confirmed the impression, on the American side, that the Japanese leaders were not prepared to lose the opportunity afforded by the war in Europe for extending Japanese dominion over Eastern Asia."³

The Americans were, of course, equally adamant in their own effort to rein in the Japanese: to have them quit China, to abandon their efforts at further encroachment upon the countries of Southeast Asia, and to renounce their ties with their Axis partners. The prospects were not good, and from the outset, nobody had any illusions—least of all Cordell Hull—that the path would be smooth. Members of the Roosevelt administration were very much aware that the road to peace would be

³ Toynbee & Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, vol. 11: 531.
fraught with difficulties and Hull had further betrayed his own pessimistic outlook when, on 15 January in a speech to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, he'd denounced Japan's aggressive policies; telling the assembled members: "It has been clear throughout that Japan has been actuated . . . by broad and ambitious plans for establishing herself in a dominant position in the entire region of the Western Pacific. Her leaders have openly declared their determination to achieve and maintain that position by force of arms."  

In reaction to this speech, Foreign Minister Matsuoka told an assembly of the Japanese Diet that the Americans had shown how poorly they understand the fact that the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was a matter of vital importance to the Japanese, and that the United States had adopted an attitude which indicated that they seemed to think their first line of defence included not only the Eastern Pacific but China and the South Seas as well. According to Matsuoka, by taking this position, America intimated that Japan's own interests were indicative of little more than ambitious design for control in the Pacific. Such a reproach from their side revealed an egotistical attitude.  The following day, Hull rebutted Matsuoka's Diet speech, issuing a press statement which said, in part:

"We have threatened no one, and surrounded no one. We have freely offered and now freely offer co-operation in a peaceful life to all who wish it. This devotion to peaceful and friendly processes naturally warrants no implication of a desire to extend frontiers or assume hegemony. Our strategic line must depend primarily on the policies and courses of other nations."

---

Adding to Hull’s sense of pessimism was word that the Germans were none-too-pleased with the recent Japanese efforts to bring about a rapprochement with the U.S. There would be enough obstacles in that path even without the additional obstructions which might arise out of German meddling in the shaky relations which existed between Japan and the U.S. Already, Ambassador Grew had reported (3 January 1941) that those Germans stationed in Japan, were doing everything in their power to bring about a complete rupture of diplomatic relations between the U.S. and Japan. In line with this “trickery,” they had been dead set against Nomura’s upcoming journey to Washington. Grew had later cabled this same information to Washington along with several suggestions of his own, which he believed his colleagues in Washington might want to impress upon Nomura. Most noteworthy were the following:

(1) If Japan follows the German urgings she will become involved, to her great disadvantage and probably without ultimate profit, in useless expenditures and risks.

(2) If Japan enters the war on the side of the Axis she will either be defeated or, if her Axis partners should win, she will never be allowed by her partners to hold what she may temporarily have gained.

(3) That her Axis partners can render effective military support to Japan is not believed to be the case.

(4) Japan may well pause to consider the tremendous risks without compensating advantage which she would be assuming were she to enter the war with the Axis or openly to assault or imperil important American or British interests, or interests important to those countries.  

Grew, it seems, was prepared to engage in just the sort of tactic he had attributed to the German

---

7 For the complete text of Grew’s points, see Grew, Ten Years, p. 365.
agitators he'd referred to in his report; that is, he appears to have had it in mind to sow the seeds of mistrust between Japan and her Europeans allies. In addition, we may discern, a none-too-subtle word of caution for the Japanese; that they should give sober consideration to any thoughts of launching an attack against any of the European or American colonial holdings or territories in the Far East. Incidental to this word of caution, towards the end of the month, Grew also reported rumours—at that time circulating in Tokyo—"to the effect that the Japanese, in case of a break with the United States, are planning to go all out in a surprise mass attack on Pearl Harbor."^8

**Unofficial Proposals from the Maryknoll Mission**

At about this time, there arrived back from Japan, a certain Bishop James Walsh of the Catholic Foreign Mission Society in Maryknoll, New York, and Father Drought, of that same society. The Maryknoll Fathers, who had been in Japan since December 1940, were approached while overseas by Paul (Tadao) Wikawa—a Japanese banker—and Colonel Iwakuro Hideo, of Japan's Military Affairs Bureau. The Japanese had hoped to persuade Walsh and Drought to carry back to Washington some unofficial proposals designed to redress the sour relations between their two countries.\(^9\)

Shortly after their return to the U.S. in January 1941, the two clerics were able to secure an

---


^9 In most reference works the spelling "Wikawa" has been employed. However, "Ikawa" is an alternate—and more appropriate—rendering of a proper Japanese surname. See also Hull, *Memoirs*, 2: 984.
interview with President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull through the good offices of Postmaster General Frank C. Walker. Because of Hull's scepticism regarding the Japanese proposals, and his desire that any negotiations be conducted only through official channels, Roosevelt was persuaded by his Secretary of State, to postpone making any comment until after Nomura's arrival.  

On 23 January 1941, Admiral Nomura began his journey from Tokyo to Washington. Despite Hull's pessimistic outlook—as evidenced by his recent pronouncements—the diplomatic conversations he had with Nomura were to continue practically uninterrupted from the time of their first meeting, through to the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In total, they met on more than fifty occasions, beginning with Nomura's first official meeting with President Roosevelt, which took place on 14 February 1941 at Roosevelt's office; Cordell Hull was also present.

The meeting began with a cordial exchange between Roosevelt and Nomura during which they reminisced about having met several years earlier and the tone seemed truly amicable. After their friendly exchange, Roosevelt took on a more serious tone, telling Nomura that relations between Japan and the U.S. were clearly getting worse and making it clear that although the American people were "not bitter as yet," they were seriously concerned about the deterioration in Japanese-American relations. On more specific matters, he made reference to Japanese moves against Indo-China, the Spratlys "and other localities in that area. . . ." The President then indicated the serious concern

10 Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, pp. 320-21.
11 Nomura's first meeting with Hull alone, had taken place two days earlier. It was simply to afford them the opportunity to familiarize themselves with one another and there were no serious discussions relating to Japanese-American relations.
Japan's entry into the Tripartite Pact was causing the U.S. and finally, he suggested that Nomura and Hull review Japanese–American relations with a view to ascertaining how their divergent viewpoints had arisen and what might be done to improve these relations.\textsuperscript{12} According to Hull, Nomura continually nodded his head in acknowledgement of what the President was saying, but told them frankly "that his chief obstacle would be the military group in control in Tokyo."\textsuperscript{13}

Talks between Hull and Nomura were first seriously undertaken beginning with their meeting on 8 March at Hull's apartment at the Carlton Hotel in Washington. As might have been expected, their were numerous disagreements from the outset. These disagreements revolved around the following three main points: (1) Contrary interpretations of the Tripartite Pact; (2) reaching a satisfactory settlement of the China problem; and (3) agreement upon the acceptable limits of Japanese commercial and economic activity in China and the Southwest Pacific.\textsuperscript{14}

During the course of their discussion, Hull told Nomura that he very much appreciated the "purpose and efforts" being put forth by those individuals on both sides of the Pacific who were trying "to make their respective contributions to better understanding and other desirable relations between their own and the other Governments; . . . ." However, Hull also told Nomura "that on all official questions and problems" between their respective Governments, he (Hull) was—despite the efforts of aforesaid persons—only prepared to talk with Nomura, as Japan's duly authorised ambassador.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{12} Memorandum of 14 February 1941. See FRUS, Japan, II: 387.
\textsuperscript{13} Hull, Memoirs, 2: 987-88.
\textsuperscript{14} Schroeder, Axis Alliance, pp. 32-33.
\textsuperscript{15} Memorandum from Cordell Hull; dated 8 March 1941. See FRUS, Japan, II: 389.
\end{flushright}
On more specific matters relating to Japan's southern advance, Hull asked Nomura whether or not recent Japanese assurances disavowing an attack on the Dutch Indies or Singapore were reliable. Nomura could only say that he was "fairly definite" in rejecting the possibility: a rejection of hostile intentions, so mild that it could hardly have been designed to inspire optimism. Even this qualified statement of hope hinged on the provision that the U.S. eschew additional embargoes. At this point, Hull became quite blunt, turning the discussion to the subject of Japan's membership in the Tripartite Alliance; and he drew for Nomura a perceived parallel between the international behaviour of the two Axis partners. "The American people," said Hull:

... have of late become very thoroughly aroused over movements by Japan and Germany... at the expense of all other peoples. These apprehensions, of course, will continue as long as Hitler continues his avowed course of unlimited conquest and tyrannical rule and as long as the Japanese Army and Navy increase their occupation by force of other and distant areas.\(^{17}\)

On 14 March, at Nomura's request, Hull arranged a meeting in the company of President Roosevelt. During this particular meeting, Nomura began by distancing himself from the bellicose statements of such people as Matsuoka who, as Nomura explained, "talked loudly for home

\(^{16}\) Langer and Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, p. 467. The disavowal of Japanese intentions to attack either Singapore or the Netherlands East Indies had come from Tōgō Shigenori, in a conversation with Winston Churchill. Hull was sceptical of these assertions. See also Deborah Nutter Miner, "United States Policy Toward Japan, 1941: The Assumption that Southeast Asia was Vital to the British War Effort" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1976), p. 169 and 177.

consumption because he was ambitious politically . . . 18 Strangely enough, during the meeting with Hull on 8 March, Nomura had said something remarkably similar. During that meeting, he had stated: "Matsuoka sometimes uses big words . . . the talk of Matsuoka and other statesmen in Japan . . . was really for home consumption." 19

Perhaps it would seem a little less peculiar for Nomura to have repeated himself in this manner if one embraces the assumption that Ambassador Nomura felt a certain degree of humiliation with regard to the behaviour of certain of his countrymen—Matsuoka in particular. Whatever his reason, Roosevelt took the opportunity to make clear to the Japanese ambassador that he, like Hull, was much concerned over the alliance between Japan and Germany and its possible impact on Dutch and British colonies in the Far East. The American people were "upset," he told Nomura, because they perceived a concerted action between the two allies, such that Germany, on the one hand, was attempting to reach the Suez Canal, while Japan was simultaneously trying to extend herself into the Dutch East Indies, Singapore and the Indian Ocean. But just as Tōgō Shigenori had denied to Churchill, any intentions of further Japanese encroachment to the south, so too, Nomura denied any such aims on Japan's part. 20

Paul Wikawa had also made the journey to America, and during his stay, he continued to meet with Father Drought in an effort to determine ways by which the two sides might come to realise mutually agreeable terms. By the 17th of March, this pair had produced a draft proposal for a

18 Ibid., 990.
19 FRUS, Japan, II: 391.
20 Ibid., 397. See also Hull, Memoirs, 2: 990-91.
settlement between the U.S. and Japan.\textsuperscript{21} And towards the end of March, Colonel Iwakuro, too, arrived in the United States; his mission: to assist and advise Ambassador Nomura in revising the draft proposals of Wikawa and Drought.\textsuperscript{22}

Finally, on 9 April, after a great deal of hard work and persistent negotiating, the State Department was presented with an unofficial proposal for steps which might help settle the serious differences which then existed between Japan and America. These proposals had resulted from those ongoing discussions which had been taking place between the Maryknoll Fathers, Postmaster General Frank Walker, and certain Japanese representatives including Nomura. The stated purpose of the proposals of 9 April were for "the restoration of friendly relations and the prevention of the extension of the war in the Pacific." They were:

1. Japan and America pledge themselves not to enter the European war of their own initiative and to restrict their policies exclusively to defence.
2. America will influence Chiang Kai-shek to come to a direct understanding with Japan.
4. American recognition of Manchukuo and a Japanese–American guarantee of the status quo in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{21} Langer and Gleason, \textit{The Undeclared War}, pp. 467-68.

\textsuperscript{22} Toynbee & Toynbee, \textit{Survey of International Affairs}, vol. 11: 641.

\textsuperscript{23} A complete version of the proposals may be found in FRUS, Japan, II: 398-402. The version in DGFP, series D, 12: 711-12, has written, in point 4: "... status quo in the Philippines," rather than "... status quo in the Pacific." The latter is the correct rendition.
In addition to the above, Nomura proposed several items, most of which related to Japan's relations with China. Because these proposals contained numerous "loopholes," Hull remained sceptical of Konoe's ability to implement them should they come under challenge from the military or the Foreign Ministry. The Americans had been hoping for a disavowal of the Tripartite Pact but Japan's only concession was an offer to abide by their obligations under the pact with Germany "only in the event of that power's being attacked by the United States." (italics added).24

Were America to accept the proposals as stated, she would be pledging herself to neutrality vis-à-vis the war in Europe (a move tantamount to abandoning her ally, Great Britain) and Roosevelt was not prepared to betray his ally. In addition, it was also felt that acceptance of the proposals would have permitted Japan too much freedom to assume a position of hegemony in the Southwest Pacific.25

On April 14, because of Hull's lingering doubts concerning Japanese sincerity in negotiating on these proposals, Nomura was invited to discuss matters further. After receiving Nomura's assurance that they represented an official offer and that Nomura would assume responsibility for their legitimacy, Hull told Nomura that he wished to include certain points of his own before the text was cabled to Tokyo.26 At this point in their discussion, Hull again expressed his indebtedness to those individuals who were working towards improving Japanese-U.S. relations. He then queried Nomura

_________

24 Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 468.
26 The Japanese proposals may be found in their entirety in Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, pp. 468-69.
as to "whether it was his desire to present the [9 April] proposals officially, as a first step in negotiations between their two Governments." Nomura confessed that he "did not know all about this document . . ." But he strongly expressed "the view that his Government did not intend to invade the South Seas area." Then after exchanging certain platitudes and some discussion concerning the state of world affairs, Hull told Nomura that the U.S. Government "prior to negotiations" on the 9 April proposals, wished to raise certain questions, most of which related to China: its integrity and sovereignty, the principle of equal opportunity, etc. Nomura was quick to agree to Hull's proviso, noting that although he hadn't yet consulted with his own Government on the proposals of the 9th, it was his opinion that they "would be favourably disposed . . ." Hull was careful to remind Nomura that any discussions to this point remained unofficial and at that stage, they were only searching for a basis upon which to negotiate.

Two days later, (16 April) they met again at Hull's apartment, during which time, Hull presented certain conditions under which the U.S. would negotiate on the unofficial proposals of the 9th. He

---

27 Memorandum for Cordell Hull; dated 15 April 1941. See FRUS, Japan, II: 402-03.

28 In the version of the conversation found in FRUS, Japan, II: 403, it says: "The ambassador promptly replied that he did not know all about this document and that he had collaborated more or less with the individual Japanese and Americans referred to, and that he would be disposed to present it as a basis for negotiations." According to Hull, Memoirs, 2: 994, Nomura tells Cordell Hull, that "he knew all about the document . . ." Both of these responses from Nomura are drawn from authoritative, reliable texts. However, as Nomura played a role in drawing up the proposals, it would be difficult to believe that he didn't have a reasonably detailed knowledge of their content.

29 FRUS, Japan, II: 405-06.

30 Ibid., pp. 402-406.
told Nomura that the Japanese proposals then under consideration contained numerous recommendations with which the U.S. Government "could readily agree." "However," he continued, "... there were others that would require modification, expansion, or entire elimination, and, in addition, there would naturally be some new and separate suggestions by this Government for consideration."  

Of paramount concern to the Americans was the stipulation that they be given—in advance—definite assurances that Japan was willing and able to go forward with the plans outlined, and abandon the use of force as an instrument of policy. America also wanted the Japanese to adopt four principles which they (the U.S.) regarded as the proper basis of relations between nations: (1) Respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of each and all nations; (2) non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries; (3) recognition of national equality, including the equality of commercial opportunity; and (4) maintenance of the status quo in the Pacific except where it might be altered by peaceful means. The Secretary expressed a willingness to consider any Japanese proposals consistent with these principles.  

31 Sanborn, Design for War, p. 292. See also ibid., pp. 406-07.  
32 Hull, Memoirs, 2: 994-95; Kirby, The War Against Japan, 1: 65; Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 469; Marder, Old Friends, New Enemies, 158; Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 643. After having been informed by German intelligence sources about these specific points, an angry von Ribbentrop summoned Ōshima on 3 May, at which time he berated the Japanese Government. Then, on 5 May, Ott insisted to Matsuoka that he be kept abreast of the ongoing Japanese–American talks. Matsuoka assured Ott that he would "oppose any decisions incompatible with the Tripartite Pact." See Kutakov, Japanese Foreign Policy, pp. 202-03. The version contained in FRUS, Japan, II: 407, has minor variations in the wording. However, the
Nomura studied the four principles "for a few minutes" after which they engaged in some brief conversation concerning their merits and shortcomings. Hull stated in his memorandum of this meeting, that he was very unsure as to whether or not Nomura had properly understood the statements he made regarding the four principles. He endeavoured to make things clear to Nomura, telling him that if the Japanese Government should abandon its present policies of force and aggression and "adopt a peaceful course with worthwhile international relationships . . ." they should have no objections to the four points.33

Hull's reference to Japan's need to "adopt . . . worthwhile international relations," was, of course, a subtle poke at Japan's relationship with Germany. As he often did, Hull made certain to signal his disapproval of the Nazis, and Japan's affiliation with them. It was a theme which was often repeated during the course of their conversations. Hull could not hide his loathing for Hitler and nazism, and it appeared at times as though he sought to shame or embarrass the Japanese. Perhaps because he was dealing with Nomura on an almost daily basis and on a personal level, he sought to appeal to the more reasonable side of the ambassador's character. The impression is formed that Hull would have received some satisfaction from hearing Nomura—at the very least—disavow some of Germany's more rapacious actions; a repudiation he never did hear.

In any case, at this point, Nomura began pressing Hull to come to an agreement on the proposals of the 9th. Said Hull: "The ambassador seemed not to understand why I could not now agree to some of these proposals in his document." Hull reiterated that they had not yet reached the stage of

33 FRUS, Japan, II: 409.
negotiations and Nomura also confessed that he had not yet received authority from his own Government to proceed with them. As Nomura readied himself to leave, Hull told him that he was prepared at any time to receive Nomura should he hear from his own Government. Hull then indicated to Nomura, that if the four points were accepted by the Japanese, Nomura might then ask his own Government—upon the assumption they were accepted—to resubmit the entire package back to him (Hull), at which point, they would have "a basis for starting conversations."

Nomura cabled home asking for instructions on these points and back in Japan, Konoe convened a conference on the 18th, in order to discuss Japan’s response to the motions contained in Nomura’s cable. At this conference, the conferees came to an agreement that by acceptance of these proposals, Japan might speedily dispose of the China problem, as well as agreement that it would provide the best means to avoid a U.S.–Japanese war while serving to help protect against the spread of the European war. However, the Japanese also felt that it would be “improper” if the Roosevelt administration thought that any understanding between Japan and the U.S. should “… relieve America of her commitments in the Pacific and thus afford her an opportunity for increasing her support of Britain. . . .” As the conference broke up, Vice Minister Ōhashi insisted that they await Matsuoka’s return from Europe before informing Nomura of their decisions.

---

34 Ibid., p. 410.
35 Hull, Memoirs, 2: 995.
36 Sanborn, Design for War, p. 292.
37 Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 2: 897; Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 473. See also Jones, Japan’s New Order, pp. 270-71. Shigemitsu has written that Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Ohara [Ōhashi] suggested that they defer a decision until Matsuoka had returned. See Shigemitsu, Japan
Because Nomura had cabled not only Hull’s four principles, but the unofficial draft from Wikawa and Father Drought as well, the Japanese took it to mean that the Americans had now already recognised these latter provisions as representing official components of dialogue; an assumption which was to lead to later confusion. It will be recalled that Hull had requested of Nomura, that he have his own Government signal their acceptance, not only of the four points, but of the unofficial proposals of 9 April; and that if the Japanese were prepared to indicate their compliance with these requests, then—and only then—would Hull consider all of these proposals taken together, as constituting a serious basis for discussions.

There were at this time, some members of the Japanese military, who were under the impression that it was the U.S. which was on the defensive and thus very eager to negotiate. Colonel Iwakuro had even drafted a summary of those points which he believed were pertinent factors in America’s readiness—or perhaps, eagerness—to negotiate. These, he cabled back to Japan, where they arrived on the 18th. However, there was little consensus of opinion regarding their value as points of serious discussion. Iwakuro believed the U.S. wished to avoid a two-front war and he felt it was time to

38 Apparently Konoe and Tōjō later said that they and their colleagues “regarded the proposals as the beginning of official negotiations, in view of the way Mr. Hull had discussed them and Admiral Nomura had presented them.” Quoted in Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, pp. 470-72. Hull had, as will be recalled, told Nomura during their first direct talks that while he appreciated the efforts of Bishop Walsh and Father Drought, all official questions between Japan and the U.S. Government could only be dealt with “through the duly authorized ambassador of Japan.” See Hull, Memoirs, 2: 989.
“press” the Americans to come to a comprehensive solution to the problems which were then undermining Japan–U.S. relations.39

**Matsuoka Returns from Europe**

Matsuoka, upon his return from Moscow via Dairen, seemed disinterested in discussing the proposals which had arrived from Nomura on the evening of 17 April and discussed by the military at the joint conference alluded to above. Perhaps he was overawed by his recent, heady experiences in Europe. Whatever the reason, he subsequently fell ill for several days (as did Konoe) and his seeming lack of interest began to breed “ill-will” amongst certain members of the top “military brass.” There were even rumblings emanating from within certain military quarters, to the effect that the Foreign Minister should be replaced.40

During a conference of heads of the Army on 21 April 1941 (Tokyo time), suspicions were raised concerning the American proposals for fear that they might, if accepted, weaken the Tripartite Pact—which, of course, the Americans were hoping to do. However, at the same time their acceptance was viewed as an opportunity to “bring about a satisfactory end to the China Incident, restore [Japan’s] national strength, and secure a strong voice in the joint efforts to restore world peace.” The Americans also had it in mind to strengthen their support for Great Britain, and to fully

---

restore America’s armaments capability in an effort to gain a position of world-leadership.\textsuperscript{41}

In spite of the fact that he was not well, Matsuoka did manage to attend a conference upon the day of his return (22 April). And although he made a careful review of the various opinions and possible options put forth by both Navy and Army sources, Matsuoka still remained cautious in the extreme. He stated that he would need anywhere from two weeks to two months to consider the appropriate response to the recent proposals sent by Nomura; a delay which many of those present at the conference “felt would be a mistake.”\textsuperscript{42}

Despite the relatively enthusiastic response of certain of the conferees to an agreement in principle of this draft understanding, Matsuoka remained basically opposed to its terms, and in accordance with his opposition, he did, in fact, end up receiving a two-week delay before furnishing Nomura with further instructions. During this time, he wrote a revised draft of his own, which was given subsequent approval at a Liaison Conference held on 3 May.\textsuperscript{43}

At this particular conference (3 May), Matsuoka put forth the following suggestions. He told

\textsuperscript{41} Murakami, “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina,” p. 276.

\textsuperscript{42} Ike, Japan’s Decision, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{43} According to Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 473, Matsuoka’s initial reaction when being informed by telephone (he was still en-route to Tokyo from his European trip) to the proposals, was one of elation, believing America had now made definite proposals for settling the China Incident. He attributed this development to the warning he had recently given America’s ambassador in Moscow, Laurence Steinhardt. See page 269 of this thesis. Despite this “elation,” Matsuoka told Ott that he hadn’t wanted to “take up the American proposal until he had obtained acceptance of his views from responsible authorities handling domestic matters.” See telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 6 May 1941. DGFP, series D, 12: 723-25.
those assembled that he would like not only to offer the United States a proposal for a non-aggression pact; but he also wished to send an “oral statement,” indicating to Roosevelt the following: Germany and Italy, feeling confident of an eventual victory, were not going to make peace with Britain, and although American entry into the war in Europe might prolong the conflict, it would not end it; it might, in fact lead to the “destruction of world civilisation.” This oral statement was typical of just the sort of hyperbole for which Matsuoka was well-known. Finally, Matsuoka told the conference members that America should be told that Japan would do nothing which ran counter to her obligations under the Tripartite Pact.  

Not surprisingly, there was little agreement amongst the more moderate elements present at the meeting for implementing Matsuoka’s radical suggestions. In fact, the majority were said to have opposed these ideas; even Prince Konoe spoke out against the idea of a proposal for a neutrality pact. But Matsuoka, undaunted by the obvious opposition to his ideas, indicated that he would prepare a written message which he would then have Nomura read to Hull. Notwithstanding the disagreement voiced at the conference, Matsuoka, once again, had matters his own way.  

At this point, Matsuoka switched topics, and speaking now of his trip to Europe, he told the others present that Germany had made no demands upon him for a move against Singapore, nor had he offered to do so. However, it was his opinion that the time was right for Japan do this and Germany had thought Japan should do it.

---


46 Ibid., p. 24-25.
In order to allay any fears the Germans might have as to where Japan's allegiance lay, Matsuoka also thought it proper to inform Ambassador Ott that they were just then considering the latest American proposals, and just as he had told the conference members, he was to let Ott know that he would "oppose any proposition which was not consistent with the Tripartite Pact." He also cabled Nomura that day with an interim response.\(^{47}\) When Ambassador Ott received Matsuoka's notice of reassurance, he promptly wired both it, and a copy of the "oral statement" which Matsuoka had given him, onward to Berlin.\(^{48}\)

That Matsuoka should have proposed to make such an offer as a non-aggression pact to Roosevelt, is perplexing to say the least. Clearly, the Roosevelt administration was not so gullible as to be drawn into any agreement with the Japanese which even hinted at the suggestion of their being bound to observe a neutral stance in the face of Japan's aggressive policies; a fact about which Matsuoka had surely to be cognisant. Moreover, one has cause to reflect upon the serious repercussions the conclusion of such an agreement would have had in Britain and amongst America's other allies. At the same time, Matsuoka's shallow effort to intimidate the U.S. Government administration with his assessment of the current situation in Europe could hardly have had the affect Matsuoka intended. On the contrary, Hull was not going to be swayed in his thinking by Matsuoka's

\(^{47}\) Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 5 May 1941. According to this telegram, Ott said that Matsuoka had just informed him of the Roosevelt administration's proposal for a secret agreement with Japan. See DGFP, series D, 12: 711-12. Nowhere has the present author been able to discover any evidence which would substantiate Matsuoka's statement.

\(^{48}\) According to Sanborn, \textit{Design for War}, p. 293, the offer of a pact was designed, more precisely, to be a test of American "sincerity."
bluster, nor, as we shall see, was he even remotely prepared to entertain the thought of a neutrality pact. In fact, Hull was to give the paper on which that suggestion was written, little more than a cursory glance before returning it to an embarrassed Ambassador Nomura.

Hull and Nomura met again on 2 May (Washington time), at Secretary Hull’s room in the Wardman Park Hotel. The meeting was brief as Nomura had not yet received further instruction from back home. Nomura had only come to tell Hull that he’d cabled his Government for instructions but there had been some delays. He asked Hull to remain patient, but suggested that his Government would respond favourably to Hull’s four articles. After exchanging some small talk relating to world conditions and America’s abhorrence of “Hitlerism,” Nomura took his leave.49

Hull and Nomura met again 5 days later (7 May). Nomura began with the usual pleasantries; thanking Hull for his patience and understanding, at which point, Hull recorded: “If I understood the ambassador correctly and I think I did, he tactfully suggested as coming from his Government a non-aggression pact. I did not hesitate but promptly brushed it aside . . .”50 Hull was, of course, not mistaken. Nomura did precisely as Matsuoka had directed him, but as had happened during the course of several of their conversations, Hull had some difficulty understanding Nomura—and vice-versa—as Nomura’s English was said to have been less than perfect. In any case, Nomura had with him the “oral statement” from Matsuoka. This letter was brimming with the sort of pomposity and loquacious behaviour for which Matsuoka was famed.51

49 FRUS, Japan, II: 411.
50 Ibid., 412.
51 A version of Matsuoka’s “oral statement” may be found in Hull, Memoirs, 2: 997-98. See also
Nomura was obviously uncomfortable having to play the role of “message-bearer” for Matsuoka’s more contentious verbiage and in reference to these aggressive statements, he told Hull there were many things “that were wrong.” Although Nomura was not specific as to the errors of content, what he was likely alluding to here, were some of the more offensive statements contained in the letter; which—as Japan’s ambassador in Washington—Nomura was, of course, duty-bound to pass along. That being the case, Nomura passed Hull, Matsuoka’s letter, which Hull merely glanced at. Perhaps sensing Nomura’s discomfort, Hull responded that since the message contained errors, if Nomura had the discretionary power to do so, he might just as well retain the documents he had brought since nothing could be gained by presenting them; a suggestion to which Nomura was more than eager to comply.

Hull quite conceivably felt that he could well afford to play the role of the detached participant. It was possibly his intention to appear to Nomura somewhat dispassionate; believing that would give him a “psychological edge,” which might in turn keep the pressure on the Japanese to temper their stance. It was not beyond Hull to employ such a tactic. In his “Memoirs,” the reader is informed that his associates had thought it a “good idea psychologically” not to seem too eager to meet with Nomura. As Hull put it: “Too much evidence on our part that we were anxious to reach a settlement

ibid., 474. Hull also indicates that by utilizing their code-breaking abilities, known as “Magic,” the Americans were made privy to the contents of this and other messages passing between the Japanese Foreign Ministry and her overseas representatives. See ibid. See also telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 5 May 1941. DGFP, series D, 12: 713-14.

52 FRUS, Japan, II: 412.
with Japan induced the Japanese to narrow their concessions and enlarge their demands."  

In any case, the fact is, Hull was already well aware of the contents of the documents which he had just bid Nomura to retain. American military ciphers, employing an ingenious system they had dubbed "Magic" had enabled Hull to remain one step ahead of his Japanese counterpart. Although the information gleaned from "Magic" played little part in the early phases of the negotiations, it assumed an ever-increasing role as the talks reached their later stages. Obviously Hull could not let on that he had even the slightest inkling of the content of Matsuoka's statement. However, he could hardly contain his anger and he used this opportunity to castigate the conduct of certain Japanese statesmen—in particular Matsuoka—telling Nomura that the aggressive statements of these individuals "were in the opposite direction of the entire spirit and policy of most of the documents which the ambassador had recently sent to his [Hull's] Government."  

Nomura spoke to Matsuoka on the morning of the 8th (Tokyo time) at which time he told the Foreign Minister: "... it would be difficult to conclude a neutrality pact, especially since he [Nomura] was not empowered to negotiate such a pact." Here again, we may speculate with a reasonable degree of certainty that Nomura felt somewhat ill-at-ease in being asked to relay certain of Matsuoka's more impulsive propositions. And perhaps, at the same time, he was hoping to circumvent being pressed too hard by his Foreign Minister on the idea of re-submitting the matter of a

---

53 Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1013.  
54 See ibid., pp. 997-98.  
55 FRUS, Japan, II: 411-15.  
56 Ike, Japan's Decision, p. 28.
neutrality pact with Hull. We do know that the ambassador was quick to accept Hull’s prompt refusal to entertain such a notion, and the fact that neither Matsuoka nor Nomura ever again pressed the matter with Hull would seem to indicate that neither of them reasonably felt such an agreement could be reached—at least while there remained so many other outstanding obstacles which were in need of resolution.

The two statesmen met again on the 11th and the 12th of May. During the meeting of the 11th, little of substance came up for discussion. Nomura did have with him some documents which had been prepared by his Government. However, as they had not yet been completely translated, or there were certain revisions which needed to be made, he would retain them until the following day, at which time he would make them available to Hull. He did however leave off some additional documents for Hull’s perusal; the contents of which Hull did not disclose in this memorandum.

Hull’s Four-Point Plan

Upon his return the following day, (the 12th), a concerned Nomura began by telling Hull that “he had made a mistake” in handing him the documents on the previous day. The “mistaken” documents,

57 In fact, the Japanese were at this time awaiting some input from their European allies regarding the ongoing Hull-Nomura talks. Therefore, they had delayed sending Nomura any fresh information for discussion. As late as the noon-hour of the 11th (Tokyo time), they had still received no response from their German partners. Ott later told Matsuoka that the delay had resulted from technical problems in the cable transmission. See ibid., 32.

58 FRUS, Japan, II: 415-18.
it turns out, were a copy of a statement of 22 December 1938 by Premier Konoe and copies of the Nanking Agreement. After retrieving these from Hull, he passed the Secretary the "proper documents." Hull told Nomura that he would only receive the new documents "unofficially" as he wished to study them before commenting on their merits. Matsuoka’s earlier gambit relating to a non-aggression pact having failed, Ambassador Nomura presented Hull a further scheme for general settlement which included the following proposals:

(1) The United States Government should request Chiang Kai-shek to negotiate peace with Japan and if he refused, they should discontinue assistance to the Chinese Government.

(2) Normal trade relations should be resumed.

(3) The U.S. should help Japan acquire facilities for the exploration of natural resources (including oil, rubber, tin and nickel) in the Southwest Pacific. Also included were proposals for a joint guarantee for independence of the Philippines, the resumption of normal trade relations and the elimination of legislation which discriminated against Japanese immigration to the U.S.

The Japanese had by now, grown very weary of the protracted war against China and they, too, wished to arrive at some sort of a negotiated settlement. However, they believed that continuing

59 The 22 December 1938 statement by Konoe concerned Japanese military operations in China, which he said were not being carried out for reasons of conquest, but in order to guarantee that China would be able to fulfill her role as a member of the new order in the Far East.

60 FRUS, Japan, II: pp. 418-19.

61 Quoted in Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, pp. 475-76. See also ibid., pp. 420-425, which contains the Japanese proposals in their entirety. See also Ike, Japan’s Decision, p. 31.
American aid to China prevented Japan from concluding a favourable settlement and it was hoped, therefore, that the U.S. would discontinue such aid while, at the same time, Japan would be permitted to negotiate her own settlement with the Chinese based upon neighbourly friendship, co-operation in defence against communist activities, and economic co-operation.  

In addition to the proposals above, this draft contained the following paragraph which had been lifted in toto from the 9 April “private citizens” draft:

The Government of the United States maintains that its attitude toward the European war is, and will continue to be, directed by no such aggressive measures as to assist any one nation against another. The United States maintains that it is pledged to the hate of war, and accordingly, its attitude toward the European war is, and will continue to be, determined solely and exclusively by considerations of the protective defence of its own national welfare and security.

Not surprisingly, Hull had no intentions of limiting America’s freedom to determine its own course of actions in response to the war in Europe. By agreeing to a pledge of non-assistance as it related to the European war, not only would America be turning her back on her British ally, but the exact meaning of “aggressive measures” could certainly be open to a number of various interpretations. America could, for example, contend that any assistance offered her allies in Europe constituted a legitimate measure designed to protect her own well-being: That is, that for the U.S., Great Britain constituted a “first line of defence.”

Putting aside the geographical differences involved, this sort of defence would not have been so

---

62 For a more detailed analysis of these points, see Schroeder, *Axis Alliance*, pp. 34-35.

63 Quoted in Sanborn, *Design for War*, pp. 293-94.
dissimilar from that justification used by the Japanese decades earlier to rationalise their own aggressive acts directed towards Korea. Japan had claimed she had a legitimate defensive interest in seeing that Korea did not fall under the rule of any other nation which was considered hostile towards Japan. In fact, Hull indicated that his own thinking ran along similar lines. In a 23 May cable to the Chinese ambassador in Washington, Dr. Hu Shih, he noted: “I have at all times treated the Far Eastern and European wars as one combined movement so far as our defence is concerned.”64 And just the previous week, when told by Nomura that in his own opinion, and that of his Government: “... the United States was in no danger from Europe,” Secretary of State Hull had angrily responded: “We have irrefutable evidence ... that this hemisphere and this country would be and are in serious and imminent danger. It all depends on whether Hitler conquers Great Britain...”65 And in July, Rear Admiral Turner was to tell Nomura:

... speaking from the standpoint of self defence, the greatest danger to the United States in the future lies in the continued military success of Germany. ... If Great Britain were to collapse, German military power might very well be directed against South America, and such moves would cause great difficulties for the United States.66

Hence, Nomura had been made well aware of American concerns in this regard and, despite the fact that the recommendations of 12 May seemed to offer Japan much, and the U.S. very little, in his “Memoirs,” Hull writes that it was these proposals which represented Japan’s official position and

64 Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1006.
65 Ibid., p. 1,001.
66 FRUS, Japan, II: 516-19.
laid the foundation for discussions up until the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor.\textsuperscript{67}

Although these proposals, if accepted, might possibly have meant placing restrictions upon, or even suspending entirely, American assistance to Britain, Matsuoka gave the thought of any such concessions on America’s part, short-shrift; he remained committed to the Tripartite Pact and he was now threatening that if the ongoing convoy and patrol activities of the U.S. Navy in the Atlantic were to inadvertently lead to a clash with Germany, Article 3 of the pact would come into force.\textsuperscript{68}

Apparently, Matsuoka’s recent threat was inspired by a German message of 12 May to the Japanese Government, the gist of which, according to Konoe’s recollections had stated amongst other things: “The patrolling and convoying being carried on by America was recognised as an act deliberately provocative of war, and one which would inevitably cause Japan to enter the war . . .”\textsuperscript{69}

The Nazi Government had not only urged the Japanese to warn America about the negative repercussions which might come about as a result of American convoys in the Atlantic, but they had warned the Japanese “. . . that American peace efforts in the Pacific were only a prelude to her entry into the European war.”\textsuperscript{70} Warnings of this nature were clearly indicative of the sense of betrayal with which the Germans greeted the news of Japanese attempts to seek an understanding with the U.S. What would be Japan’s value as an ally should they reach an accord? Probably nothing.

Weizsäcker wrote a memorandum for his superiors on 5 May which indicated Germany’s

\textsuperscript{67} Hull, \textit{Memoirs}, 2: 999.


\textsuperscript{69} Quoted in \textit{Sanborn Design for War}, p. 294.

\textsuperscript{70} Quoted in Presseisen, \textit{Germany and Japan}, p. 297.
disillusionment: “Any political treaty between Japan and the United States is undesirable at present. . . It would leave us alone on the battlefield against England and America. The Tripartite Pact would be discredited.” Nevertheless, German disillusionment with their allies was not a powerful enough reason for the Japanese to discontinue their efforts to come to an arrangement with the Americans and it did nothing to prevent the Hull-Nomura talks from continuing.

On 28 May, Hull and Nomura met yet again. During the ensuing discussion, problems arose once more regarding the extent of Japan’s obligations under the Tripartite Pact and the settlement of the conflict in China. Hull sought further clarification of the Japanese attitude towards those obligations, as he had apparently not yet received a satisfactory answer to queries he had made of Nomura two weeks earlier. He had suggested to Nomura during their meeting of the 16th that his Government should “spell out” its position under the Tripartite Pact, as far as their obligation to offer military assistance. Furthermore, Hull had stated that Japan should “declare that she was under no commitment under the Axis alliance or otherwise which was inconsistent with the terms of declaration of policy agreed upon by Japan and United States.”

Nomura told Hull that he doubted his own Government had anything new to add to the position they had been maintaining vis-à-vis their perceived obligations under the Tripartite Pact. To do so, he said, would place them “in a very difficult position,” with her allies and fuel domestic discontent at the hands of the pro-Axis group back in Japan. 

71 Ibid., p. 298.
72 Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 2: 898.
73 Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1,006-07.
On 31 May, the State Department submitted to Nomura their draft plan—rephrased so as to conform to Hull's "four points." It's major difference from the previous proposals being that it now included a sentence noting: "obviously the provisions of the [Tripartite] Pact do not apply to involvement through acts of self-defence." What this meant was that provisions of the pact did not apply to American involvement in the European war. This cleverly conceived detail meant the Japanese would not be obligated to use force against the United States if, for reasons of self-defence, she (the U.S.) were compelled for whatever reason to enter into the European war. That would, of course, provide the Japanese with a "face-saving" mechanism, although their German and Italian allies would take little comfort in knowing the Japanese were prepared to opt out of their Tripartite obligations because it was expedient to do so. In addition, there was a further revision according to which Japan was to withdraw all her troops from China and "Japan would refrain from aggressive actions in the Pacific."\(^74\) The draft also noted that the United States was not ready to terminate their support for the Chinese Government, and a further proposal stipulating that efforts be made to reach a solution relating to economic co-operation between China and Japan.\(^75\)

Nomura told Hull on 2 June that some things in the American draft of 31 May were acceptable in principle, but for some of the phraseology. Both Hull and Nomura agreed that as the latter was heading off to New York for a few days, that would afford some time for their respective associates

\(^74\) Ibid., p. 1,007; Miner, "United States Policy Toward Japan," p. 225. The revisions of 31 May can be found in their entirety in FRUS, Japan, II: 446-454.

\(^75\) Kirby, The War Against Japan, 1: 65.
to take a closer look at the wording of the proposals.\textsuperscript{76}

Nomura then returned with some counter-proposals on June 4. This time it was Hull’s turn to take exception. He felt the new wording of the draft allowed the Japanese too much licence for interpretation of the provisions contained in this particular version.\textsuperscript{77}

Some informal draft proposals were submitted to the U.S. Government on 15 June. As far as the situation in Europe, this draft had retained those proposals already tendered in the 9 April “private citizens draft” and then again in the draft of 12 May. That is: the Japanese Government maintained that the Tripartite Pact was designed to prevent those not currently mixed up in the conflict in Europe from becoming involved, and that the U.S. attitude toward the war in Europe would be determined solely by considerations of self-defence. However, they had deleted the line which the U.S. had introduced: “... the Japanese would not be obliged to act under the Tripartite Pact if the U.S. became involved in the European war through measures of self-defence.”\textsuperscript{78} The Japanese also asked: (1) That the U.S. Government use its influence to persuade Chinking to enter into negotiations with Japan for a peace treaty; (2) that the U.S. Government join with Japan—at such time as she was prepared to do so—to work toward the neutralisation of the Philippines; (3) for both Governments to

\textsuperscript{76} Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1,007; FRUS, Japan, II: 454.

\textsuperscript{77} Hull noted that the ensuing discussions between the Japanese and U.S. assistants regarding the “phraseology” only resulted in the Japanese attempting to have the terms of the U.S. proposals rendered so ambiguous as to be open to a number of interpretations “including,” as Hull put it, “the one Japan intended giving it.” See Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1,008.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 1,010. The draft proposals from Hull to Nomura which were given on 21 June, may be found in FRUS, Japan, II: 486-92.
work towards the resumption of normal trade relations such as had existed under the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation; and (4) that both Governments agree to co-operate with one another in obtaining those natural resources (i.e., oil, rubber, tin, nickel, etc.) necessary for the safeguarding and development of their respective economies.\textsuperscript{79}

In his 21 June redraft, Hull also included his own “oral statement,” which began with a declaration noting his appreciation for the “earnest efforts” put forth by Nomura and his associates, and their “frankness.” Hull also said he had no reason to doubt the serious intentions and goodwill on the part of many Japanese. However, the United States Government saw accumulating evidence which had been garnered from all over the world which, according to Hull, indicated:

\begin{quote}
... some Japanese leaders in influential positions are definitely committed to a course which calls for support of Nazi Germany and its policies of conquest and that the only kind of understanding with the United States which they would endorse is one that would envisage Japan’s fighting on the side of Hitler should the United States become involved in the European hostilities through carrying out its present policy of self-defence.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

This was clearly another of Hull’s oft-stated slights aimed directly at Foreign Minister Matsuoka; someone whom Hull obviously viewed with great displeasure. Hull’s animosity towards Matsuoka likely sprang from the latter’s seeming admiration for Nazi Germany and his truculent attitude.


\textsuperscript{80} FRUS, Japan, II: 485.
Whatever the reason, Hull rarely missed any opportunity to denounce the Japanese Foreign Minister. The Japanese were very slow in responding—at least officially—to these latest modifications. Apparently Matsuoka had taken exception to the oral statement in which he had been castigated by Hull for his perceived truckling to the Nazis. That there was a delay in the Japanese response, was also to be expected with the new situation brought about by the German assault on Russia. It wasn’t, in fact, until the conference of 10 July that the Japanese began deliberations upon Hull’s draft of the 21st.

Matsuoka, not surprisingly, offered the greatest resistance to these proposals; particularly—as noted above—the accompanying oral statement: a statement which Matsuoka claimed was designed to help engineer his downfall and thus constituted meddling on the part of the U.S. in Japan’s domestic affairs. At his insistence, the oral statement was to be returned to Hull and he was to be informed that the Japanese would not give their consideration to the proposals until such time as Hull withdrew the offending statement. Hull had no difficulty complying; having already made his point.81

CHAPTER VIII

THE NETHERLANDS EAST INDIES

Simultaneous with Japan's diplomatic efforts to forge stronger bonds of friendship with the U.S. and her continuing military pressure directed against French Indo-China, there were ongoing efforts aimed at coercing the authorities of the Netherlands East Indies into making available to Japan ever-increasing amounts of raw materials and commodities which Japan desired; in particular petroleum products.

We can trace these efforts to the early months of 1940, and it was not by mere chance that these efforts coincided with America's termination of the Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. On 12 January 1940, Japan gave notice to officials of the Dutch Indies that the Treaty of Judicial Settlement, Arbitration, and Conciliation of August 1935 was shortly due to be terminated. Under the terms of this treaty, the contracting parties were bound to settle any dispute which arose between them by solely peaceful means and a permanent committee had been established to carry out the deliberations. The subtle implications which the abrogation of this treaty carried were not lost on Indies' officials; a veiled threat was clearly intimated.

On 2 February 1940, shortly after the notification of intended termination was given, the

---

1 Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 341.
Japanese ambassador at the Hague Ishii Itarô, sought to discuss with the Foreign Minister of the Netherlands, Dr. E.N. van Kleffens, matters relating to questions of trade between Japan and the Dutch Indies as well as the position of Japanese subjects in the Indies and Dutch subjects in Japan. At the same time, Mr. Ishii presented to Dr. van Kleffens a note (a similarly worded note was handed the Netherlands' Minister at Tokyo on 8 March) containing several items relating to the Japanese desiderata. They are worth reproducing in full:

I. Matters Relating to Commerce.

(1) Japanese Side:

(a) Japan is to refrain, as far as circumstances permit, from adopting any measure prohibiting or restricting the exportation of its principal goods required by the Netherlands Indies. (It is to be understood that the exportation may sometimes be difficult for economic reasons.)
(b) Japan is to adopt such measures as deemed to be appropriate with a view to furthering the importation of goods from the Netherlands Indies.

(2) Netherlands Side:

(a) The Netherlands Indies is likewise to refrain from adopting any measure prohibiting or restricting the exportation of its principal goods; the prohibitive or restrictive measures, to which the exportation of certain goods has already been subjected are to be so modified as to render the flow of goods easier between Japan and the Netherlands Indies.
(b) The existing measures of import restrictions in respect of Japanese goods are to be abolished or moderated.

II. Matters Relating To Entry.
(1) **Japanese Side:**

Japan is, as at present, to adopt no restrictive measures in future in respect of the entry of employees of Netherlands firms in Japan.

(2) **Netherlands Side:**

The existing Foreigners Labour Ordinance in the Netherlands Indies is to be abolished or moderated.

**III. Matters Relating To Enterprise And Investment.**

(1) **Japanese Side:**

(a) Japan is to afford, within its influence and competence, reasonable protection to Netherlands' interests in Manchukuo and China.

(b) Facilities are to be afforded in respect of new Netherlands’ investments in Japan; its offer of investment to Manchukuo and China is to be recommended by Japan to be accommodated, to Governments concerned.

(2) **Netherlands’ side:**

(a) Further facilities are to be extended to the existing Japanese enterprises in the Netherlands Indies.

(b) Facilities are to be granted to new enterprises, including those under joint control of Japan and the Netherlands.

**IV. Control of Press and other Publications of Anti-Japanese Nature.**

The anti-Netherlands tendency, if any, of the press, magazines and other publications in Japan on one hand, and the anti-Japanese tendency of the press, magazines and other publications in [the] Netherlands and the Netherlands Indies on the other, are to be placed respectively under strict control
in conformity with [the] friendly spirit prevailing between Japan and the Netherlands.\(^2\)

Hubertus van Mook, the Director of Economic Affairs for the N.E.I., was to later note that although the Japanese proposals seemed to contain the element of reciprocity, "those familiar with the facts and their history could perceive at first glance how much the dice were loaded on the Japanese side."\(^3\) He also made the following observation: "It is noteworthy that Japan not only grasped the opportunity, provided by the circumstances of war, to renew her attempts at a more privileged position, but that she also showed concern about her access to raw materials at this early date."\(^4\)

The Japanese had for some time, been going to great lengths to convince anyone who cared to listen, that they and the Dutch Indies shared especially close and intimate ties. Nor did Japan hesitate to repeat such platitudes to officials of the Indies—who were well enough attuned to Japanese methods to make up their own minds as to the sincerity of such pronouncements.

Foreign Minister Arita Hachirô issued one such pronouncement to the Japanese press on 15 April 1940, (less than a week after the invasion of Norway and when an invasion of the Netherlands seemed certain) which opened with another of those, by now, well-worn banalities, pontificating on the mutually beneficial ties which existed between Japan and the Indies. Arita’s statement declared that Japan and the Dutch Indies were "economically bound by an intimate relationship of mutuality in ministering to one another’s needs."\(^5\) He then went on to say:


Should the hostilities in Europe be extended to the Netherlands and produce repercussions in the Netherlands East Indies, it would not only interfere with the maintenance and furtherance of the above-mentioned relations of economic interdependence and of coexistence and common prosperity, but also give rise to an undesirable situation from the standpoint of the peace and stability in East Asia. In view of these considerations, the Japanese Government cannot but be deeply concerned over any development, accompanying the aggravation of the war in Europe, that may affect the status quo of the Netherlands East Indies.6

In the same statement, Arita had also noted that Japan could not view with equanimity any alteration in the status quo of the Indies.7 On the same day that Arita made the above announcement, the Asahi newspaper noted that “if the Netherlands became involved in a war, either Britain might seek to control the East Indies or else the Netherlands Government might take refuge there and appeal for the protection of the United States.”8

Viewed in the light of recent pronouncement made at the conference of 11 April, in which the Army had called for a military invasion of the Indies, Arita’s statement to the press was so much

6 Hull, Memoirs, 1: 888; DAFR, 2: 305; Langer and Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation, p. 586. See also FRUS, Japan, II: 281.

7 Ambassador Grew attributes Arita’s reference to the preservation of the status quo in the Indies, to reports which were then circulating in Europe which suggested that the United States was contemplating the establishment of a protectorate over the Indies. Grew ascribed these reports to German sources. See Grew, Ten Years in Japan, p. 318. Such reports were promptly denied by Washington but Foreign Minister Arita stated that in Japan, they were taken seriously. Quoted in Langer and Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation, p. 585.

8 Quoted in Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 580.
prattle. And at that same conference, a certain Captain Okuma of the Intelligence Division was to declare that the war in Europe "would offer the most favourable opportunity for Japan to occupy the Netherlands East Indies." 9

The Japanese appeared interested in the maintenance of continuing stability; but only until they had made the decision to effect a change in the balance of power. In the meantime, any attempts by the U.S. or Great Britain to establish some sort of a protectorate over the Indies or to send naval vessels into her waters, could then be met with accusations that it was the Allied powers who had been the first to upset the status quo.

Two days after Arita's statement to the press, Cordell Hull came out with his own announcement—a portion of which follows:

> Intervention in the domestic affairs of the Netherlands Indies or any alteration of their status quo by other than peaceful processes would be prejudicial to the cause of stability, peace, and security not only in the region of the Netherlands Indies but in the entire Pacific area.

> This conclusion, based on a doctrine which has universal application and for which the United States unequivocally stands, is embodied in notes exchanged on November 30, 1908, between the United States and Japan in which each of the two Governments stated that its policy was directed to the maintenance of the existing status quo in the region of the Pacific Ocean. It is reaffirmed in the notes which the United States, the British Empire, France and Japan—as parties to the treaty signed at Washington on December 13, 1921, relating to their insular dominions in the region of the Pacific Ocean—sent to the Netherlands Government on February 4, 1922, in which each of those Governments declared that it is firmly resolved to respect the rights of the Netherlands in relation to their insular possessions in the region of the Pacific Ocean. 10

---


10 Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 1: 342; Fawn Brodie, ed., *Our Far Eastern Record: A Reference Digest*
The day after Arita's statement to the press, the Netherlands' Minister gave his assurance to Arita that the Indies had no intentions of "placing any restrictions on the export of oil, tin, rubber, and other raw materials vital to Japan" and that he, too, desired the maintenance of general economic relations with Japan. Arita was also told that the Netherlands' Government would neither seek nor accept "protection or intervention of any kind which might be made by any country."

At this time, however, there were already fears that Germany would soon invade the Netherlands and it was clear that such an attack would greatly increase the vulnerability of the Dutch East Indies to an assault by the Japanese. It had become obvious to all concerned, that Japan was then engaged in a major effort to secure for herself access to such petroleum products and minerals as could be found there.

For the British, the Indies held great importance for both economic and political reasons and it was certain that their loss would serve to greatly increase the threat hanging over Singapore. Churchill, himself, believed that any attack directed against Singapore would only come after the

---

on American Policy 2, no. 4 (New York: American Council: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942) 18. See also Langer and Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation, p. 586. On 16 May, the Japanese ambassador in Washington told Hull that he was satisfied that the four Governments (U.S., Britain, France and Japan) had declared their intentions to respect the status quo in the Dutch Indies following Arita's statements of 15 April and 11 May. See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 11,636. See also, State Department Press Release; dated 11 May 1940 in FRUS, Japan, II: 282.

11 Röling and Rüter, TTJ, 1: 342.
Japanese had taken the Netherlands East Indies. In any case, the British were hesitant to make a formal pledge of aid to the Indies; particularly when no similar commitment was forthcoming from the U.S. However, as a not too provocative warning to the Japanese, and a signal that the British were prepared to defend Singapore, Under-Secretary R. A. Butler of the British Foreign Office suggested sending two British ships to Ceylon; a suggestion which the Admiralty quickly vetoed, saying: "Surely the real deterrent to Japanese aggression... can only be found in the willing and open co-operation of the United States." The British had, in fact, been pressuring the Americans for some time to produce some sort of new, presumably more concrete display of the sort of consequences which the Japanese could expect to face if their aggressive behaviour in Asia were to continue. The U.S., however, remained averse to imposing any sanctions against the Japanese which were so forceful as to precipitate any imprudent reactions. When Hull had received Lord Halifax back in mid-February and been told by him that it was "imperative that the United States demonstrate its concern [to Japan]," he was told by Hull that "caution was needed so as not to precipitate Japanese seizure of the Netherlands East Indies."14

In late June 1940, the British Chiefs of Staff gave some consideration to the question of whether or not Britain should promise to assist the Netherlands Indies. Chief of the Navy General Staff Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, however, was against the idea. He based his objection to the proposal on

---

13 Tarling, Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Pacific War, p. 217; Marder, Old Friends, New Enemies, pp. 138-39.
14 Quoted in Lowe, Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War, p. 223.
the belief that the British Navy was already so severely over-extended, that they would be unable to fulfil such a promise should they be called upon to do so. Owing to dissent from other top military leaders, the question was referred to the War Cabinet.\textsuperscript{15}

If neither the British nor the Americans were ready at this stage to render assistance to the Indies, the Dutch might then be forced to "knuckle under" to Japanese demands. Clearly Britain was then preoccupied with concerns over the welfare of her own Empire, while back in the U.S., public opinion continued to play an determining role in the American Government's reluctance to make a definite commitment to the defence of the Indies.

As if to highlight current suspicions of Japan's future plans, America's ambassador in Paris, William C. Bullitt cabled Cordell Hull with a suggestion from the French Foreign Office that, in conjunction with his (Bullitt's) British and French counterparts, the American ambassador in Tokyo should remind Arita that Japan was a signatory to the Four-Power Treaty of 1921 which, amongst other things, bound the signatories to respect the rights of The Netherlands in relation to their Pacific possessions. Cordell Hull dismissed the suggestion, believing individual action by the separate Governments would be more effective than a joint démarche.\textsuperscript{16}

It does not seem improbable to presume that Hull's rejection of Bullitt's recommendation was rooted in his desire to avoid stoking Japanese feelings of suspicion concerning their perceived persecution at the hands of the Western powers. This perception on the part of the Japanese was well-known to Hull and anything done which might possibly "add fuel to the fire," so to speak, would

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 163.

\textsuperscript{16} Hull, Memoirs, 1: 888-89.
likely have proven counterproductive so far as the Secretary of State was concerned.

It is not surprising that Japanese manoeuvring in the Far East created nervous reactions in the halls of Western Governments. In Britain, as noted, fears continued to centre on the possibility of a Japanese attack on Singapore. If the Japanese were to execute such an attack, the British would have only the U.S. to turn to for support, and at that time, America was militarily unprepared to go to war. As far back as the summer of 1936, the British Chiefs of Staff had discussed the matter of a Japanese take-over of the Indies. Their inability to predict the American reaction to such an eventuality left the British military uncertain as to what their own options would be. When the war in Europe began, Churchill was still confident that Japan would not risk provoking American retaliation by the aggressive occupation of naval bases so near the Philippines. But this was mere speculation and now that war was a reality, the British had to make some definite decisions. Even after the Netherlands had been overrun, the British Service Chiefs issued a report which stated that Britain could only afford to offer token military assistance to the Dutch if the U.S. were not prepared to go beyond extending economic support for the Indies. And in early February 1941, Churchill had told Cadogan:

\[\ldots\] [A] guarantee to the Dutch regarding the Netherlands East Indies will avoid an awkward political situation, and may, to some extent, facilitate the co-ordination of our joint plans. As opposed to this we stand the risk of being involved in war with Japan, with all the incalculable consequences that would spring therefrom, in circumstances where this might have been avoided had freedom of action remained with us. In the Admiralty view, therefore, we should on no account give any assurance either formal or informal to the Dutch unless we have previously been assured of complete American co-operation.\[17\]

---

\[17\] Quoted in Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies*, p. 203.
Britain could give little naval support excepting the use of the facilities at Singapore and no assistance on land was possible owing to the inadequate number of British and Indian regular troops in Malaya. First-line aircraft were also insufficient and those available were not even enough for the defence of Britain's own holdings in Malaya. All in all, the picture was one of gloom. A follow-up report revealed that the British had come to the conclusion that "buying time" was the only realistic option available to them for the present. The basics of the report were thus summarised:

Committed as we are in Europe, and without the help of France, we must avoid an open clash with Japan. A general settlement, including economic concessions to Japan, is desirable. But the prospects are not at present favourable. Failing this settlement, our general policy must be to play for time, cede nothing until we must, and build up our defences as soon as we can. At the same time we should aim at securing the full military co-operation of the Dutch.

America, too, had reason to fear a military move against the Indies. If the Indies' great storehouse of raw materials were to fall into Japanese hands, not only would their military muscle be greatly augmented, but their ability to fight a protracted war would be assured. At the same time, America (and Britain) would be deprived of these very same raw materials.

When the Germans began their offensive in western Europe, the Americans found themselves unprepared in many ways. They discovered that their stocks of raw materials were wholly inadequate to deal with an emergency. According to Herbert Feis, the State Department's economic advisor:

18 Ibid., p. 84.
19 Ibid., p. 86
"The inflow [of raw materials] from the Far East on which we lived could be cut off. The defence was simple—immediate Government spending."\(^{20}\) However, the solution was not so simple as stated. As late as May 1940, American stockpiles of tin and rubber were only sufficient for three months' consumption and negotiations with the Dutch and British for the purchase of raw materials had proved to be difficult.\(^{21}\) The paucity of American reserves of tin and rubber remained problematic despite a 412 percent increase in tin imports between the years 1938-1940, and a 331 percent increase in imports of rubber during the same years.\(^{22}\)

In July, on the instructions of Cordell Hull, Ambassador Grew spoke with Foreign Minister Arita on the very matter of U.S.-Indies' trade; reminding him that statistics for the year 1937—which they took to be an average year—revealed that 15.8 percent of the Dutch Indies' foreign trade was with the U. S., while the figure for Japan amounted to only 11.6 percent.\(^{23}\)

**Germany Overruns the Netherlands**

On 10 May, the forces of the Germany military, as expected, began their invasion of the Netherlands; and this was only the beginning. Shortly thereafter, the "annihilation" began at Dunkirk.

---


ending in the tragic retreat of British and French forces. For the French, it was all over by 17 June and there was no shortage of voices which were then prepared to declare that the collapse of Britain, too, was near at hand; conditions in Europe having changed with extraordinary speed. "Don't miss the bus" or *basu ni noriokureru na*, suddenly became the catch-phrase in Japan. It was, in fact, around this time, that the chief of the Army General Staff (Intelligence Division), Tsuchihashi Yūitsu, told the British Military attaché in Tokyo Major-General Francis Gilderoy Piggott: "... the Japanese people would be cowardly if they failed to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the disasters suffered by the French and British. Nothing could stop Japan from seizing French Indo-China, the Netherlands Indies, or Hong Kong—any one or all of them."24

Like the sudden change in circumstances which had occurred in Europe, so too, did thinking change in Japanese military circles; making a 180-degree shift. Whereas a mere two months earlier, the push for a resolution of the China conflict had been the main preoccupation, more and more—particularly after the start of 1941—troops were steadily being withdrawn from the China theatre. At Imperial Headquarters too, those who feared "missing the bus" were turning rapidly to the doctrine of "southern advance."25

The Germans were well aware of the effect their victories in Europe were having on Japanese

---

25 Tanemura Sakô, *Daihon'ei kimitsu nisshi*, p. 33. According to Nishi Haruhiko, after the formation of the second Konoe Cabinet, and in the wake of the German victories in Europe, the expression: "basu ni noriokureru na" or "Don't miss the bus," which was the clarion call to seize the opportunity for the military advance southward, became even louder—especially amongst the Army. See Nishi, *Kaisô no nihon gaikô*, p. 101. See also SGS, 3: p. 97.
strategies in the Far East. On 27 July 1940, Ott cabled the Foreign Ministry to report:

The changed world situation brought about by German victory has to an increasing extent brought to the fore in Japan ideas of subordinating the solution of the China conflict to the creation of a large economic area in East Asia under Japanese hegemony. It is thought that with the inclusion of Indo-China, Burma, and parts of the Netherlands Indies, Japan might be enabled to act more generously to China and to permit Chiang Kai-shek to participate in this endeavour of a Greater Asia in a manner acceptable to him.26

The influence of changes in Europe on Japan's strategy were not lost on the Roosevelt administration either; Hull noted:

When Hitler threw his legions at northern and western Europe, there was no more interested spectator than Japan. Each time Europe had fallen into turmoil in the past, Japan had seized her advantage. And now as the pillars of Western civilization seemed crumbling, her greatest opportunity of all appeared to be drawing nigh.27

Britain's Ambassador Craigie echoed Hull's sentiments proclaiming:

The forces of greed, rapacity and aggression were carrying all before them. Time pressed if the [the Japanese] were to snatch for themselves in the South Pacific the spoils which might otherwise fall to a victorious Germany. Now, cried the expansionists, was the great moment in Japanese history. How were they to face their ancestors should this supreme opportunity be

26 Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry; dated 27 July 1940. See DGFP, series D, 10: 330.

27 Hull, Memoirs, 1: 888.
The assessments of Ott, Hull, and Craigie were all directly on target; on 30 July 1940, a report was made to the Emperor by his chief military aide-de-camp, Hasanuma Shigeru, stating that "Japan does not intend to solve the southern problem by itself; its real intention is to benefit itself at the expense of others." Tsunoda Jun contends that the "expense of others," referred primarily to German aid as well as the Japanese Navy. This can only mean the Japanese were hoping to take advantage of the German victories in Europe, and to then attempt to turn these victories to their own advantage.

The truth is, the Japanese Navy was not yet prepared to take on such a task. Speaking of an attack directed against Singapore and the Dutch Indies, the chief of the Navy General Staff Prince Fushimi, told the Emperor on 10 August 1940 that the Navy wished to avoid using force against the Dutch East Indies and Singapore at that time and that "it would be better to postpone war as much as possible" since at least eight months of preparation time would be needed.

Neither was the U.S. at that time prepared to go to war. Because of America's isolationist sentiments and their inability to yet engage in open hostilities, it seemed prudent to increase arms exports to the Indies. By the first half of 1941, for example, exports to the Indies had exceeded exports in the first half of 1940 by a full 100% and this trend continued throughout 1941. Although the publication of official statistics on arms shipment to the Indies was discontinued after April 1941, statements by E.C. Zimmermann of the N.E.I. Trade Commission in Washington indicated that in

May and June 1941, at least $7 million worth of armaments were sent to the Indies and for the remainder of 1941, exports were estimated to be not less than $4 million per month.\textsuperscript{31}

The increased arms shipments seemed to be a highly circumspect policy; the American public might feel disinclined to involve themselves in the war raging on the other side of the Atlantic; a war which much of the American public felt was not necessarily their concern. On the other hand, such sentiments need not have prevented the great "arsenal of democracy" from helping to build up the military potential of their allies. The U.S. might not yet be prepared to send their sons overseas, but other less hazardous forms of support could prove one day to have been a very prudent hedge against a time when the U.S. could not avoid being drawn into war. Events were taking place which might very well mean that the time when the U.S. could no longer stay out of war were nearer at hand than they may have envisaged.

On the very day that Germany invaded Holland, the Japanese Navy General Staff decided that the 4th Fleet should be prepared to move to the south, and that studies should be conducted concerning the need to put the fleet on an "alert" standing in case there were any violations of the neutrality of the Dutch Indies by Britain, France, or Germany.\textsuperscript{32} That same day, Japan demanded once again that the Indies' Government guarantee shipments to Japan from the Dutch Indies of petroleum, bauxite, manganese, nickel, and rubber.

Now that war had come to the Netherlands, Foreign Minister Arita felt compelled to reiterate his concerns regarding the maintenance of the status quo in the Indies; being certain on this occasion to

\textsuperscript{31} Kurt Bloch, "Japan on Her Own," \textit{Far Eastern Survey X}, no. 21 (1941): 252.

\textsuperscript{32} Tsunoda, "The Navy's Role," p. 244.
inform the British, German and French representatives in Tokyo of his interests in this regard. Within the next few days, the British and French representatives had informed the Japanese Foreign Ministry of their agreement with Arita's concerns and General J. C. Pabst, the Dutch Minister in Tokyo, called on Minister Arita at his official residence on the 15th to inform him that the Netherlands' Government were of the opinion that neither Britain, France, or America had any designs on the Indies.  

Giving due consideration to the possibility of war breaking out between Japan and America, the Japanese Navy General Staff was now engaged in preparing a war strategy and war production plans; making adjustments according to the dictates of the varying strengths and manoeuvres of one side against the other. Between May 15th and the 21st, naval map exercises were carried out by the Japanese as part of their strategic planning phase for southern operations—the results of which were grim for the Japanese. For roughly the first eighteen months, things could be expected to go well enough. However, after two years, Japan's ability to fight any sort of delaying action or war of attrition (jikyūsen) against the forces of the United States would have become quite grave. Estimates of comparative military strength one year after the outbreak of hostilities indicated Japan would be at one-half America's strength and her problems would be further compounded by difficulties arising out of their having to transport raw materials from the southern regions coupled with a complete embargo by the U.S.

According to the recollections of Navy Captain Kawai Iwao and Commander Miyo Kazunari, both former members of the Operations Section of the General Staff, if Japan were to come under a complete embargo by Great Britain and the U.S., within four or five months—if Japan were unable to

---

secure sufficient fuel—she would lose her ability to wage war.³⁴

Upon receipt of this report, Navy Minister Yoshida spoke with chief of the Operations Division Ugaki Matome, asking: “Are we not engaging in incompetence if, after occupying the strategically important areas of the Indies wherein the natural resources are located, we are unable to secure the sea lanes? If so, doesn’t this render an attack on the Indies meaningless?”³⁵

Admiral Yoshida, like Admirals Yonai and Yamamoto, was doubtful of Germany’s ultimate victory in Europe and therefore, extremely cautious about the southern advance. Furthermore, he was much concerned over the prospect of American economic pressure, owing to Japan’s continuing economic reliance on America and Britain.³⁶

The results as reported to the Navy chief of Staff and the Navy Minister were as follows:

(1) If U.S. exports of petroleum are totally banned, it will be impossible to continue the war unless within four months we are able to secure oil in the Dutch East Indies and acquire the capacity to transport it to Japan.

(2) Even then, Japan would be able to continue the war for a year at most. Should the war continue beyond a year, our chances of winning would be nil.³⁷

A further revelation which resulted from the Japanese war games held in May was the realisation—as far as the Navy was concerned—that a war with the Netherlands was bound to lead to

³⁴ DSKK, 2: 25.
³⁵ Ibid.
conflict with both Britain and the U.S., despite the hope that military operations would be restricted "insofar as possible...to Britain alone."\(^{38}\)

On the 15\(^{th}\) of May 1940, Holland capitulated to the Germans and on that same day, Prime Minister Churchill sent a telegram to President Roosevelt requesting American assistance in the form of a loan of forty or fifty old destroyers, several hundred of the latest types of aircraft, anti-aircraft ammunition, the liberty to purchase American steel, a request that America should "show the colours" by having an American naval squadron pay a visit to Ireland and, regarding the Far East, Churchill told Roosevelt: "...I am looking to you to keep that Japanese dog quiet in the Pacific, using Singapore in any way convenient." A similar invitation was tendered the Americans on the 17th, but the U.S. administration was neutral to the idea, preferring instead, to keep the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor.\(^{39}\)

On 25 May, Foreign Minister Arita sent a note to General Pabst asking for a "definite commitment" from the Dutch Indies that they would—*no matter what future circumstances might arise*—export to Japan each year thereafter, at the very least, the following quantities of raw materials. (italics added):

1. Tin (including ore) 3,000 tons

---


2. Rubber 20,000 tons
3. Mineral oil 1,000,000 tons
4. Bauxite 200,000 tons
5. Nickel ore 150,000 tons
6. Manganese ore 50,000 tons
7. Wolfram 1,000 tons
8. Scrap-iron 100,000 tons
9. Chrome iron ore 5,000 tons
10. Salt 100,000 tons
11. Castor seeds 4,000 tons
12. Quinine bark 600 tons
13. Molybdenum 1,000 tons

Just as the Japanese were to reveal their concern that Germany, as the now undisputed power in western Europe, might lay claim to the vast mineral resources of French Indo-China, so too for the Indies. The Japanese could hardly conceal their apprehensions over the possibility that the “lion’s share” of the resources of the Indies would be wrested from her by her European ally.

Two days after the capitulation of Holland, Kurusu visited Weizsäcker seeking German assurances that they had no designs on the Dutch Indies. Weizsäcker appeared amenable and after

---

40 DSKK, 2: 22-23. In Kirby, The War Against Japan, p. 43, Arita’s request to J.C. Pabst for the large quantities of raw materials is recorded as having been tendered on 15 May.
speaking with Kurusu, he relayed the minutes of the meeting along with his own recommendations to Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop. Among the recommendations which he proposed were the following: (1) That a statement be issued by the Foreign Office stating that the true threat to the status quo in the Indies comes from our enemies and the U.S.A.; (2) that Germany shouldn’t rule out the possible use of hiding places in the Netherlands Indies for the German Navy; and (3) that the German statement should contain nothing that could prejudice any later decision vis-à-vis the Netherlands Indies. 41

In direct reference to his talks with Kurusu, he indicated that the Japanese seemed almost to think that Germany was their enemy, suggesting Ribbentrop attempt to placate Arita by telling him that Germany, too, shared some concern over the future fate of the Netherlands Indies and knew the true enemies to be the Allied powers and U.S.A. 42

Two days later, the German Foreign Ministry cabled a definitive statement to Ambassador Ott in Tokyo, who was instructed to relay the message to Minister Arita. It said in part:

This German–Dutch conflict was exclusively a European affair and had nothing to do with overseas questions. Germany, therefore, has no interest in occupying herself with such overseas problems, in which she continued to regard herself disinterested. . . . Please make these statements orally to the Japanese Foreign Minister. A detailed publication advisable but there is no objection, in view of the recent inquiries of the press conference, to Japan’s putting on record that Germany has stated her disinterestedness on the question of the Netherlands Indies. 43

41 Telegram from Weizsäcker to the German Foreign Minister’s secretariat; dated 18 May 1940. See DGFP, series D, 9: 375-76.

42 Ibid., pp. 376-77.

43 Telegram from Ribbentrop to Ambassador Ott; dated 20 May 1940. See ibid., pp. 385-87.
The Japanese could hardly believe their good fortune. Their German ally, who by all rights should have been entitled to share in the exploitation of the resources of Netherlands Indies, was now telling the Japanese that she had no such interests. Ott cabled home on the 23rd May to report that:

The whole press publishes [sic] under large headlines yesterday’s communiqué by the spokesman of the Foreign Ministry on the declaration of Germany’s disinterestedness in the question of the Netherlands East Indies. The [Japanese] newspapers are unanimous in emphasizing that Germany’s attitude differs fundamentally from the declarations by England, France, and Holland, . . . Germany’s disinterestedness could be regarded as a kind of carte blanche for Japan.44

Simultaneous with Arita’s demands on Pabst, came the further demand that the Indies enter into an extensive accord based on the economic relationship between their two countries.45 During the course of ensuing talks, the Dutch continued—as the French Indo-Chinese had done—desperately trying to avoid making any solid commitments.

Prompted by Tokyo’s 28 May request for a speedy reply and a further request for the convening of immediate negotiations to be held in Batavia, on 6 June—a full four months after Ishii had handed Dr. van Kleffens the note containing the Japanese proposals of 2 February 1940—General Pabst finally responded to Japan’s proposals of that date as well as those of 25 May. Regarding commercial relations between the two, the Indies’ Government indicated that they would refrain from taking any measures which might hamper the export to Japan of the thirteen mentioned products in the

44 Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry, dated 23 May 1940. See ibid., pp. 414-15.
45 Feis, The Road to Pearl Harbor, pp. 58-59.
quantities Japan had requested. With regard to the question of immigration, the Government declined the proposition to revoke the Foreigners Labour Ordinance on the grounds that its revocation would result in an influx of foreigners to the detriment of the resident working-population of the Indies; while a partial revocation to accommodate a single country (Japan) would imply unequal treatment and a violation of the status quo.

The response also hinted at the perceived one-sidedness of the Japanese proposals in that it was pointed out that the number of Dutch nationals then working in Japan constituted a very restricted number. The Netherlands' Government indicated that their current policy vis-à-vis the establishment of commercial enterprises and the investment of foreign capital in the Indies was, in their eyes, basically sound and liberal as it was presently applied; enough so, that it deserved to be maintained in its present form. As to the question of controls being applied on the press, the Indies' Government also expressed their belief that press limitations, as they were currently constituted, were sufficient to ensure the continuation of good relations between the peoples and Governments of the Indies and Japan.

The Indies' Government attached an appendix to their response outlining their capacity to provide the raw materials Japan was seeking to import. Regarding the importation of 1,000,000 tons of petroleum products, the appendix indicated that the Indies "may be able to supply the required quantities, provided the Japanese, on their part, conclude the contracts on time." A guarantee was also provided that exports of scrap iron (Japan sought to import 100,000 tons) to Japan in the quantities available would not be subject to any restrictions. (italics added).46

46 The response from the Indies indicated that the Japanese sought 100,000 tons of scrap-iron; a
This qualified response by the Dutch was also evasive as far as the amounts of manganese ore, wolfram, and molybdenum which would be available for export; with Indies' officials insisting that production and export figures for these materials were well below the quantities which the Japanese sought to import.

On 10 June, Italy issued their declaration of war against France and Great Britain, and the Japanese declared their neutrality towards the Dutch East Indies—a declaration which was received by the Dutch with a healthy dose of scepticism. That same day, word came from the Netherlands East Indies of their decision to suspend negotiations with the Japanese, and their blunt refusal to be included in Japan's envisioned co-prosperity sphere; a rejection which the Japanese believed was a direct result of American and British interference. That day, Joseph Grew received a confidential message from an unnamed member of Japan's Diet; a member who appeared to be sympathetic to America's viewpoint. He informed Grew that "Matsuoka was under very strong pressure both by the German embassy and from certain Japanese extremists, to take strong action against the Netherlands East Indies . . . . As for the Japanese extremists, they want to acquire the Indies before the war ends . . . .

Sizeable increase over their 1939 imports, which totaled 47,200 tons. The Japanese claim to 50,000 tons of manganese ore was approximately seven times the total exports of that product in 1939—7,300 tons; and finally, the figures for wolfram and molybdenum were also not in accordance with the Indies' production figures; wolfram being obtained in only very small quantities, while they had never exported the rarely found molybdenum. The full text of this response can be found in van Mook, *The Netherlands Indies and Japan*, pp. 29-36. General Pabst had to await his instructions from the Dutch home Government which, at the time of Holland's collapse, had moved to London. See DSKK, 2: 23.
in German victory, since they fear German designs on the islands.”

This morsel of confidential information suggests that all may not have been well within the “pro-Axis” camp. German proclamations of disinterest in the Indies notwithstanding, there obviously remained those in Tokyo who doubted or—at the very least—continued to hold feelings of suspicion concerning their European ally. Grew noted at this time (6 July 1941) that although there hadn’t yet been “a complete collapse of Japanese confidence of German good faith,” he did not think it “sufficiently robust to justify any initiatives tending to serve German interests more closely than the interests of Japan herself.”

As for the acquisition of the Indies, this drastic move would have required consent from the highest levels of the military who were still understandably fearful of the Allied response, and as the recent map exercises had revealed, they remained unsure of their own long-term capabilities.

In any case, in response to the Indies’ rejection, Mr. Ishii Koh, the Japanese Foreign Office spokesman, accused officials of the Netherlands East Indies of “insincerity” which, in turn, prompted a British publication to issue an editorial rebuttal of Mr. Ishii’s characterisation. It noted: “In fact, nothing could be more straightforward than the Dutch attitude. They are ready to trade with Japan on goodneighbourly [sic] lines. They insist, however, that nothing they supply should be sent, or enable other Japanese imports not under their control, to be sent, to their archenemy Germany.”

Relations between Japan and the Indies had already taken a further turn for the worse when, at

---

48 Ibid., p. 402.
49 See *Great Britain and the Far East* LVI, no. 1568 (Thursday, 12 June 1941), p. 414.
about this same time, a Japanese fishing trawler was fired upon by a Dutch naval vessel as that craft was piloting the waters off the North Celebes (present-day Sulawesi). This episode only served to further exacerbate the already strained relations between the Dutch and the Japanese and dimmed the prospects for any success which might possibly have arisen out of further discussions.50

On 2 July 1940, the National Defence Act gave President Roosevelt the authority to place under license, arms, munitions, critical and strategic raw materials, aeroplane parts, optical instruments, and metal working machinery. Moderates in the State Department prevented the inclusion of oil and scrap iron from being included. These measures supplemented an earlier (4 June 1940) embargo on machine tools. Because, in its practical application, the British Empire was exempted from such embargoes, these export controls affected principally, Japan.51

Evidence of a stiffening of the American attitude was also shown by Roosevelt's naming of two "hard-liners"—Henry L. Stimson and Frank Knox—to the respective posts of Secretary of War and Secretary of the Navy. And on the 20th of July 1940, the President signed a bill to create a two-ocean Navy. Five days later, he issued an executive order—effective the next day—which froze all Japanese assets in the United States.52

Although it would be an overstatement to say that there were appeasers within the Roosevelt Government, certain key authorities such as Ambassador Joseph Grew, chief of Navy Operation

50 Yano, Nihon to iōnan ajia, p. 91.
51 Brodie, Our Far Eastern Record, p. 29
Admiral Harold Stark and Army chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, were well aware that initiating a full-scale embargo against the Japanese might very well force them into doing precisely what it was that an embargo was meant to prevent; that is, unleash all-out attacks aimed at various points in Asia and the South Seas wherein key raw materials and petroleum fields might be seized. With the exceptions of China proper and Manchuria, the Japanese—at least at this point—hadn't yet resorted to the all-out military attacks which the Western powers nervously anticipated. In French Indo-China, Thailand, and the Indies, they still appeared to prefer the use of stealth in the guise of diplomacy.

Until the American Government (and people) had come to terms with the reality of the war then raging across Europe, it still seemed to be more prudent to buy time in order that they might build up their own defensive capabilities as a hedge against being drawn into the conflict at some time in the future. We may say then, that it was imperative for the Roosevelt administration to strike a balance: To step lightly in applying just enough pressure to show the Japanese their displeasure—hopefully giving them pause for thought—while, at the same time, avoiding the imposition of any sanctions so severe that they would precipitate hostilities on the Pacific side. Roosevelt himself had said as much in a speech given during the summer of 1940. If he had cut off the petroleum supply to Japan, he’d said, “they probably would have gone down to the Dutch East Indies a year ago and you would have war.”

Still, the mood in American was one of pacifism and both the Democrats and the Republicans continued to deliver speeches promising to keep America out of war. Speaking of the campaigns of 1940, the prominent American historian Charles A. Beard wrote the following:

Indeed, in respect of foreign policy, the striking feature of the political campaign of 1940 was the predominance of the antiwar sentiment among Democrats and Republicans—the overwhelming majority of the American people. . . . President Roosevelt and Mr. Wilkie both engaged in outbidding each other in the solemnity and the precision of their pledges to maintain the neutrality and peace of the United States.  

The Kobayashi Mission

As a result of talks which took place during a Cabinet meeting of 27 August 1940, a policy outline was produced which summarised the Japanese plans as regards the Indies; They ran as follows: (1) To sever the connections between the Indies and Europe; (2) to bring the East Indies into membership in the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere; (3) to recognise the right of the Indonesian peoples to full self-Government; (4) to work toward the fundamental goal of consummating a mutual defence treaty with the Dutch Indies so that she may be able to enjoy a secure peace within the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere; and (5) to present various demands to Indies’ officials for the recognition of Japan’s special rights with regard to business, manufacturing and navigation, in addition to procuring essential raw materials. Most importantly, the same Cabinet paper also noted that it was

54 Charles A. Beard, “Roosevelt Deceived the Public,” in Dallek, ed., The Roosevelt Diplomacy, pp. 36-37.
clear that without the resort to military means, these goals could not be achieved. On the same day these decisions were reached (27 August), the Japanese notified General Pabst that special envoy Kobayashi Ichizô, along with a Mr. Ōta from the Foreign Ministry, and a staff of twenty-four—including some members from each branch of the military—would form the Japanese delegation coming to the Indies to discuss outstanding Japanese concerns.

As their representative to the Indies, the Japanese had originally planned to dispatch former Minister of Overseas Affairs, General Koiso Kuniaki, to handle the negotiations. However, Koiso proved himself to be an unfavourable choice for the task he was expected to undertake, when he stated in most un-diplomatic language: "If the Indies refused to submit to Japanese demands, [he] would not be averse to commanding naval vessels and marine units in a campaign to establish a protectorate over the Indies." This option, and Koiso's selection, were promptly vetoed by the Naval, Foreign and Army Ministers. When informed of the fact that Japan's choice as their representative was Koiso Kuniaki, Indies' officials had also expressed their unwillingness to compromise. For such reasons as these, it was decided that Kobayashi Ichizô would be the wiser choice to represent Japan in Koiso's stead.  

Apparently, Koiso had also made inflammatory remarks to the press on 3 August concerning oppressive behaviour on the part of the Netherlands' regime against the indigenous

---

55 DSKK, 2: 82-83; Kurihara, Tennô, pp. 144-45.
56 DSKK, 2: 83; Ishikawa, Hôisareta Nihon, p. 57. Actually, Japan's first choice had been Mr. Sakô, a former ambassador to Poland. However, a Cabinet change had resulted in his ouster. He was followed by a Mr. Sawada, Japan's former ambassador to Brazil; his appointment, too, was retracted for reasons unknown. Clearly the Japanese were being extremely cautious about their choice of lead chairman, thus indicating the gravity with which they held the upcoming negotiations.
peoples of the Indies. The Netherlands’ Government could, therefore, not accept him “without at least a public retraction or denial of that statement.”

In any case, it was hoped that Kobayashi’s status as the Minister of Commerce and Industry, might enable him to persuade officials of the Indies’ Government to give more serious consideration to Japanese solicitations. Kobayashi, acting on the recommendations produced by the Cabinet (as summarised above) set off for Batavia with his entourage; arriving in mid-September 1940. According to a telegram from Batavia, a member of the Japanese mission said of Kobayashi’s mission:

He had been expected to be hailed as a saviour of the Netherlands East Indies and to have long talks with the Governor-General, ending in a secret oral or gentleman’s agreement. When asked on what subject agreement was to be, he said that [the] aim of the mission was to arrange that Japan will guarantee [the] territorial integrity of the Netherlands East Indies and in return have a free hand economically there. They want an assurance that Japan would always be allowed to buy as much as she wants when she wants it . . .

Japan would, as noted in this telegram, guarantee the territorial integrity of the Indies; a guarantee remarkably similar to that offered the French Indo-Chinese.

Two days after his arrival, Kobayashi had his first meeting with Indies’ officials, after which he sent a telegram to Matsuoka stating the following:

The (Dutch) governor-general does not realize that the present situation is so serious that if he

57 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 11,796.
58 Quoted in Tarling, Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Pacific War, p. 147.
remains so old-fashioned as to be concerned with diplomatic formulas only, the existence of the Dutch East Indies will be in danger, and he can not keep pace with the changing situation. He openly tried to do his utmost to evade political problems. He evinced not the slightest sign of fervour to try to sound out the true intention of the Japanese Government towards the Dutch East Indies. In as much as he does not understand our real idea of friendly relations between the two countries, it is no use for us to continue the negotiations with such a governor-general. It has made me feel that I have come all this way in vain.59

Clearly the pessimistic tenor of Kobayashi's telegram—and at such an early stage—did not bode well for Japanese fortunes in the negotiations. Official talks opened on the 16th with the Japanese requesting that the question of oil procurement be given top priority. The specific quantities of petroleum products which the Japanese requested, totalled in excess of 3,000,000 tons—this amount to be provided annually over a five-year period. The following quantities were requested:

(1) Aviation crude: 1,100,000 tons.

(2) Aviation fuel (over 87 octane): 400,000 tons.

(3) Regular crude: 1,050,000 tons.

(4) Heavy crude: 500,000 tons.

(5) Lubricating oil: 100,000 tons.

Total: 3,150,000 tons.

The outlines for an oil agreement were reached on 16 October but the details were to be worked out at a later date. On 29 October, the Indies responded to the Japanese requests; telling Kobayashi that they were unable to produce such quantities and offering a revision of an earlier contract promising 580,000 tons, to one which had been increased to 720,000 tons. Aviation crude was to be limited to 120,000 tons and the request for crude oil was reduced to 540,000 tons.60

Meanwhile, the American and British Governments continued to observe with interest the negotiations taking place in the Indies. Phillip Lothian, the British ambassador in Washington, stressed that in order not to undermine American pressure, the Dutch should make no long-term commitment to the Japanese for the supply of oil, and in talks with Cordell Hull, he pointed out that “America’s refusal to supply aviation fuel licences had intensified the pressure on the Indies and resistance depended, in some measure, on American support.” Hull replied that the “Americans were making almost a daily record of opposition to Japanese expansion and Japanese aggression . . . .”61

The lack of co-operation from the Indies coupled with the increasing burden of American sanctions, were having their effects on the Japanese. President of the Planning Board, Hoshino Naoki reiterated statements he made during the 19 September 1940 Imperial Conference when he told a meeting of the Privy Council, held at the end of the following week:

Most important is petroleum. We are at present depending greatly on America, especially for aviation gasoline, all of which we must import from America. We must try to increase its production at home and, at the same time, we must find means to secure it from places other than

60 See ibid.; DSKK, 2: 84.
61 Tarling, Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Pacific War, p. 148.
America. Recently we have accumulated a considerable stock of petroleum. However, in case of a prolonged war with the U.S.A., a self-sufficient supply cannot be obtained solely in Japan, Manchuria, and China. Therefore it is necessary that we speedily secure the right to obtain oil in the Dutch East Indies or North Karafuto.\(^{62}\)

During that same meeting, "Prince Fushimi reminded the leaders of the Government that the Navy would accept the Axis Alliance only on condition that the Army and Government would provide enough funds to accelerate the Navy's war preparations."\(^{63}\)

The Japanese were obviously concerned about the attitude of the Indies' officials, which was thought to permit little room for compromise. And it had been apparent from the outset (as indicated by Kobayashi's telegram) that their attitude was going to be one of inflexibility. Not surprisingly, the entry of Japanese troops into Tonkin province coupled with the announcement of the Tripartite Pact were to further stiffen the attitude of the Indies' officials; eventually bringing discussions to a standstill.\(^{64}\)

Kobayashi, who attributed his later failure to American interference, was recalled without having accomplished his mandate and he embarked for the return home on 22 October 1940. In his stead, Ôta Tamekichi of the Kobayashi delegation and the consul-general in Batavia, Saitô Otoji remained behind to continue the negotiations.\(^{65}\)

Although the Government in the Indies had also refused to act as a broker between the Japanese

\(^{62}\) IMTFE, *Transcript*, pp. 9,758-59.

\(^{63}\) Pelz, *Race to Pearl Harbor*, 217.


buyer and the oil companies, on 14 November 1940, the U.S. consul at Batavia informed the State Department that Japanese oil importers had initialied an agreement with local oil companies which offered approximately one-half of what the Japanese had requested. This, however, included precious little aviation fuel (120,000 tons of aviation crude). On the other hand, the Indies continued to send such raw materials as oil, rubber, tin, and bauxite, although the export amounts for these products also fell short of those requested by the Japanese.

The Netherlands' Minister in London, Michiels van Verduyen, told Richard Butler of the British Foreign Office on 19 November, that he did not want to put the screws in on the Japanese to too great an extent. Switching topics, he then went on to say:

Speaking personally, he himself had been mystified and disquieted by the fact that His Majesty's Government had never given to the Netherlands Government any undertaking that we should come to the aid of the Netherlands East Indies if attacked by Japan." Butler assured him of the great importance which Britain and America attached to the preservation of the integrity of the Dutch Indies.  

As noted, American and British concerns were rooted in the assumption that the Japanese, in their quest to secure petroleum, might, in fact attack the Indies. Obviously such an attack would have serious ramifications: the isolation of Singapore, Japanese control over the waters off Borneo and the

---

66 The oil agreement of 12 November 1940 offered a total of 1.8 million tons of petroleum products as opposed to the 3.1-3.7 million tons the Japanese had sought. See DAFR, 3: 300, for a complete inventory of the petroleum and petroleum by-products, including the export quantities agreed upon. See also FRUS, Japan, II: 297-98.

67 Tarling, Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Pacific War, pp. 215-16
South China Sea, and the envelopment of the Philippines. Churchill was to touch on certain of these points in a telegram to the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand. The telegram had begun with a brief statement in which Churchill had expressed his belief that Japan would not declare war unless Germany successfully invaded Britain; he then went on to say:

Should Japan nevertheless declare war on us, her first objective outside the Yellow Sea would probably be the Dutch Indies. Evidently the United States would not like this. What they would do we cannot tell. They give us no undertaking of support, but their main fleet in the Pacific must be a grave preoccupation to the Japanese Admiralty. In the first phase of an Anglo-Japanese war we should, of course, defend Singapore, which if attacked—which is unlikely—ought to stand a long battle.

It seems worth mentioning at this stage, that the last of the genrō, Saionji Kinmochi, finally passed away on 24 November; thus removing one of the few remaining voices of moderation who had the Emperor's ear. As far back as 1936, for example, Saionji had spoken out against Japan's aligning herself with Germany. He had "attacked" the Anti-Comintern Pact as "... German exploitation and of no conceivable value to Japan." And he had told his private secretary, Harada Kumao:

The Japan-German Pact is 100% to Germany's benefit and can be nothing but a loss to Japan. So far, pro-German feelings have been confined to the kambatsu and the feelings of the mass of the people are pro-Anglo-American rather than pro-German ... Geographically, we are

---

much better off to keep close relations with England and America. If Japan were in the position of Turkey, or one of the Balkan states, then the current methods might be valid but in terms of geography, we are very different... Whichever way one looks at it, the Japan–German Pact has diminished Japan.  

The Yoshizawa Mission

On 28 December 1940, Yoshizawa Kenkichi, who had replaced Kobayashi Ichizô as Japan's special envoy, arrived in Batavia with the Japanese negotiating team to commence scheduled talks with Dutch Indies' officials which began on 2 January 1941 (local time). They brought with them a lengthy inventory of desires which reflected the agenda decided upon in a Cabinet meeting of 25 October 1940. At this particular meeting, the Japanese Cabinet had come out with further recommendations relating to the Indies. Batavia was to remove export restrictions on certain items which the Japanese deemed necessary to their self-defence, in addition to increasing their agricultural output in order to boost their purchasing power for Japanese goods; Japanese advisors were to be attached to various economic organs in Indonesia such as those handling foreign trade, customs, taxation, finance, and transport, and the Indies' authorities were to make arrangements to ban anti-Japanese material from their newspapers and magazines.

So, although the desiderata of late December reflected proposals which had been arrived at two months earlier, it appears that the Japanese preferred to hold off on their presentation due to Kobayashi having been unable to gain the confidence of the Indies' officials. In addition, the Japanese

---

70 Quoted in Connors, The Emperor’s Advisor, p. 187.
were, at that time, just then anticipating the appointment of the new negotiating team under Yoshizawa. Such speculation is given substance owing to the fact that Minister van Kleffens had given Vice Minister Ōhashi an aide-mémoire on 15 November which stated that the Netherlands had adopted the position that the negotiations had reached a standstill owing to the lack of subject matter; furthermore, the Dutch officials recommended that the talks be discontinued. The Japanese had, in fact, responded to this suggestion with a note-verbale of 20 November which announced the imminent appointment of a new special envoy. In any case, it was Yoshizawa who presented the latest proposals, based upon the following desires:

(1) The Japanese wished to see some relaxation in the restrictions which had been placed upon the entry of Japanese nationals to the Indies. They felt they were subject to the most stringent restrictions of any peoples; noting, for example, that during the year 1940, entry permits were granted to a mere 1,633 Japanese. In addition, the question of eliminating the entry tax on Japanese subjects was also brought up.

(2) The Japanese also sought the elimination of barriers which restricted the Japanese from engaging in certain development projects in the Indies. The removal of restrictions pertaining to certain industrial and economic activities were also discussed.

---

71 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 11,844-45. According to the records of the transcript, these demands were not officially made known to the Dutch side until 16 January 1941; the Japanese desiderata wasn’t made public. However, the U.S. embassy was told by the Netherlands’ legation that although the desiderata were delivered in a friendly and non-threatening manner, “…the demands themselves are of such a nature that, if acceded to, the Netherlands East Indies would be reduced to the status of a Japanese colony.” See FRUS, Japan, II: 305.
(3) The Japanese sought permission to allow Japanese doctors to practice medicine in the Indies.

(4) Favourable promotion was sought for Japanese-managed industrial enterprises and friendly assistance for joint Japanese-Indies' industry.

(5) In the area of industrial mining, the Japanese were hoping to be granted, without delay, permission to engage in large-scale operations.

(6) In the area of fishing rights, and to the degree that it wouldn't create competition, the Japanese were looking for authorization to fish the waters within the Indies' oceanic boundaries and, at the same time, to increase the permissible number of Japanese fishermen and fishing vessels, in addition to the establishment of Japanese fish processing facilities in the Indies.

(7) The Japanese discussed the idea of joint Japanese-Indies' industrial development in the field of aeronautics.

(8) There were consultations concerning the removal of restrictions against Japanese ocean-going vessels and other related shipping matters. The Japanese wanted permission to navigate freely within the Indies' territorial waters and to increase the number of Japanese vessels permitted to do so.

(9) They sought improvements in telegraphic communications between their two nations; specifically, the laying of an underwater cable to be constructed under the auspices of Japanese management and a lifting of the restriction imposed against the use of the Japanese language in cable traffic within the Indies.

(10) Regarding restrictions on industrial enterprises, the Japanese sought greater leeway to engage in such enterprises as warehousing, printing, and textile and ice manufacturing.  

72 DSKK, 2: 187-88.
Maberly Dening, consul at the British Foreign Office, upon hearing of this extensive list, characterised it as “preposterous,” and he doubted that even the Japanese themselves believed their desires could be met; noting: “[T]he oriental sets his price high, expecting to be beaten down.”\(^7\) His misgivings went even deeper, with speculation that the Japanese, knowing that many of their desires would be rejected, might then turn that rejection into a \textit{casus belli} for aggressive action. Japan had also made a request to seek and develop oil deposits in the Indies and defined the area for exploration to include Borneo, the Celebes, Dutch New Guinea, the Arroe Archipelago, and the Schouten Archipelago.

Evidence produced at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East shows the Japanese were interested in more than just oil exploration; they planned to clandestinely bring in aeroplanes and plainclothes troops and turn certain areas into strategic bases. However, the Indies’ Government managed to stall the Japanese by referring these requests to the Mining Department for further study. These requests were later refused.

Like Kobayshi before him, Yoshizwa was encountering difficulties with the Indies’ officials. A cable dated 27 January 1941 reached Tokyo, in which Yoshizawa indicated that the Netherlands Indies had been buoyed by the news of the defeat of the Italians in the Mediterranean theatre, the support she was receiving from the U.S. and Great Britain, and American aid being given Britain. As a consequence of these circumstances, the Netherlands Indies had, according to Yoshizawa’s assessment “developed an optimistic viewpoint that the objective situation is developing favourably. . . thus not only is she [the Indies] completely disregarding the Empire’s East Asia Co-Prosperity

\(^7\) Tarling, \textit{Britain, Southeast Asia and the Onset of the Pacific War}, p. 224.
Sphere, but she is further expressing her spirit of opposition on every matter.” Yoshizawa then offered that if the Empire did not adopt “determined resolution or measures,” progress in the negotiations and the development of better relations between Japan and the Indies, “would be extremely difficult.”

Japanese concerns were further compounded when, at the end of January (31/1941) acting upon his Government’s directions, the Netherlands’ Minister in Japan, General J.C. Pabst, told Japan’s Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr. Tani Masayuki, that his Government wanted to “make it clear that the people of the Netherlands East Indies could not be expected either to let their actions be guided by the conception of the new order as set forth by the Foreign Minister, or acquiesce in the consequences of its eventual application.” In the same telegram which reported this bit of information, Ambassador Grew reported that in the Japanese press, there were “thinly veiled threats” admonishing the Netherlands East Indies to reconsider their opposition to “its incorporation in the new Co-prosperity Sphere.”

---

74 Telegram from Yoshizawa to Matsuoka; dated 27 January 1941. See IMTFE, Transcript, p. 11,857. Robert Butow is in disagreement with the precise translation provided in the transcript of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. He translates the passage given, as saying: “without momentous determination and manoeuvring on Japan’s part,” progress in the negotiations with the Dutch would be “most difficult.” See Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War, p. 200. He further suggests that as this same telegram was also sent to the Vice Minister of War and the Vice-Chief of the Army General Staff, the expression “momentous determination” may have been a euphemism for “a decision in favour of force.”

75 Telegram from Joseph Grew to Hull; dated 10 February 1941. FRUS, Japan, II: 305.

76 Ibid.
These threats notwithstanding, the Netherlands Indies responded to Yoshizawa’s lengthy desiderata on 3 February 1941. It began with a restatement of “considerations determining the economic policy of the Netherlands East Indies.” The Japanese were told that the Indies must obviate any measures “which tend to run counter to the interests of the inhabitants, or which would unduly narrow the scope of their future development . . .” The Netherlands were committed to conducting their economic relations “on a basis of strict non-discrimination . . .” and, the Japanese were told, “no preponderance shall be created of foreign interests in any field of economic activity.” The statement continued—now in a tone tinged with suspicion: “For the duration of the war in which the Kingdom of the Netherlands is involved, it is unavoidable that trade and other economic activities will be subject to restrictions preventing direct or indirect advantage to the enemy or safeguarding the defence of the Netherlands Indies.” Finally, the statement refuted Japanese claims that economic relations between Japan and the Indies were of a nature important enough to warrant their being termed interdependent.77

Matsuoka was sent a follow-up telegram from Yoshizawa, on 6 February which was, if anything, even more pessimistic than his earlier cable of the 27th. He told the Foreign Minister that if the situation in the Indies was not properly addressed, it would “be impossible to expect much of the current situation.” He further indicated that if Japan didn’t resort to force, “it would be impossible to make [the] Netherlands East Indies a member of the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.” Finally, he stated that it would be “imperative” for Japan to undertake preparations for “all possible

77 The text of the Dutch Indies’ response may be found in its entirety in IMTE, Transcript, pp. 11,852-56.
eventualities,” including military preparations as well as “adjustments of the Chinese Affair and other international relations.”

Yoshizawa’s desperation was now quite evident; a second follow-up cable to Matsuoka warned that it would be “difficult to expect even unsatisfactory success from the Dutch-Japanese negotiations, and the break-up of the talks was “only a question of time.” For Japan to resolve her current problems with the Indies would be to resort to exercising her real power. The cable ended on a note of hopelessness, with Yoshizawa telling Matsuoka that “it will be quite fruitless for Japan to strive to achieve success by peaceful negotiations...” If the Japanese were, indeed, contemplating a more aggressive move against the Indies, on 14 February (1941), Eugene Dooman, a counsellor at the American embassy in Tokyo, gave them an additional admonition to contemplate. Dooman told Vice Minister Ôhashi: “However greatly Japan’s security might be enhanced by occupying the Netherlands East Indies, it must be realised by Japan that any such move would vitally concern the major preoccupation of the United States at this time, which is to assist England to stand against German assault.”

Japan’s desperate need for raw materials was reflected in a report produced on by a Colonel Okada Jûichi of the War Preparations Section of the Army Ministry on 25 March 1941. The report, entitled: “Estimates of the Japanese Empire’s War Materials Available for the Projected Operations in the South Seas,” indicated that if Japan entered into a war with America and Britain in April, she

---

78 Telegram from Yoshizawa to Matsuoka; dated 6 February 1941. See ibid., pp. 11,860-61.
79 Telegram from Yoshizawa to Matsuoka; date unknown. See ibid., p. 11,863.
80 Memorandum from Eugene Dooman; dated 14 February 1941. See FRUS, Japan, II: 138-39.
could expect to do well for the first two years, but thereafter, the shortages of materials, in particular aviation gasoline, would completely frustrate her efforts. If she chose not to embark on the path of war, choosing instead to opt for the maintenance of the status quo, Japan would still suffer a rapid reduction in national strength due to a total embargo by the Anglo-American side.\footnote{Murakami, “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina,” pp. 256-57.} Just as Dooman had offered a none-too-subtle warning to Vice Minister Ōhashi to move with caution, Winston Churchill sent a message to Matsuoka, questioning Japan’s capability of simultaneously engaging both British and American naval power. “If the United States entered the war on the side of Great Britain, and Japan ranged herself with the Axis powers,” asked Churchill, “would not the naval superiority of the two English-speaking nations enable them to deal with Japan while disposing of the Axis powers in Europe?”\footnote{Quoted in Miner, “United States Policy Toward Japan,” pp. 183-84.}

Just days after Colonel Okada’s report was drafted, Konoe cabled Yoshizawa, telling him in essence, that if the negotiations ended without result, the nation would “lose all confidence in our foreign policy, while enemy nations outside will gain the impression that we are easily dealt with and will intensify all the more their contumely and oppression.” He therefore urged Yoshizawa, despite the difficulties involved, to continue to push for the Japanese demands; directing his main effort to the acquisition of resources. In the meantime, they would await further developments.\footnote{Telegram from Konoe to Yoshizawa; dated 28 March 1941. See IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 11,864-66.}

Not surprisingly, the report from the War Preparations Section created a heightened sense of
urgency in military circles: the decision on whether or not to press ahead with the plans for southern advance could not be delayed indefinitely as time was now at a premium. The seriousness of the Japanese situation was made even clearer by the contents of a policy paper of 17 April 1941. It noted in part:

(A) Aims of the measures to be taken by the Empire in the south are to promote the settlement of the China Incident as well as to expand our overall national defensive power in the interests of self-existence and self-defence.

(1) To establish close and inseparable joint relations in military affairs, politics, and economy with French Indo-China and Thailand.

(2) To establish close economic relations with the Netherlands Indies.

(3) To maintain normal commercial relations with the other various countries in the south.

(B) The foregoing purposes, shall, on principle, be accompanied through diplomatic measures.

(C) In executing the foregoing measures, resort to arms in the interest of self-existence and self-defence will be taken only when the following instances should occur and when no means for solution of same can be found.

(1) In case the Empire's self-existence should be threatened by the embargoes of the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.

(2) In case the situation of the anti-Japanese encirclement by the United States, Great Britain the Netherlands and China becomes so tense that it cannot be tolerated in the interests of national defence.\(^\text{84}\)

On 23 May, the Navy High Command issued its own document pertaining to Japan’s southern advance, entitled: “An Outline of Emergency Measures to be taken towards the Economic Negotiations with the Netherlands East Indies.” This document advised the Foreign Ministry to do their utmost to conclude an agreement with the Indies for the procurement of necessary raw materials, while expressing the opinion that Japan should also concentrate on establishing her influence with Thailand and Indo-China in the political, economic, and military spheres before settling the economic negotiations with the Indies.  

In keeping with the sense of urgency with which the Japanese now viewed their plans for southern advance, a Liaison Conference, which was held on 3 May 1941, devoted some time to the question of a military campaign directed against Singapore. Matsuoka reminded the assembled Ministers that while he was in Europe, Germany had made no demands upon Japan with regard to an attack on Singapore; nor had the Japanese made any commitment to doing so. According to Matsuoka, Germany had only remarked that for Japan’s own sake, she should undertake the conquest of Singapore now, and Matsuoka had agreed that the timing was right.

The Army Minister, thinking that the timing was premature, stated that “in order to carry out operations in Malaya [with Singapore the ultimate goal], Thailand and French Indo-China would be needed as bases.” He also pointed out that it was this need to secure bases that had prompted the call for the early conclusion of a military agreement made at the meeting of 30 January 1941. Matsuoka

---

85 Murakami, “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina,” p. 282; Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War, p. 197. General agreement on these principles was reached during discussions of 17 April; they were a further extension of the discussions of 30 January.
agreed that as the Japan–Indo-China Economic Agreement had been concluded, they “should try to get at this matter as soon as possible.” Although Sugiyama offered that “operations in Malaysia would not be easy,” Matsuoka responded that “Singapore should not be difficult.”

Beginning early in May 1941, the Japanese Navy had commenced work on certain strategic studies which were designed to determine whether the Navy could advance south, and if by doing so, they would be risking war with the U.S. They were able to complete their studies by 5 June and concluded at that time, that Japan would have to take the risk of a move south despite the inherent dangers of war with the U.S. Some of the members of the committee argued that it was necessary for Japan to establish autarchy “in the special resources needed in wartime for the expansion of our armaments and production capacity if it took control of Thailand, French Indo-China, and the Dutch East Indies. By seizing bases in French Indo-China, Japan could build an impregnable position and they assumed there was a strong possibility of Germany’s attack on England succeeding.”

During the morning of 22 May 1941, another Liaison Conference had been convened to discuss, among other things, the continuing negotiations with the Dutch Indies. During this meeting, Matsuoka indicated his displeasure with the Indies’ officials over their refusal to export to Japan the total amounts of tin and rubber agreed upon, should Japan be able to secure those quantities from some other source such as French Indo-China or Malaya.

In other words, the Indies was only prepared to make up the difference should their be a shortfall. He surprised the others, asking them to put their trust in him on this occasion; telling them that he would now like to discontinue the negotiations with the Indies, seek an alternate plan, and, in

86 Ike, Japan’s Decision, p. 26.
the meantime, recall Yoshizawa. One of the conference participants (the record is unclear who), noted that he could well understand the recall of Yoshizawa based on the present attitude of the Dutch Indies but it was the support of Britain and America which was responsible for the Dutch attitude. It was also noted that, in due time, it might become necessary to accelerate plans to strike at the Philippines and Malaya in order to overcome the Dutch Indies' stubborn resolve. However, prudent consideration for such a course of action was called for considering the great importance attached to such a proposal. At this point, for reasons known only to himself, Matsuoka then asked the others: “If we fail to show resolve at this time, might not Germany, Britain, France and Russia eventually unite to pressure Japan?” He then continued in the same vein, saying: “Germany, in union with Russia, could be expected to turn [against] Japan; in this case, America would likely enter the war against us.” He then solicited the opinions of the High Command if such a scenario should come to pass. Admitting that such circumstances would pose a grave problem, General Sugiyama then submitted the oft-repeated opinion [at the 3 May conference, for example]; namely, that above all else, bases had to first be obtained in Indo-China and Thailand. Matsuoka was violently opposed to a move into southern French Indo-China, saying they [the Japanese] must be resolved to deal with the Americans and the British and, without such resolve, further diplomacy could not be carried out. Satô Kenryô, takes the position that Matsuoka absolutely opposed a move into the southern provinces of French Indo-China, while advocating instead, a surprise attack to capture Singapore. This was based on his fear that a surprise attack wouldn’t be possible if the Japanese were to first establish military bases and other facilities in southern French Indo-China and Thailand as they would lose the element of surprise. Establishing bases would require [too much] time, thus permitting the U.S. to become
involved. The basis for Matsuoka’s argument then, seemed to be that if the Japanese were to launch a quick attack, the U.S. would not be afforded the opportunity to interfere militarily. On the other hand, Matsuoka was strongly in favour of an attack directed against Singapore. Matsuoka’s pronouncements seemed so bizarre that Navy Minister Oikawa felt constrained to ask rhetorically: “gaishō wa atama ga hen dewa nai ka,” meaning: “Is the Foreign Minister not crazy?”

On that same day (22 May 1941), Matsuoka sent a cable to Batavia informing Yoshizawa that he had spoken with Ambassador Craigie (that day) and he’d explained to the British ambassador that “negotiations with the Dutch Indies, through the extreme wholesale concession on our side, had reached a rapprochement [sic] when compared with the former contentions on both sides, but that there still remained some difficulty about rubber and tin.” He went on to inform Yoshizawa that despite claims that the Japanese would supply Germany with rubber, the Japanese would not have enough for themselves even if the amount demanded from the Indies (20,000 tons) were supplemented by the rubber they expected to import from French Indo-China and Thailand. “What country is there in the world,” Matsuoka claims to have asked Craigie, “that would give its own flesh to another country by even going to the extent of cutting its own...” He also reportedly told Craigie that if negotiations in the Indies were “ruptured,” and Yoshizawa had to be recalled, “a grave situation” would arise not only diplomatically, but also internally [i.e., in Japan] and that he might not be able to quell anti-Dutch, anti-British and anti-American sentiments to the degree that he’d been able to check them in the past. Despite Matsuoka’s rhetorical statements implying that the Japanese

---

87 Hattori, *Daitōa sensō zenshi*, p. 69. See also Satō, *Daitōa sensō*, p. 149.

88 Telegram from Matsuoka to Yoshizawa; dated 23 May 1941. Additional copies were sent to
were not then contemplating the re-export of certain strategic raw materials, U.S. fears relating to the final destination of Japanese imports from the Indies were not so easily assuaged. The historian, Rupert Emerson, noted: "To the old-established difficulties which had regularly impeded Japanese-Indies' trade negotiations, there was now added the further complication that Japan was attempting to secure exceptionally large quantities of certain raw materials, a part of which were presumably intended for reshipment to Germany via Siberia." 89

Despite all the negative sentiment surrounding Japan's current situation, judging from the conversation at the Liaison Conference of the 22nd, certain members of the High Command still appeared to have near unlimited confidence in their ability to strike against the southern regions. Despite their inability to resolve their problems in China, they were now talking of taking the offensive in all of French Indo-China, Thailand, Malaya, the Philippines, and perhaps the Dutch Indies.

On the question of an attempt to occupy the Dutch East Indies and the need to move against the Philippines and Malaya—as suggested by Sugiyama—Hattori Takushirô, formerly of the Operations Section, has offered the following opinion:

Ambassador Shigemitsu in Great Britain and Ambassador Nomura in Washington. See IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 11,869-70. As copies of this cable were sent to both Nomura and Shigemitsu, it would seem that this particular information was intended to be passed on to British and American officials in order to allay any fears they might have concerning Japanese intent to sell any excess rubber to their German allies.

89 Emerson, The Netherlands Indies and the United States, p. 54.
The Japanese would find themselves in a bad position with the Philippines to the east and Singapore to the west. Japan could not just overlook the American and British reactions to their pursuit of the southern advance. . . . The Dutch were completely dependent upon the British and the Americans, so it should be recognized that if by any chance, Japan were to resort to military means in an advance against the Dutch Indies, they could expect to come into conflict with Britain and America—particularly the latter.90

The Navy were adamant in their belief that the United States and Britain couldn’t be considered separately. Consequently any military move against Britain in the Far East: i.e., an attack on Singapore, would necessitate having to attack the Philippines as well. The Army, on the other hand, felt an attack on the Philippines should be avoided as this would practically guarantee a closer union between the U.S. and Great Britain.91

On 5 June, the Chiefs of the Military Affairs Bureau’s of the Army and Navy Ministries met once again to discuss the importance of stationing troops in the southern part of French Indo-China. A policy paper which emerged from this particular conference called for “the military advance into French Indo-China and Thailand to be carried out as soon as possible.” Naval input noted that they were not prepared to shy away from the use of military measures in the southern advance in the event of certain conditions arising; for example:

(1) A Dutch embargo on petroleum shipments [to Japan].

(2) A complete embargo of rice, rubber, tin and nickel by the French Indo-Chinese, Thailand, and the Indies.

90 Quoted in Takayama, Sambô hombu, p. 73.

91 Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War, p. 204.
(3) A refusal by the Indo-Chinese and the Thai to accede to military co-operation with the Japanese—co-operation deemed necessary for Japan's self-defence.

(4) Military reinforcement of the Far East by the Americans, British, and Dutch, to an unacceptable level.

(5) Interference by Britain and America in the Empire's right to employ military force in settling the problems in China.

(6) Military action in Thailand by either of the British or the Americans.92

The Indies Respond

As a member of an alliance with Holland's European nemesis, the Dutch view of Japan was that of a potential enemy nation. Therefore, it should not have been too surprising for the Japanese when, on 10 June 1941, the Indies sent their formal reply, rejecting any notion that they should be included as a member in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.93 The Dutch told the Japanese bluntly, that the Indies were capable of developing their own economy without foreign assistance and that the policy of self-help was best for the well-being of its people.94 Their formal rejection was followed up

92 DSKK, 2: 324.

93 On that same day, Grew was reporting from Tokyo, that the Germany embassy, along with certain Japanese "extremists" were pressuring Matsuoka to take some action—presumably this meant military action—against the Indies. Grew went on to report that these extremist were motivated by fears that Germany "had designs" on the Indies. See DAFR, 3: 302-03.

94 Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 482.
by a joint communiqué, issued on 18 June 1941 (local time), which professed mutual regret over the fact that they had been unable to reach a satisfactory agreement as a result of their economic negotiations. On the same day the communiqué was issued, the Yoshizawa Mission departed for its return trip to Japan.

The issuance of the joint statement of the 18th was followed the next day by an additional statement from the Japanese Cabinet Information Board which declared that in the face of the Netherlands' "unsatisfactory" reply to the Japanese requests of May 1940, coupled with the possibility that "... quantities may be decreased at any time to suit their own convenience, the Japanese Government... has decided to discontinue the negotiations."95

On that same day, Grew was reporting from Tokyo, that the Germany embassy, along with certain Japanese "extremists" were pressuring Matsuoka to take some action—presumably this meant military action—against the Indies. Grew went on to report that these extremist were motivated by fears that Germany "had designs" on the Indies.

Following the blunt refusal of the Indies to be drawn in by the Japanese, and the rejection of their inclusion in Japan's concept of a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere—as well as Germany's rapid military advances in Europe—there was even greater impetus for the Japanese military to accelerate the drive towards the south. With these thoughts in mind, the Army and the Navy now made a more concerted effort to reach an agreement concerning the future of southern French Indo-China in their strategy.

There was also a resurgence of fears on the part of the U.S. and Britain, over an impending

---

95 DAFR, 3: 302-03.
attack against the Netherlands East Indies. In order to mitigate against such an occurrence, the British suggested issuing a statement in support of a speech made by Dr. van Kleffens in early May, warning the Japanese that “[A]n attack on any part of a line running from Singapore through the Netherlands East Indies to Australia would have to be considered and treated as an attack on the whole line, and one equally affecting all the powers concerned.” However, the Americans were unprepared to second any such threatening motions without sufficient power to back them up. Hence, Cordell Hull rejected the British suggestion, preferring instead to reiterate earlier warnings relating to American insistence on the maintenance of the status quo in the Pacific. In any case, such fears were for the present, premature; Japanese strategy called for the need to secure bases in the southern provinces of French Indo-China and Thailand before risking any undertakings directed against the Dutch Indies. This strategy was reaffirmed at a staff meeting of 7 June 1941, when general agreement was reached on the need to bring southern French Indo-China and Thailand into Japan’s sphere of influence.

Consensus was further reinforced during a meeting of 11 June (Tokyo time) in which the Army and Navy drafted a joint policy statement entitled: “Concerning Prompt Implementation of the Policy Towards the South Seas,” which included the following statements:

(1) The recall of Plenipotentiary Yoshizawa has made it necessary to establish a military alliance between Japan and French Indo-China in order to secure stability and defence of East Asia (For this purpose dispatching troops to southern French Indo-China should be added to the items of negotiations.)

96 Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 482-83.
97 Tanaka, Taisen totsunyū, p. 60.
(2) We must enter diplomatic negotiations to bring about a military alliance and at once begin preparations to dispatch troops to southern French Indo-China. We will dispatch troops to southern French Indo-China even if the French authorities in French Indo-China refuse our request. If they resist the entry of our troops, we will have to use force.

(3) Japan would risk a war against the United States and Great Britain if they should interfere with Japan's pursuit of this policy to the extent that she considered her self-preservation and self-defence endangered.98

According to Tôjô's testimony, given after the war:

. . . . our southern policy was never conceived in opposition to America, Great Britain and the Dutch East Indies, but in its execution as concerned French Indo-China and Siam we had naturally to anticipate stubborn resistance by America and Great Britain, and should they provoke Japan at that stage, we had no alternative than to fight both of them. It was entirely in that sense that we made our defensive preparations for a possible war with America and Great Britain.99

Matsuoka opposed the draft when it was first submitted at a Liaison Conference of 12 June. Among his concerns were misgivings over whether or not the French would permit the stationing of large numbers of Japanese troops in southern French Indo-China. He was also convinced that entering by force would be considered a military occupation by the U.S. and Britain and; finally, Matsuoka was further concerned over the impact such a move would have on his personal reputation, having—as mediator in the Franco–Thai border discussions—declared that Japan would respect the

---

99 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 36,265.
territorial integrity of Indo-China. Matsuoka preferred, instead, to negotiate the building of air and naval bases in Indo-China as a prelude to the stationing of troops.\(^{100}\)

Matsuoka told Ott on the 21 June 1941, that they were considering using force against the Indies, but as a prelude to any such move, it would first be necessary to secure bases in French Indo-China’s southern provinces. As he also told Ott during this same conversation, since a renewal of negotiations between Japan and the Dutch East Indies were not expected, there was every possibility that the Japanese felt an even greater urgency to move against the Indies. In closing, Matsuoka indicated that he had asked Ôshima to ascertain whether Berlin would use their influence to pressure Vichy into agreeing to the use of these bases; if not, Matsuoka would take up the matter with Vichy personally.\(^{101}\)

During this conference, Army chief of Staff Sugiyama Hajime, responded to Matsuoka’s query as to why the move into southern Indo-China had to be accomplished with force, by telling him that it was necessary to side-step the Anglo–American stratagem for preserving Indo-China, as well as the fact that the establishment of military bases was fundamental to Japan’s strategy for further moves south. When Matsuoka asked why it was necessary to move with such urgency, Sugiyama replied that Japanese thinking on this matter had remained consistent from as far back as the summer of 1940. Beginning around March 1941 and continuing right up into the summer months, the war situation in Europe had been rapidly developing (including now, Britain’s involvement) and Sugiyama noted that these rapid developments had created a “ripple effect” which had touched upon East Asia.

\(^{100}\) Ike, *Japan’s Decision*, pp. 51-53.

\(^{101}\) IMTFE, *Transcript*, pp. 7,008-09.
Japan had to be prepared to deal with this changing situation, and in their eyes, Indo-China was necessary for both offensive and defensive purposes.\textsuperscript{102} After some debate, an agreement was finally reached; diplomatic negotiations would be carried out in two stages: First they would deal with securing military bases and second, they would deal with the stationing of troops. During the course of the discussions, although the chief of the Navy General Staff argued for the stationing of troops in southern French Indo-China, the Navy Minister offered no opinion of his own. However, according to Admiral Maeda Minoru, chief of the Intelligence Division of the Navy General Staff: “The Navy was then quite willing to move into southern French Indo-China even at the risk of war.”\textsuperscript{103}

The policy to move troops into southern French Indo-China required Imperial sanction before it could be implemented, and while drafting a memorial to the throne, disagreements arose once again between Matsuoka and the military; Matsuoka insisting that sending troops into the southern provinces hinged upon the successful conclusion of the diplomatic negotiations, while the military wanted to send troops in as soon as they were prepared, regardless of the state of negotiations.

In an attempt to mitigate against the negative effects of stationing troops into southern French Indo-China, Ōshima (as noted previously) had been instructed by Matsuoka, to see if Germany might be able to persuade Vichy to concede to such an arrangement. Without such intervention by Germany, Matsuoka felt sure the French would disallow the troop movement. Germany, however, was non-committal—being preoccupied at that time, with their planned attack on Soviet Russia.\textsuperscript{104}

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{103} Murakami, “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina,” p. 290.

\textsuperscript{104} After a 20 July request for German assistance in the form of pressure on Vichy, Ambassador Ott
\end{flushright}
After the war, Tōjō told the Military Tribunal for the Far East:

It is true that Japan requested the good offices of the German Government in the negotiations with the French Government but the German Foreign Minister refused that request. Hence the charges made in the indictment that pressure was brought to bear on the French through the use of the Germans are not supported by the facts.\(^{105}\)

Ôshima believed the move into southern French Indo-China would constitute an act of "bad faith" on Japan's part and during a conference which took place on 16 June (Tokyo time), Matsuoka agreed with this assessment, asking for two or three days in which to consider Japanese options. Nor was this Matsuoka's only concern; fears that the occupation of southern French Indo-China would lead to an annulment of the Arsène-Henry Pact, while further tarnishing Japan's international standing, were also raised by the Foreign Minister.\(^{106}\)

Over the course of the next few days, Army and Navy staff officers continued to work on a draft paper with the rather unwieldy title: "Concerning the Absolute Necessity, from Military, Economic and Political Points of View, of Stationing Troops both in Northern and Southern French Indo-China." On two occasions (the 21st and the 22nd), General Mutō Akira and Rear Admiral Oka Takasumi met with Matsuoka to discuss the various viewpoints put forward in this draft. On the evening of 22 June, Matsuoka finally succumbed to their persuasive powers and relented in his

\(^{105}\) IMTFE, Transcript, p. 36,252.

\(^{106}\) Ike, Japan's Decision for War, pp. 53-56; Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War, p. 211.
opposition, with the *proviso* that Article 3 be deleted.107 This particular article stated that Japan would risk a war against the U.S. and Britain if they should interfere with Japan’s pursuit of this policy to the extent that she considers her self-preservation and self-defence endangered.108

The Japanese military, having gained their much desired foothold in Indo-China’s northern Tonkin province, had turned their attention to the southern provinces of Indo-China not only because of the stir created by recent reports of Japan’s inability to carry out a prolonged war in the Pacific without increased access to petroleum, but because there was now reason to believe that Germany might launch an attack on Soviet Russia. The revelations made by Hitler and Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop to Ōshima concerning the likelihood of a German–Soviet War had served to alleviate some of the tension which the Japanese had been feeling over the security of their northern flank.109

On 6 June, Ambassador Ōshima had reported that during the course of conversations he’d had with Hitler and Ribbentrop over the previous two days, they’d informed him that there existed the strong likelihood of Germany declaring war against the Soviet Union. Although no time-frame for the commencement of hostilities had been specified, they were certain that once war had begun, Germany would need only two or three months before they could claim victory. Hitler had even invited

---


109 The Konoe Cabinet had been considering a non-aggression pact in order to protect their rear: i.e., from a Russian assault in the event that Japan attacked Singapore and the Dutch Indies. Matsuoka had a hand in the formulation of this policy, made during the conference of 19 July 1940. See Röling and Rüter, *TTJ*, 1: 339.
Japanese co-operation in the attack on Russia if she were not yet prepared to move southward and Ôshima got the impression from Hitler that he would like very much to see Japan join the fray.\textsuperscript{110}

However, the Japanese were much more preoccupied with a move southward. For them, the following important factors had to be considered: (1) A successful engagement waged against Soviet Far Easter territories would not bring them the windfall in resources which they could expect to garner from a successful campaign to the south; (2) previous military engagements with Soviet forces in Siberia had proved ill-advised; (3) Germany might yet attack the Soviet Union as Ribbentrop and Hitler had hinted to Ôshima; and (4) In the event such an attack took place, if the Japanese were to bide their time, they might, at some point in the future time choose to engage a Soviet Union greatly weakened as a consequence of their having been at war with Germany. As we shall discuss shortly, this final consideration did, in fact, come into play during the course of a conference held in late June, when leading members of the Japanese military and Government gathered to discuss their options.

Ambassador Grew offered an additional element which may have influenced Japanese thinking. The ambassador noted that current speculation concerning the decision to push southward "[was] actually aimed at Germany so that Japan may consolidate her position to the southward before

\textsuperscript{110} Ike, 	extit{Japan's Decision}, p. 46. The previous month, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov had told Japan's ambassador in Moscow, TatekawaYoshitsugu that "rumours of an impending German attack on the Soviet Union were the result of British and American propaganda and were entirely without foundation." See telegram from Ambassador Stienhardt to Hull; dated 17 May 1941, in 	extit{Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers, 1941: General: The Soviet Union} (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958), I: 144. (hereafter cited as FRUS, General: Soviet Union, I).
Germany is in a position to interfere with Japanese ambitions after attaining full victory in the war.\footnote{Grew, \textit{Ten Years}, p. 402}

Grew's observation revealed an astute mind: On 17 May, Ambassador Kurusu had called on German State Secretary Ernst von Weizsäcker with a request for frank and unofficial talks on the subject of the Netherlands Indies. Kurusu explained that as a result of the war between Germany and Holland, and the latter's unexpectedly quick capitulation, there were fears in Japan that "either Germany herself or a new Netherlands' Government of pro-German tendency might come forward with a declaration that would prejudice the issue of the Netherlands Indies or even announce their annexation." In response, Weizsäcker stated that he needn't explain to Mr. Kurusu "where the real opponents of Japanese interests were. He was well aware of the fate which war at present had brought to the Netherlands' possessions in the West Indies."\footnote{Memorandum from Weizsäcker; dated 17 May 1940. See DGFP, series D, 9: 360-61. On 10 May, British and French troops had landed on the islands of Curaçao and Aruba in the West Indies.} We get a further indication of Japan's apprehension concerning the future disposition of the Netherlands East Indies from a telegram which Ott had cabled the German Foreign Ministry a week before Kurusu's visit with State Secretary Weizsäcker, reporting Minister Arita's having told him that the Japanese were anxious lest the status quo in the Indies be upset by Holland's having been dragged into the war.\footnote{Telegram from Ott to Ribbentrop; dated 11 May 1940. See \textit{ibid.}, p. 327. In an interview of 8 July with Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister in Hayashi's Cabinet, Satô Naotake also referred to Japanese apprehensions concerning the future of French Indo-China and the Netherlands Indies. See IMTFE, \textit{Transcript}, pp. 6,174-81.}
Operation Barbarossa

On the morning of 22 June 1941 in complete disregard of his pact with Russia, Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa: the attack on Soviet Russia. This startling—though not totally unexpected—development was a source of mixed feelings for the Japanese. On the one hand, it provided the Japanese with some measure of relief from the anxiety which they had feeling been as regards Russia. Since it was hoped that as a result of this new situation, the Soviets would be compelled to either reduce or suspend their support for Chunking, while, at the same time, it would reduce Japanese-Soviet tensions on the northern flank; in turn, permitting Japan to concentrate on her advance to the south. In the U.S. State Department, the feeling was that the Japanese would use the opportunity afforded them by the German attack, to engage the Soviets with greatly reduced risk to themselves.

The chief of the Division for Far Eastern Affairs, Maxwell Hamilton submitted a memorandum on the subject in which he explained his thinking as follows:

The German attack on the Soviet Union will undoubtedly cause much confusion and debate in Government circles in Japan.

Some Japanese Government circles will argue that Russia's preoccupation with Germany will give Japan freedom for a couple of months at least from the menace of a possible Russian attack

---

114 Adolf Hitler had produced a directive on military co-operation with Japan in which he had written that Operation Barbarossa would itself provide "militarily and politically a favourable basis" for a Japanese attack on Britain in the Far East. Quoted in Craig and Gilbert, eds., The Diplomats, pp. 639-40.
against Japan and that therefore Japan should embark on military operations against the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya.

Other Government circles will urge that this is Japan's opportunity to remove the Russian menace to Japan and that Japan should attack Russia in the Far East. These circles will be supported by those Japanese who fear the setting up by Hitler of a German-dominated régime in the Soviet Far East. I believe that the likely development of Japanese thought will be along this line rather than along the line indicated in the previous paragraph.

If the foregoing analysis is correct, it seems to me that the German attack on Russia is likely to result in a postponement for at least a few months of any Japanese attack upon British and Dutch possessions to the southward. 115

The British inclined to believe that the Japanese would use the opportunity to move into southern Indo-China, and despite the relief felt in some quarters, many Japanese saw the attack as a betrayal of Japanese–German confidence. Matsuoka confessed to the Soviet ambassador to Tokyo: "... Japan finds herself in the most awkward position faced with the war between Germany and Italy, her allies, on one hand, and the U.S.S.R. on the other, with whom she has but recently begun to improve relations."

Other Japanese had hoped that the Germans would first concentrate their efforts on achieving a final victory over Great Britain, while the Army General Staff viewed the sudden offensive as an opportunity to take advantage of the German–Soviet War, and use it to finish off Soviet strongholds in Siberia. The Japanese, however, had to remain ever-cognisant of the possibility that an attack on Russia’s eastern flank might drive the Soviets into the Anglo–American


116 Quoted in Schroeder, Axis Alliance, p. 48.
camp, with the result being, the Japanese would then come under even further economic pressure from the U.S. Needless to say, the Chinese still posed a substantial and ongoing threat for the Japanese as well. With only the limited control which the Japanese exercised in specific areas on the continent, any attack against the Soviet Far Eastern flank would likely invite increased Chinese military pressure against the Japanese. Little had changed since Tōjō had stated back in the summer of 1937: "I am convinced that if [our] military power permits it, we should deliver a blow first of all upon the Nanking regime in order to remove this menace at our rear."\(^\text{117}\) In addition, and as noted earlier, having fought previous losing engagements at Changkufeng in the summer of 1938 and at Nomonhan a year later, the Japanese were understandably anxious over the prospect of fighting in Siberia once again. These considerations, coupled with the fact that Japanese cities were within bombing range of Soviet Far Eastern bases, were factors which couldn’t be taken lightly.

Certainly the Germans would have liked to see Japan take the offensive against the Soviets. In his memoirs, Ribbentrop wrote that after the outbreak of war between Germany and Russia, he’d spoken to Ōshima, urging the Japanese to enter the war against Russia. However, in this, they were to be disappointed. "Judging from the attitude of Ōshima and the Japanese Government," wrote Ribbentrop, "I got the impression that Japan did everything possible to keep out of the conflict with Soviet Russia and to keep from antagonizing Soviet Russia in any way."\(^\text{118}\)

Tōjō Hideki also noted that the Government in Berlin was looking forward to Japan’s entry into


the Russo–German War but that the Japanese had no obligation to do so under Article V of the Tripartite Pact. He further noted that during discussions at the conclusion of the pact, the Japanese had argued in favour of inducing Moscow to join in the alliance and Japan was absolved from “any obligation to participate in a war between Germany and the Soviet Union.”

General Tōjō had, in fact, told the journalist Hashimoto Testuma during the course of a personal interview: “... inasmuch as we have concluded the treaty, [Tripartite Pact] we must observe it to the minimum. (italics added).”

On the other hand, there were certain Japanese—including Matsuoka—who, despite his commentary regarding the seeming improvement in Russo–Japanese relations which he’d recently given the Soviet ambassador—were prepared to abandon their treaty with Russia and launch an attack against them. At the Liaison conference of 30 June, Matsuoka asserted: “I have never made a mistake in predicting what would happen in the next few years. ... [I]f we occupy southern Indo-China it will become difficult to secure oil, rubber, tin, rice, etc. Great men will change their minds. Previously I advocated going south, but now I favour the North.”

Matsuoka’s desires notwithstanding, the Japanese were becoming ever more inclined to press on with their plans for the southern advance. Indeed, the need to do so seemed unavoidable to some; particularly after the negotiations with the Netherlands East Indies had been terminated on 17 June 1941.

As noted, Germany would have liked Japan to take the offensive against Russia, and Matsuoka

---

119 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 36,260-61.
120 Hashimoto, Untold Story, p. 48.
121 Quoted in Lowe, Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War, p. 234.
and Konoe were later to clash over the idea of a simultaneous north-south attack. Even the Emperor had an opinion: informing Kido that Matsuoka’s policy would mean Japan’s “positive advance” in both the northern and southern regions, and pointing out that it was doubtful whether this policy was appropriate to Japan’s national strength.122

This new development in Europe obviously presented the Japanese with several options and the Army Minister, wishing to take advantage of the fact that the Soviets were now preoccupied with the German armies in the west, preferred to venture south rather than north in order to acquire necessary strategic raw materials. In fact, according to a draft war plan of 18 June 1940 by Lieutenant-Colonel Nishiura Susumu of the Military Affairs Bureau at the Army Ministry, it was “assumed [that] it would be necessary to establish air bases in Indo-China and Thailand and then carry out a lightening attack on the Dutch East Indies.”123 The plan expressed the hope that the U.S. and Britain could be separated and if there was a likelihood of British obstruction, Japan must attack Singapore. But it

122 It has been written that courtesy of a U.S. Government intelligence report, Stalin had been made aware of German designs on Russia. The Soviet spy in Japan, Richard Sorge, is also purported to have wired home reliable intelligence to that effect. See Shigemitsu, Japan and her Destiny, pp. 216-17. It has been further suggested that Matsuoka’s reluctance to move southward and his apparent interest in attacking the Soviet Union was actually based upon the foreknowledge that Germany was going to attack the Soviets. See Butow, Tojo and the Coming of the War, p. 212. This is not entirely implausible given that he had been cabled information from Ōshima to that effect. As noted previously, Hitler is also said to have hinted to Matsuoka that Germany was contemplating such an attack.

would leave the Philippines alone unless it became impossible to separate Britain and England.\textsuperscript{124}

As alluded to above, Japan's seeming ambivalence concerning attacking the Soviet strongholds in Siberia, and her pressing need to acquire greater access to the raw materials of the southern regions, resulted in more weight being given Tōjō's preferred option (i.e., a move to the south). Konoe wrote at this time: "Though the Government leaders were able to set aside the insistent demands for an immediate war against the Soviets, they were obliged to decide on the armed occupation of French Indo-China as a sort of consolation prize."\textsuperscript{125}

The decisions of the 25 June 1941 Liaison Conference which were drawn up under the title: "Nanpō shisaku sokushin ni kan suru koto," reflected Konoe's observation; they included the following:

The policies of the Empire, shall be carried out in accordance with established policies, giving due consideration to the various conditions then prevailing. Accordingly, policies relating to French Indo-China and Thailand must be accelerated. In particular, because of the recall of the [Japanese] representative in the Dutch Indies [Yoshizawa], and for the purpose of stability and security in East Asia, haste should be made in establishing a military alliance with French Indo-China. The establishment of this relationship will necessitate the following: (1) The use in French Indo-China of specified areas for the establishment of airfields and harbour facilities; including bases in the south of Indo-China which will be necessary for the stationing of troops; (2) in order to accomplish the preceding article, diplomatic measures shall be undertaken; (3) if the French Government or the French Indo-Chinese officials fail to accede to these demands, we shall accomplish our aims by employing military force; (4) in case the preceding article should be necessary [i.e., the need to use military force], plans for the dispatch of troops shall be

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{125} Quoted in Maxon, Control of Japanese Foreign Policy, p. 166.
During the Liaison Conference of 26 June 1941, the move into southern French Indo-China was agreed upon. The participants at the conference had on the agenda a policy paper entitled: "Acceleration of the Policy Concerning the South." During the discussions, Matsuoka made reference to a particular document which contained a review of the reasons for sending troops into southern Indo-China. He further alluded to the fact that the Japanese had been unsuccessful in their attempts to have Germany pressure Vichy into providing military bases. Matsuoka then told the assembled Ministers that Japan would, therefore, "do it alone... and carefully combine diplomacy and military affairs."  

In mid-June, cables had been sent to both Berlin and Vichy which stated: "Matsuoka requests Ribbentrop’s aid in demand on French for [the] following bases. Japan determined acquire above quickly, diplomatically if possible or by force if necessary in order to expand and strengthen them. Chief reason given is to prevent [the] British moving in." When the German response indicated "Ribbentrop reluctant to force issue now," Tokyo responded: "Matsuoka will negotiate directly with


127 Ambassador Ott reported a 19 June conversation with the head of the European Department of the Gaimushō, in which he (Ott) had been told that Ambassador Kurusu had been instructed to remind him of Japan’s special interests in the future of French Indo-China. It was explained to Ott that this meant Japan wanted Germany to give her a free-hand in Indo-China and presumably to help pressure Vichy to that end. See IMTFE, *Transcript*, p. 6,164.


the French. Repeats determination [to] get bases soon.". In a follow-up cable to Vichy, Tokyo stated: "Japan now considers it absolutely essential to force France [to] accede to demands for above bases."\footnote{130}

Ribbentrop had apparently met with Ōshima at about the time that these cables had been sent. During their meeting, the German Foreign Minister had been presented by the latter with a memorandum relating to an ultimatum which Japan had sent to Vichy. Ōshima explained that the ultimatum had been delivered to the Vichy Government as a first step in the "push to the south": i.e., the attacks on the Indies and Singapore, and he had asked once again for Germany's help in pressuring Vichy to accede to the demands. Ernst Woermann of the German Foreign Ministry, reported that Ōshima had let it be known that the Japanese armed forces needed bases for their Navy in southern French Indo-China. Counsellor Kase Toshikazu stated that this was due to the fact that the Japanese military "wished to create for themselves a favourable strategic position with respect to Singapore."\footnote{131} But, as noted, the Germans were disinclined to offer their services in this regard.

In addition to those points deliberated upon during the conference of the 26th, and discussed above, the Japanese also conferred upon the policies they should follow as a result of the attack on Russia; resolving not to join Germany in the attack on the Soviet Union. Regarding the southern advance, they would attempt to gain complete dominance over all of Indo-China, in order to establish air bases and harbour facilities. And, as noted, Japan was to first ask Vichy for the right to station troops in southern Indo-China, but force would be used if Vichy should refuse to co-operate. The

\footnote{130}{\textit{Ibid.}}

\footnote{131}{Memorandum from Ernst von Woermann; dated 10 June 1941. DGFP, series D, 12: 992-93.}
foothold they hoped to establish in southern Indo-China would thus provide Japan with a defensive line running from southern China, through Thailand, Burma, and the Malay Peninsula.¹³²

During the conference, Matsuoka also expressed his concerns over the seeming unwillingness on the part of both Army and Navy officials to consult with their tripartite partners on the matter of Japan’s entry into the war against the Soviets. The Vice-Chief of the Army General Staff posited that to discuss questions of supreme-command with the Germans, would result in Japan being “dragged in the direction the Germans wanted her to go.” Japan would therefore “have to make her decisions independently.”¹³³

The following week, on 2 July 1941, an Imperial Conference of great importance was convened. During this conference, the participants ratified the recent decisions made at the conferences of late June: To move against southern Indo-China and to establish the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” even if these ventures should ultimately lead to war with the United States and Great Britain. The endorsement of such a policy was in direct opposition to Matsuoka’s expressed desire—as stated on the 22nd—that Article 3 of the original draft paper of 11 June, be deleted before he would concede to its approval.

Naturally, decisions of such magnitude had to be put before the Emperor to receive his sanction. It appears, however, that there may have been some hesitancy on the part of the military to seek the Emperor’s endorsement, or at least his tacit approval. Plans based on the decision of 2 July were not, in fact, communicated to the Emperor until 31 July by Admiral Nagano Osami, chief of the Navy

¹³³ Butow, *Tojo and the Coming of the War*, p. 215.
General Staff. Afterwards, Nagano made the following statement:

H.I.M. was extremely perturbed by the plan against the U.S. contained therein. He enquired in a tone of reproof whether war with the U.S. could really be contemplated. Nagano replied that war with the Americans could not be conducted longer than one year and a half with any prospect of success and that Japan’s leaders did not actually desire it.\textsuperscript{134}

As agreed upon during the Liaison Conference of the 26th, it had also been reiterated that there would be no intervention by Japan in the German–Russian War except in the case of that conflict developing in such a manner to as to provide Japan an opportunity to exploit the situation; the summary portion of a “secret” policy paper from that conference having noted:

Our attitude with reference to the German–Soviet War will be based on the spirit of the Tripartite Pact. However, we will not enter the conflict for the time being. We will secretly strengthen our military preparedness vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, and we will deal with this matter independently. In the meantime, we will conduct diplomatic relations with great care. \textit{If the German–Soviet War should develop to the advantage of our Empire, we will, by resorting to force, settle the Northern Question and assure the security of the northern borders.} Japan would use both diplomatic and “other” means to keep America out of the European war, but failing that, Japan would act in accordance with the Tripartite Pact, deciding independently as to the use and timing of force. (italics added).\textsuperscript{135}

\textsuperscript{134} Shigemitsu, \textit{Japan and her Destiny}, pp. 236-37.

\textsuperscript{135} A more complete synopsis of the 2 July Imperial Conference may be found in Ike, \textit{Japan’s Decision}, pp. 77-89. See also Kase, \textit{Journey to the Missouri}, pp. 47-48. A Brief summary of the main points is located in Hull, \textit{Memoirs}, 2: 1,012-13. See also IMTFE, \textit{Transcript}, p. 39,305, in which the Japanese translation is rendered: “... should the conditions of the German–Soviet War progress favourable to Japan we shall execute arms to solve the northern problems, thereby securing
It seems clear enough from this statement that the Japanese were once again hesitant to move against a potential "target" nation without first waiting for their allies in Germany to weaken the Soviets and ease the potential burden Japan would have to shoulder should they decide to attack to the north. On the other hand, the German ambassador to Italy, Hans Georg von Mackensen, quoted the Japanese ambassador to Italy, as telling him: "Japan has the intention to actively advance (vorgchern) against Russia on its part, but needs a few more weeks."136 And on 3 July, a telegram was sent to Nomura in Washington, telling him:

Needless to say, the Russo–German War has given us an excellent opportunity to settle the northern question, and it is a fact that we are proceeding with our own preparations to take advantage of this occasion . . . If the Russo–German War proceeds too swiftly, our Empire would inevitably not have time to take any effective symmetrical action. (italics added).137

The precise meaning of this latter observation is open to various interpretations. It may imply that hesitation on the part of the Japanese to take up arms against the Soviets might cost the Germans their victory over the Soviets. However, a second interpretation, and in the context of the statement taken in its entirety, suggests that some Japanese feared that their failure to offer swift assistance to their allies, might rob her [Japan] of a chance to share in the spoils of a German triumph. In either case, the Japanese could ill-afford to procrastinate.

---

136 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 39,907.
137 Ibid., p. 39,910.
Having been made aware of Japan’s recent decision in favour of a move southward, the Germans were disappointed with Japan’s apparent “fence-sitting” with regard to a simultaneous move north. In early July, Ribbentrop telephoned General Ott in Tokyo, and told him, in part:

... I ask you to employ all available means in further insisting upon Japan’s entry into the war against Russia at the soonest possible date, as I have mentioned already in my note to Matsuoka. The sooner the entry is effected, the better it is. The natural objective still remains that we and Japan join hands on the Trans Siberian railway, before winter starts.\(^\text{138}\)

While Ribbentrop was troubled as to whether or not the Japanese could be relied upon to take up arms against the Russians on their Eastern flank, he expressed his certainty as to the Japanese response should the U.S. enter the fray against Germany. In the same conversation with Ott, he told his ambassador: “I do not doubt for a moment that in the case of the outbreak of hostilities between Germany and America . . . Japan will fulfil her obligations, as agreed upon in the Three-Power Pact.”\(^\text{139}\)

On 13 July, Ott cabled the following response: “I am trying with all means to work towards Japan’s entry into the war against Russia as soon as possible.”\(^\text{140}\) However in the same cable, Ott sounded a note of caution; telling Ribbentrop that the pro-German members of the “Activist group” suffered from disunity and were slow to adapt to changing situations.\(^\text{141}\)


\(^{139}\) Quoted in Langer and Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, p. 638.

\(^{140}\) Sanborn, *Design for War*, p. 316.

\(^{141}\) Quoted in Langer and Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, p. 638.
Ribbentrop’s belief that Japan would decide to “act in accordance with the Tripartite Pact” did, however, seem to square well with statements which Matsuoka had made to the American ambassador in Moscow. In answer to Laurence Steinhardt’s query as to the probable Japanese response in the event America entered the war, Matsuoka told Steinhardt: “Japan would certainly also enter the war, on the side of the Axis powers.” Steinhardt later noted: “Matsuoka . . . had emphasised in most unequivocal terms that in such [a] case, Japan would strike.”

We can perhaps better understand Matsuoka’s braggadocio in view of the fact that he had been speaking with Germany’s Ambassador Ott when he related this account from his trip through Europe. After the conclusion of their latest conference, Matsuoka cabled Nomura, telling him:

Preparations for southward advance shall be re-enforced and the policy already decided upon with reference to French Indo-China and Thailand shall be executed. As regards the Russo-German War, although the spirit of the Three-Power Axis shall be maintained, every preparation shall be made at the present and the situation shall be dealt with in our own way. Although every means available shall be resorted to in order to prevent the United States from joining the war, if need be Japan shall act in accordance with the Three-Power Pact and shall decide when and how force will be applied.\(^{143}\)

\(^{142}\) Telegram from Ott to the German Foreign Ministry, dated 6 May 1941. See DGFP, series D, 12: 723-25. In the same telegram, Ott says that when he asked Matsuoka what Japan would do if America were to ship munitions to Russia via Vladivostock, in the event of a German–Soviet war, Matsuoka told Ott that if such a situation came about, “no Japanese Prime Minister or Foreign Minister would be able to keep Japan neutral. In such a case, Japan would be compelled by natural consideration to join Germany in attacking Russia.”

\(^{143}\) Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1,013.
On 5 July, Maxwell Hamilton, the chief of the State Department’s Division of Far Eastern Affairs, spoke with Ambassador Nomura about recent press reports speculating on the southern advance of Japanese troops. Nomura responded that American aid to Chiang Kai-shek and the sending of pilots to China necessitated a Japanese counteraction. Nomura also brought up Japan’s perceived military encirclement by the ABCD powers as evidenced by the visit of the American Fleet to Australia, the staff conferences being held between America, Britain, and the Dutch, and the rumours of American–Soviet mutual assistance.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{144} Tôgô, \textit{The Cause of Japan}, p. 84.
CHAPTER IX

JAPANESE TROOPS OCCUPY SOUTHERN FRENCH INDO-CHINA

On 16 July, in a startling development back in Tokyo, Premier Konoe had gone to Hayama to notify the Emperor that his Cabinet had resigned en masse. They reconstituted themselves on 18 July 1941 with Toyoda Teijirō replacing Matsuoka as the new Foreign Minister. The author Hashimoto Testuma, who knew Toyoda personally, wrote of him: "He may be an able official to some extent, but he is not a man of calibre who is able to suppress the tyranny of young Army officers and solve the Japanese–American crisis. That such a man had to be appointed Foreign Minister at the most crucial time meant that Japan was forsaken by god. There was no other interpretation."¹

It was at this time that Ambassador Robert Craigie reported that Matsuoka had been asked to resign but had refused.² It was, in fact, a combination of the Barbarossa Campaign and Matsuoka’s seeming inability to make up his mind as to the military plans for southern advance, which finally spelled the end for his ministry. In particular, his inability or unwillingness to fashion a resolute response to the American proposals of 21 June seems to have led him into irredeemable conflict with

---

¹ Hashimoto, Untold Story, p. 95.
² Craigie, Behind the Japanese Mask, p. 118. Joseph Grew has offered an insightful summary of those key points which likely contributed to Matsuoka’s removal. See Grew, Ten Years, pp. 395-96.
his Cabinet.⁴ In addition, there are any number of other reasons; perhaps not catastrophic when viewed individually, but when taken together, would seem to indicate that a change in the Cabinet was probably fitting. They include the perception that as long as Matsuoka remained Foreign Minister, the chance for success in the Hull-Nomura talks would be diminished; differing interpretations between Konoe and Matsuoka regarding Japan's obligations under the Tripartite Pact; and, more generally, Matsuoka's abrasive character, which had not only alienated him from his peers, but from all those persons with whom he was expected to deal with on a diplomatic level. Nonetheless, the fundamental policies of the Japanese Government were to remain the same, with Prince Konoe now playing a more active role in the formulation of Japan's foreign policy.

On 23 July, after Vichy had issued a public announcement of Japanese demands for the occupation of certain key strategic locations in the southern provinces of Indo-China, there was no longer any need for speculation as to whether or not the Japanese had designs upon southern French Indo-China. And unknown to Vichy, at the same time they were making their announcement public, 40,000 Japanese troops were sailing to occupy southern French Indo-China.⁴

On the same day that Vichy made their announcement, Sumner Welles met with Admiral Nomura, during which time he grilled the Admiral on the proposed entry of Japanese troops into southern French Indo-China. Welles ascribed the proposed move as being born of a German

---

³ Quoted in Sanborn, *Design for War*, p. 318.

⁴ Röling and Rüter, *TTJ*, I: 358. Reports came in on the 24th of Japanese warships observed off Camrahn Bay as well as troop transports heading south from Hainan. By the end of July, these 40,00 troops were in position in southern French Indo-China. See Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies*, p. 166.
initiative; a perception which he later relayed to Cordell Hull. In the judgement of the U.S. Government, he told Nomura, if the agreement between Japan and Vichy had been a result of German pressure on Vichy, then Japan’s move into Indo-China “could only be looked upon as offering assistance to Germany’s policy of world domination.” He then attempted to inveigle Nomura, telling him that if the Japanese were to come to an agreement with the U.S., it would be to their [Japan’s] economic advantage. He next told Nomura that he believed Japan was “about to proceed on a policy of totalitarian expansion and conquest in the South Seas.”

Nomura, who was to later note that the move into southern French Indo-China “was the greatest crisis in the Japanese–American negotiations,” tried to explain to Under-Secretary of State Welles, that the move was necessary for promoting a settlement of the “China Affair” and to assure the Japanese of an uninterrupted supply of foodstuffs and raw materials.

So troubled was Nomura by this meeting, that afterwards he cabled his Government, telling them that diplomatic relations were in danger of severance by the U.S., or at the very least, steps just short of a complete severance might be being contemplated by the United States.

Clearly there was nothing in Nomura’s explanation which had convinced Welles that the Japanese were intent upon anything other than further expansion, and not surprisingly, the U.S. administration held an entirely different view of recent events than those expressed by Ambassador Nomura. On 24 July 1941, Welles, after denouncing the Japanese demands on Vichy, noted:

---

5 Quoted in Sanborn, Design for War, pp. 323-24. See also FRUS, Japan, II 340-41 and 522-26.
6 Tōgō, The Cause of Japan, p. 85.
7 See Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, pp. 644-45.
There is not the slightest ground for belief on the part of even the most credulous that the Governments of the United States, of Great Britain, or of the Netherlands have any territorial ambitions in Indo-China or have been planning any moves which could have been regarded as threats to Japan. This Government can, therefore, only conclude that the action of Japan is undertaken because of the estimated value to Japan of bases in that region primarily for purposes of further and more obvious movements of conquest in adjacent areas.  

The Japanese Government, in anticipation of their soon to be publicised treaty of joint defence, had a statement of its own; released on 25 July, it declared:

In recent times through successive Franco-Japanese agreements, beginning with the Matsuoka-Henri Agreement of August, 1940, the relations between Japan and French Indo-China have grown rapidly intimate. The Governments of Japan and France have now reached a complete agreement of views on the joint defence of French Indo-China under a friendly policy.

Against what or whom this agreement was meant to defend was not mentioned in the Japanese release. And a week later, Sumner Welles made certain to point out this oversight on the part of the Japanese. On 2 August, he released a caustic statement of his own which noted in part: “Effort has been made to justify this agreement on the ground that Japanese assistance is needed because of some menace to the territorial integrity of French Indo-China by other powers. . . there is no question of any threat to French Indo-China, unless it lies in the expansionist aims of the Japanese

---

8 Brodie, *Our Far Eastern Record* 2, no. 4, 2: 26. See also Press Release from the U.S. State Department; dated 24 July 1941, in FRUS, Japan, II: 316.
9 FRUS, Japan, II: 320.
In any case, Japanese pressure on French Indo-China had begun to pay dividends even before they had moved into her southern provinces. The Japanese, as noted, were able to negotiate their coveted protocol concerning joint defence of the French colony and the formal agreement concerning this protocol was ratified on 28 July and signed the following day by Japan’s ambassador to Vichy, Katô Sotomatsu, and French Admiral François Darlan. The text of the Tokyo-Vichy Agreement which pledged the two Governments “to co-operate in military matters for the defence of French Indo-China,” was not made available to the U.S. Government until 2 August. But by this time, the document was really quite meaningless except as a propaganda tool. Two days before its ratification, the Japanese military had—to practically no one’s surprise—moved into southern Indo-China; with the Army occupying Saigon while the Navy had set up at nearby Camranh Bay—a mere 750 miles from Singapore.

It was at about this time, that Premier Konoe saw fit to cable a telegram to Marshall Pétain in which he expressed that by now, well-worn pledge of Japanese intentions to respect France’s suzerainty in Indo-China. Konoe further indicated that talks were ongoing in Hanoi and Vichy and that neither Germany nor Japan had presented French Indo-Chinese officials with any ultimatum. These “requests” were to be handled within the framework established by the Matsuoka–Henry

10 Ibid., 321.
11 Davis and Lindley, How War Came, p. 255.
12 By 8 August, the entire Japanese 25th Army had completed their landing in southern French Indo-China. See Murakami “Japan’s Thrust into French Indochina,” p. 337.
As noted elsewhere in this thesis, the Roosevelt administration’s reaction to the Japanese occupation of bases in southern French Indo-China was both swift and unequivocal. President Roosevelt’s executive order freezing Japanese assets in the U.S. and embargoing petroleum exports to that nation was issued from Hyde Park on the 25th—to become effective the following day. And on the 26th, Roosevelt appointed General Douglas MacArthur to assume the newly-created post of commander of all Army forces in the Far East. At the same time, the Philippines Army was called into American service. The British immediately followed the American lead; abrogating Japanese commercial treaties with India and Burma (27 July), and a month later (on 28 August), the Dutch Indies imposed a total ban on the shipment of oil and bauxite to Japan. The American order, effectively signalled the end of trade between Japan and the U.S.

The decision to place a freeze order on the export of petroleum products marked the use of a new approach in America’s continuing efforts to induce the Japanese to desist from further expansion and to make their peace with China. It was a bold move: a “trump card” which the U.S. had been reluctant to play; but Japan had forced America’s hand. All efforts, whether through dialogue or the incremental addition of increasingly severe sanctions, had failed to deter the Japanese from their path of continuing aggression. And true to form, the Japanese Army let it be known that they were not prepared to withdraw from Indo-China until the “China Incident” had been settled.

15 FRUS, Japan, II: 266-67; Sanborn, Design For War, p. 325.
For the Navy, however, the severity of these sanctions created an enormous dilemma. They would now have to draw upon the stockpile of precious petroleum products which they had been so carefully conserving, because Japanese trade was now limited to that which could be carried on with their previously occupied territories. An intercepted dispatch from Foreign Minister Toyoda to Admiral Nomura betrayed the actual consternation resulting from the freeze order. In his message, Toyoda wrote: "Commercial and economic relations between Japan and third countries, led by England and the United States, are gradually becoming so horribly strained that we cannot endure it much longer. Consequently our Empire, to save its very life, must take measures to secure the raw materials of the South Seas."  

The Hull-Nomura Talks Resume

President Roosevelt had on 24 July 1941, spoken with Ambassador Nomura upon the latter's request. At that time, the President proposed that Indo-China (a week later, Thailand was added) would be declared a neutral zone if Japanese troops were withdrawn. More specifically, Roosevelt indicated to Nomura that if Japanese forces were withdrawn from French Indo-China, the President would seek a "solemn declaration" from the Governments of the U.S., Britain, China and the Netherlands, declaring Indo-China a neutral country. Japan would, of course, have to do the same.  

Nomura was evasive and gave no direct response to the proposal to declare Indo-China neutral;

---

16 Quoted in Sanborn, Design for War, pp. 325-26.
17 Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1014. See also FRUS, Japan, II: 527-30.
saying only something to the effect that because of the "face-saving element involved," it would be difficult on Japan's part and that it would take a "very great statesman" to reverse the policy. 18

When Nomura made a request to meet once again with Cordell Hull on the 6th of August, Hull acceded to the ambassador's solicitation and the two met again for the first time since the talks had broken down as a result of Japan's treatment of the French with regards to southern French Indo-China. Because of American displeasure concerning a probable Japanese incursion into southern Indo-China, Hull had refused to meet any further with Nomura, believing that the entry of Japanese troops into southern French Indo-China would leave the U.S. and Japan with no basis for further discussion. And so it was, that back on 23 July, while he was enjoying a well-deserved respite in White Sulphur Springs, Montana, Hull had had Under-Secretary of State Welles inform Ambassador Nomura of this decision. 19

Upon his arrival at the State Secretary's apartment, Nomura handed Mr. Hull a fresh set of proposals which were ostensibly a response to Roosevelt's offer of the 24th to neutralise French Indo-China. These had been decided upon during an Imperial Conference held two days earlier. Included amongst Nomura's proposals was the following article: Japan would undertake not to "further station its troops in the South-western Pacific areas except French Indo-China and . . . the Japanese troops now stationed in French Indo-China will be withdrawn forthwith on the settlement of the China Incident. . . ." 20 For their part, the Americans were: (1) To "suspend military activities in

---

18 FRUS, Japan, II: 529.
19 Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1,013.
20 Ibid., pp. 549-50.
the Southwest Pacific region...”; (2) to assist Japan in the acquisition of materials from the N.E.I.; (3) to use her influence in persuading China to enter into direct negotiations with Japan; (4) to resume normal trade relations with Japan and; (5) to recognise Japan’s “special status” in French Indo-China, even after Japanese troop withdrawal. In addition, America was to agree to suspend its defensive preparations in the Philippines, discontinue aid to the Chinese, and cease the delivery of military equipment to Great Britain and the Netherlands for use in arming their Far Eastern possessions.\(^2\)

Not only did these proposals clearly fail to address Roosevelt’s recent overtures, they also asked a great deal of the U.S. In fact, Hull was to note in his “Memoirs” that they made absolutely no mention of the President’s proposals relating to French Indo-China.\(^2\)

When they met again two days later (on 8 August), Hull and Nomura spoke once more on these latest proposals. Hull, in fact, handed Nomura an “oral statement” of his own, which reiterated thoroughly the suggestions made by the President on the 24th. Nomura, at that point, asked whether it might be possible for their two heads-of-state to meet, perhaps in Honolulu. Hull gave no direct answer but, rather scolded Nomura, telling him that if they had come to an agreement on the proposals they had been discussing for the past several weeks, they would have been able to move forward toward peace and mutual benefit.\(^2\) Both sides then tendered various clichés in defence of their own particular standpoints: Nomura telling Hull that the Japanese press was now constantly harping on the theme of encirclement by the United States. Hull, of course, denied any such thing;

\(^2\) FRUS, Japan, II: 550-51.
saying the Japanese press was merely behaving in a fashion calculated to influence public opinion against the United States.24

After this exchange, Nomura made some further proposals; now calling for the restoration of trade in exchange for the withdrawal of troops from Indo-China. Nomura still had nothing to say on the subject of the neutrality proposal and in accordance with this omission, Hull told Nomura quite simply that Japan's proposals were "lacking in responsiveness to the suggestion made by the President."25 He then advised Nomura that he should attempt to convince his Government to settle the China problem in a just manner, and he also let the ambassador know that the U.S. couldn't be expected to leave China under the "conqueror's heel." Nomura responded by saying that if the Japanese withdrew from China, the Kuomintang and the communists would battle one another; so Japan had to remain in order to preserve stability.26

The negotiations continued in this manner—without progress—and finally, Konoe suggested that he himself should meet with Roosevelt.27 However, as we shall see, the idea never came to fruition. Secretary Stimson revealed America's suspicions concerning this overture for a meeting between the two heads-of-state:

________________________

24 Ibid., p. 551.
26 Ibid., p. 1,017. See also Davis and Lindley, How War Came, 228.
27 Shigemitsu, Japan and Her Destiny, pp. 241-42. Nomura is purported to have told Roosevelt: "... considering the problem of saving face, the difficulties were likely insuperable." See Sanborn, Design for War, p. 324.
They [the Japanese] are trying now to get up a conference between the Japanese Prime Minister and President Roosevelt on a most engaging program of peace, while at the same time they are carrying on negotiations with their ambassadors throughout the world showing on its face this is a pure blind and that they have already made up their minds to a policy of going south through Indo-China and Thailand. The invitation is merely a blind to keep us from taking definite action.28

This idea of a conference between Konoe and Roosevelt was to be suggested by the Japanese on subsequent occasions, but each time the proposal came up, something or someone intervened. Konoe, it seems was truly enthusiastic about the idea and Joseph Grew, too, spoke out in favour of such a meeting. However, in the end, the meeting never came to pass.

The Atlantic Conference

Obviously the British, too, were now more concerned than ever; and it would appear that they had every reason to feel anxious. The Japanese military were slowly edging ever closer toward Malaya and Singapore, while the Hull-Nomura talks appeared to be leading nowhere. The British, who had been kept abreast of the talks, had on several occasions (some of which have been mentioned previously) beseeched the U.S. to take more concrete action against Japan. But as Hull had told British Ministers Neville Butler and Noel Hall in early June: "I have never made it a practice . . . to make a threat without being ready to back it up."29 It was hoped that the Atlantic Conference,

28 Quoted in Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 659.
29 Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1,007.
which was soon to follow, would afford the U.S. and the British an ideal opportunity to perhaps come up with some definite proposals for concerted action against the Japanese.

The Atlantic Conference took place during the period 9—12 August aboard the cruiser *Augusta*, on the waters off Argentia, Newfoundland. President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, in the company of their top advisors, finally came together to exchange their personal views and to co-ordinate their plans for how to best deal with the crises which faced their respective nations. The details of the conference need not detain us. However, certain important agreements on a unified strategy were reached and they are deserving of some brief mention here.

On 10 August 1941, Sumner Welles was told by Sir Alexander Cadogan, that in anticipation of the conference, the latter had already prepared tentative draft proposals which his Government was suggesting should be jointly issued by the British and U.S. administrations. The U.S. draft copy contained the following statement: “Any further encroachment by Japan in the South-western Pacific would produce a situation in which the United States Government would be compelled to take counter measures even though these might lead to war between the United States and Japan.”

According to Cadogan’s plan, Great Britain was to simultaneously issue an exact replica of the American statement; the only difference being, the words: “His Majesty’s Government,” would replace the words: “the United States Government.” The Dutch Government was also to issue a similarly-worded declaration. Despite Cordell Hull’s recent invocation disavowing the perfunctory resort to such threatening statements, the British were in dire need of U.S. backing and a strongly-

---

30 Memorandum from Sumner Welles; dated 10 August 1941. See FRUS, General: Soviet Union, 1: 354.
worded statement of this nature, issued simultaneously by the three powers, might conceivably have had some positive effect upon the Japanese. It was becoming patently obvious that by merely continuing along the same path which the U.S. had heretofore been willing to pursue, little or nothing was going to be accomplished in forestalling Japan’s inevitable march southward. On the contrary, in spite of six months of essentially non-stop discussion between representatives of the Japanese and American Governments, the Japanese military had continued to press forward with their plans for enveloping additional territory.

On 11 August 1941, the two heads-of-state met to discuss this joint démarche. Also present were Britain’s Deputy Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, Sir Alexander Cadogan, State Department special envoy Harry Hopkins, and Under-Secretary Sumner Welles. Welles reports that at this time, Roosevelt and Churchill came to an agreement that, in lieu of issuing the draft statements outlined above, Roosevelt would meet with Nomura upon his (Roosevelt’s) return to Washington. Roosevelt proposed to tell Ambassador Nomura:

. . . provided the Japanese Government would give the commitment contained in the first paragraph of the proposal of the Japanese Government of 6 August, namely, that the Japanese Government will not further station its troops in the Southwestern Pacific areas, except French Indo-China, and that the Japanese troops now stationed in French Indo-China will be withdrawn. . . the United States would . . . seek to explore the possibilities inherent in the various proposals made by Japan for the reaching of a friendly understanding between the two Governments.31

Upon his return to Washington, Roosevelt had his meeting with Nomura during which he did, in

31 Ibid., pp. 356-59.
fact, present the warning which he and Churchill had drawn up during their recent conference. This was another of those occasions during which the Japanese pressed for a meeting between Konoe and Roosevelt. Roosevelt was not totally averse to the idea and even went so far as suggesting a place where such a gathering might be held: Juneau, Alaska. This encouraging response prompted Konoe to send a personal letter to the President: a letter which appears to have greatly impressed Roosevelt; so much so, that he is reported to have responded: “I am looking forward to having approximately three days’ talks with Prince Konoe. . .”32 The greatest impediment to such a meeting still remained Hull, who was unconvinced of Japanese sincerity and suspicious of the value of such a meeting.

Concern was also running high over Konoe’s ability to implement any measures which ran counter to the military institutions in Japan. Many episodes in Japan’s recent history spoke clearly of the unquestionable force of that establishment in the formulation of Japanese policy. “The military element in Japan,” noted a lengthy U.S. State Department memo on Japanese–American relations, “had been embarked upon a course of aggression since 1931 and had been steadily more and more dominant in charting the course of Japan’s high policy.”33 And, although Grew was very much in favour of the idea of a meeting between Roosevelt and Konoe, Hull had the backing of other important individuals, particularly in the military, who were ready to offer him their support. As late as the beginning of October, the acting assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence Division, was prepared to state that it was the opinion of that body:

33 *FRUS, Japan, II*: 350.
... that neither a conference of leaders nor economic concessions at this point would be of any material advantage to the United States unless a definite commitment to withdraw from the Axis were obtained from Japan prior to the conference.

Since it is highly improbable that this condition can be met by the Japanese Government at the present time our course lies straight before us. Secretary Stimson, too, had reached pretty much the same conclusion. 34

Roosevelt was subsequently convinced by Hull that the Japanese should first be told that they must come to a preliminary agreement on outstanding problems before any meeting between himself and Konoe could take place, and Hull passed this information on to Ambassador Nomura on 3 September.

Hull's stance may inadvertently offered some comfort to the Germans, who were none-too-pleased with these Japanese attempts to seek a rapprochement with the U.S., although the Japanese argued that by reaching some sort of a settlement with the U.S., they might have a greater chance to prevent America's entry into the war. The argument wasn't overly persuasive and U.S. intelligence intercepted a message at about this same time in which the Germans:

demanded that the Japanese Government submit to the American Government a message to the effect that the Japanese Government observes that if the Roosevelt administration continues to attack the Axis powers increasingly, a belligerent situation would inevitably arise between Germany and Italy on the one hand and the United States on the other and this might lead Japan

34 Quoted in Sanborn, Design for War, p. 402. Some of what Ambassador Grew had to say on the matter of a Roosevelt-Konoe meeting may be found in ibid.; especially pages 594-95, 601-03, and 645-50.
to join immediately the war in opposition to the United States.\textsuperscript{35}

Having Second Thoughts in Tokyo

Back in Tokyo, chief of the Navy General Staff, Admiral Nagano, was now reporting to the throne a rather pessimistic view of Japan's situation in light of the recently announced embargoes. According to the 31 July entry in Kido's diary, the Emperor had told Kido, that Nagano was of the opinion that the Japanese should, as much as possible, focus their efforts on trying to avoid war. At the same time, he'd voiced his opposition to the Tripartite Pact, saying that it was a "great hindrance" to the restoration of friendship between America and Japan. This was the same Admiral Nagano who'd told his colleagues at the Liaison Conference of 11 June: "We must build bases in French Indo-China and Thailand in order to launch military operations. We must resolutely attack anyone who tries to stop us. We must resort to force if we have to."\textsuperscript{36}

With the oil embargo now in place, Nagano had to revise his earlier assessment. It was now his opinion that in the event of war with the U.S., Japan's supply of oil would only last 18 months and he told the Emperor that while a victory over America was possible, it would not be so sweeping as that secured in the Russo-Japanese War. Admiral Nagano's outlook on war was, Kido told the Emperor, "quite pessimistic," and as far as Nagano's opposition to the Tripartite Pact, Kido also told the

\textsuperscript{35} Quoted in Sanborn, \textit{Design for War}, p. 417.

\textsuperscript{36} Ike, \textit{Japan's Decision}, pp. 50-51. Butow has indicated that the Army chief of Staff doubted the sincerity of Nagano's remark as it was inconsistent with prevailing naval attitudes regarding war. See Butow, \textit{Tojo and the Coming of the War}, pp. 210-11.
Emperor that if Japan were to annul the pact, the U.S. would view Japan with more contempt than friendship. Nagano, on the other hand, was of the opinion that as long as the Tripartite Pact remained in place, “the adjustment of Japanese–American relations would be impossible.”

A week after dismissing Nagano’s opinions as overly pessimistic, Kido voiced strikingly similar views during a discussion with Prince Konoe. Kido was now suggesting that if current estimates of Japan’s oil supplies were accurate, Japan’s situation was “hopeless.” He continued:

Despite the external differences in the situation, we might be compelled to exercise the same self-restraint as we did after our victory in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895.

We should be resolved to toil through ten years of hard struggle. Meanwhile we should do everything to restore friendly relations between the United States and Japan; and we must try to secure the materials we need.

Kido told Konoe during that same meeting that Japan’s ultimate objective was her advance to the southern regions and it was clear that Japan’s need to obtain petroleum products weighed heavily on his mind. “Our ultimate national policy,” he told Konoe, “should focus on penetration to the south.”

Both the Americans and the British greatly feared that Japan’s latest aggressive moves, were

---

37 Kido, *Kido Diary*, pp. 296-97. In his diary entry of 22 October 1940, Joseph Grew wrote that he’d been told on excellent authority that both the Emperor and Prince Konoe were “dead against the Tripartite Pact...” See Grew, *Ten Years*, p. 347. See also Maxon, *Control of Japanese Foreign Policy*, p. 168.


merely a prelude to further southern expansion. On 2 August, for example, according to a memorandum by Cecil W. Gray, an assistant to the Secretary of State, Hull had told Welles:

... they [the Japanese] are at a point right now where they must either go forward more and more toward Thailand and the Burma Road area, no matter how surreptitiously—by evasion, deceit, and all manner of avowals of friendship and peace—as they have done so many times in the past, or they must turn around and come back toward the road of friendship and peace. They swear everyday that they are going forward and they are fitting their acts to their words. The only time they modify their policy of overt, unfriendly acts is when they are making false and fraudulent avowals of peace and friendship. This they do until they get ready to move forward. While I am not suggesting anything, we should keep what I think is the central point of the situation in mind every day, otherwise we will find ourselves surprised. Nothing will stop them except force.40

In line with the fears which had arisen over whether or not the move into southern French Indo-China was merely a case of Japan laying the groundwork for advancement against areas further afield, both Anthony Eden and Cordell Hull issued simultaneous warnings on 6 August 1941 which cautioned the Japanese not to undertake any aggressive actions against Thailand. Eden’s statement made clear that “any action which would threaten the independence and integrity of Thailand would be a matter of immediate concern ... more particularly as threatening the security of Singapore.” Hull’s statement to the press contained a similarly-worded declaration.41

Two days after these warnings had been issued, the British Chiefs of Staff came out with a report which cautioned that without U.S. backing, Britain should not issue the more strongly-worded

41 Langer and Gleason, The Undeclared War, p. 656. See also Reynolds, “Ambivalent Allies,” p. 197.
statement warning the Japanese that "aggression against Thailand would be considered a *casus belli.*"

On the other hand, certain key members of the Roosevelt administration, such as Stanley Hornbeck, the State Department's principal advisor on political relations, were not convinced that Thailand was yet in imminent danger of being attacked; he wrote to Welles:

> In my opinion both the Thai Prime Minister and Sir Josiah Crosby manifest undue alarm as regards the imminence of a possible Japanese intervention (involving military operations) in Thailand. I have no doubt but that the Japanese are pressing the Thai, probably with threats, toward causing the Thai to make concessions which would facilitate Japanese military penetration into Thailand, but I see no reason for expecting a crisis to develop in that situation within a week or even a month. [42]

At a Liaison Conference on 3 September 1941, Nagano, who had previously indicated his fears over engaging the U.S. in war, now declared that should they fail to reach a peaceful settlement, Japan must resort to war. "We are getting weaker," he shouted. "By contrast," Nagano continued: "... the enemy is getting stronger. With the passage of time, we will get increasingly weaker and we won't be able to survive. ... Although at present I'm confident that we have a chance to win a war, I fear that this opportunity will disappear with the passage of time." [43] The conference members seemed to put stock in Nagano's assessment; adopting—with minor changes—a fateful policy statement: "The Essentials for Carrying out the Empire's Policies." This resolution was critical in the

---


sense that the Japanese, although prepared to continue their discussions with the United States, were also ready to go to war with them should the current negotiations fail to lead to a successful agreement by some time in October.\textsuperscript{44}

On 5 September, the Cabinet accepted these decisions and the Imperial Conference of the following day ratified them. During the 6 September 1941 Imperial Liaison Conference, there were actually several important decisions ratified. Some of these merely reiterated those already taken up during the conference held on 2 July. What was significant about this particular conference was that the Japanese had now included a time-frame for the projected onset of hostilities. From this conference, came the following policy statements: (1) We should generally perfect our preparation for war by the latter part of October, with the determination not to shrink from a war with the United States (as well as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands) in order to ensure our self-existence and self-defence. (2) Parallel with the above, we should try to obtain our demands through negotiations with the United States and Great Britain, exhausting all diplomatic means for this purpose. (3) We should determine to commence war at once on the United States (as well as on the United Kingdom and the Netherlands) in case by the beginning of October the negotiations should not have produced any prospect of an amicable settlement.\textsuperscript{45}

These "demands" referred to in Article 2, asked a great deal of the U.S. As we shall see later,

\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 131-132

\textsuperscript{45} Reprinted verbatim from Kase, \textit{Journey to the Missouri}, p. 46. See also Ike, \textit{Japan's Decision}, p. 135. A variation on this document may be found in Marder, \textit{Old Friends, New Enemies}, p. 172. See also, IMTFE, \textit{Transcript}, pp. 10, 217-18.
they represented a great deal more than the U.S. was prepared to accept. After these decisions had been arrived at, the Japanese wasted no time before stepping-up their preparations for war. Specifically, the former chief of the First Section (Operations) Tanaka Shin’ichi testified under direct examination at the “Tokyo Trials,” that after the conference, General Sugiyama directed him “to make [an] operational study on a campaign against Malaya, Java, Borneo, Bismarck, [the] Dutch East Indies and [the] Philippines.” And following the Imperial Conference of 6 September, he was ordered by Sugiyama “to begin preparations for operations against those countries.”

According to Kase Toshikazu, the decisions made at this conference were known to very few people and years later—when war had already begun—he was told by Konoe, that when Germany attacked the Soviet Union, the Army became very uneasy and he was forced to agree to the move into southern French Indo-China in order to prevent the Army from taking any “hasty action.”

Konoe had in fact, been much concerned about the attitude of the Army for some time. He had written in late June that the Army had “stiffened its opposition” to the Japanese–American negotiations when word of these heretofore secret discussions had been leaked “as a result of Matsuoka’s secret reports to the German and Italian ambassadors.” In the evening, after the Imperial Conference had concluded, Ambassador Grew met secretly with Konoe. Discussions were said to have been “frank” and Konoe stated his “whole-hearted agreement with Mr. Hull’s four principles.” However, he told Grew that time was of the essence as resentment of the economic pressures being exerted on Japan were “mounting daily.” In addition, Konoe told Grew (Eugene

---

46 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 16,145.
47 Kase, Journey to the Missouri, p. 47.
Dooman was also present) that within the military there were certain individuals who were not in agreement with his policies, but with the backing of the Army and Navy Chiefs—backing which he claimed to have—he could quell this opposition.49

48 See Maxon, *Control of Japan's Foreign Policy*, p. 166.

49 Grew, *Ten Years*, pp. 425-28; Sanborn, *Design for War*, p. 371; Langer and Gleason, *The Undeclared War*, p. 716. Konoe recalls differently; of Hull's "Four Articles," he records having responded: "[T]hey were splendid as principles, but, when it came down to actual application, a variety of problems arose." Quoted in Toynbee & Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, vol. 11: 667, n. 5.
CHAPTER X

INTO THE ABYSS

On the same day that Ambassador Grew was meeting with Premier Konoe, back in Washington, Nomura was meeting with Cordell Hull in order to present the Secretary with a draft copy of a set of proposals which had already been presented to Mr. Grew, two days previous. Under proposal two of these articles: "Japan agreed not to extend the military occupation of French Indo-China, nor, without any justifiable reason, resort to any military action against any regions lying south of Japan." In other words, Japan agreed not to attack Singapore or the Netherlands East Indies.1 Under the third proposal, if the U.S. were to "participate in the European war," Japan would "independently decide concerning the interpretation and execution of the Tripartite Pact."2

As far as China was concerned, Japan would endeavour to bring about normal relations with that country and upon the realisation of that goal, she would be ready to withdraw her military forces from China as soon as possible, and in accordance with the agreement worked out between Japan and China. There followed certain other articles relating to economic activity in China and the Southwest

1 Sanborn, Design for War, p. 372. See also FRUS, Japan, II: 608.
2 Sanborn, Design for War, p. 372; Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 667.
Pacific, and an additional article relating to the resumption of normal trade relations between the United States and Japan.

America, for its part, was to refrain from any "measures and actions" which could be deemed prejudicial to Japan's efforts to reach a settlement with China on the terms outlined above; she was to commit to a policy of non-discrimination in her economic activities in the Southwest Pacific; and she would suspend any military measures in the Far East and in the Southwest Pacific areas. Finally there was a clause under which the U.S. would "... discontinue the application of the so-called freezing act with regard to Japan..."³

This final stipulation was questionable from the American standpoint: Hull wondering whether or not it might best be "omitted." In an oral statement given Nomura on 15 November, the Secretary gave a fairly lengthy and detailed summary of America's history of commercial relations, in which he stated that the meaning of the Japanese proviso was "not entirely clear" and he noted: "the principle of unconditional most-favoured-nation treatment has for many years been the cornerstone of commercial policy of the United States."⁴

Why Hull may have wanted this detail deleted is unclear. If it were indeed the "cornerstone" of American commercial policy, he should have had no objection to the mere restatement of that actuality. Perhaps he felt it unnecessarily impugned the reputation of the U.S. as it implied that this had not always been the case in America's international commercial dealings.

Relations between Japan and the United States were now at a most critical stage; if for no other

³ FRUS, Japan, II: 607-09.
⁴ Ibid., 734-36.
reason than the fact that the Japanese had now placed a time limit upon how long they were prepared to continue with the negotiations.

The Talks Drag On

In the meantime, Hull had read over the proposals given him by Nomura on 6 September. However, he remained unimpressed; particularly with the notion that Japanese troops should be stationed long-term in China. Although the Japanese had pledged themselves to removing their troops, this was contingent upon their arriving at an equitable peace settlement with the Chinese. With the information gleaned from "Magic" as well as the record of Japan's past conduct, Hull had good reason to be highly cynical of Japanese statements of intent. At all times he therefore remained cautious about the successful chances of any plan, the implementation of which, hinged upon the prior fulfilment of some additional prerequisite. He felt that agreements of this nature allowed the Japanese too much leeway for later providing excuses as to why they had reneged on their commitments.⁵

In any case, Hull was not able to respond immediately to these most recent proposals from Ambassador Nomura. Joseph Ballantine was meeting at that same time with a Mr. Obata, a sometimes-translator at the Japanese embassy, in order to clarify certain discrepancies in the wording of the proposals which Nomura had given Hull on 6 September, and the version forwarded to the State Department by Joseph Grew. These incongruities were significant; for example, Ballantine

---

⁵ Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1,028-29.
pointed out that the copy which had arrived from Ambassador Grew indicated that Japan proposed not to attack "without any justifiable reason any regions lying north of Japan," while the document given Hull by Nomura had also made the above proposal not to attack "without any justifiable reason"—but, against regions to the south of Japan. Clearly discrepancies of this magnitude required rectification. Therefore, the U.S. reserved the right to make or withhold any official decision on the various merits and demerits of the proposals until such time as they had been furnished with further clarifications.6

Nomura sent Toyoda a cable on 11 September in which he told the Foreign Minister that the difficulties that he was facing in his discussions with Hull were mostly related to the withdrawal of Japanese troops from China and the stationing of troops for "Anti-Comintern purposes." He told his Foreign Minister that, owing to public opinion both in the U.S. and China, the American Government would be unable to support any Sino-Japanese peace accord which contained provisions allowing Japanese troops to remain in those areas of China which had been agreed upon in the terms of the treaty they had worked out with Wang Ching-wei. Hull had, in fact, suggested a total withdrawal of Japanese troops within two years of the conclusion of peace.7

Yet another Liaison Conference was held on 20 September during which there was some discussion pertaining to concluding terms of peace with China. The tentative terms which the Japanese were to finally settle on, were communicated to Hull on the 23rd along with some further information which directly follows.

---

6 FRUS, Japan, II: 614-15.
7 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 10,224-25.
When Nomura came to visit Hull on 23 September, he gave the Secretary of State two papers: One of these (as noted) related to the Japanese proposals for peace with China, while the other was the latest attempt to satisfy Hull’s continuing inquiries as to Japan’s perceived commitment towards the Tripartite Pact. With regard to the latter, Nomura stated: “[It is] a full expression of what the Japanese Government desired to say to us, and that the question of anything further by way of clarification in regard to Japan’s relations to the Tripartite Pact might best be left to the proposed meeting between the heads of our two Governments.” The remainder of the proposals were simply variations of what had already been repeated many times previously: expressions of good will, a genuine desire for peace, etc., while the specific portion relating to Japan’s obligations under the Tripartite Pact ran as follows:

With regards to developments of the situation prior to the restoration of world peace, both Governments will be guided in their conduct by considerations of protection and self-defence; and, in case the United States should participate in the European war, Japan would decide entirely independently in the matter of interpretation of the Tripartite Pact . . . and would likewise determine what actions might be taken by way of fulfilling their obligations in accordance with the said interpretation.

We have noted earlier that Hull had pressed Nomura on more than one occasion to make available a definitive statement of Japan’s perception of her own obligations under the Tripartite Pact. However, this muddled declaration from Nomura failed once again to fully satisfy Hull’s inquiries; it

---

8 FRUS, Japan, II: 634.
9 Ibid., 634-38.
was simply a tautology: it contained no new information and Hull was still left to wonder whether or not the Japanese would go to war against the United States, in the event the U.S. entered the war against Germany. Hull it seems would have been satisfied with nothing less that an unambiguous “yes or no” response.

Even at this late date, (3 October 1941) Hull continued to believe that the execution of Japanese plans were contingent to some degree upon events unfolding in Europe. In a conversation with Lord Halifax on 3 October 1941, during which they discussed the American strategy of “buying time” by keeping the Hull-Nomura talks alive, Hull told Halifax that “he thought the outcome of the war in Europe was the most important factor in determining Japan’s attitude.”

The Americans were not only “buying time,” but they were putting what time they had to good use. In order to be prepared for any eventuality, the U.S. continued to effect precautionary measures for war. In a telegram of 15 October (1941), Hull told the U.S. ambassador in the United Kingdom, John G. Winant, the War Department had “reached the conclusion that the immediate establishment of an air route between Hawaii and the Philippine Islands, suitable for the movement of heavy bombardment land-type aircraft, is imperative to national defence.” (italics added).

Already, in the spring of that year, (21 Feb. 1941) the U.S. Congress had approved the Vinson Bill which authorised the expenditure of $245,000,000 U.S. for air and fleet base expansion. And on the same day, the War Department had announced that the Army was strengthening intelligence services in the Far East by assigning observers to Thailand, the Dutch East Indies, and Malaya.

---

10 Quoted in Miner, “United States Policy Toward Japan,” p. 304.
11 USWA, 1940: 100-01.
Tōjō Becomes Premier

On the 16th of the month (October) the Japanese had yet another change of Government. It was on that date that the Government of Prince Konoe fell and was replaced by one under General Tōjō Hideki, who took as his Foreign Minister, Shigenori Tōgō. There is a general consensus that it was Konoe’s failure to settle matters with the U.S. as well as the inability of the Japanese Government to bring about a relaxation of the economic problems which had become increasingly acute following application of the recent U.S. embargoes, which had brought about this downfall. This latest change of Government necessitated a reassessment of the ongoing talks on both sides of the Pacific. A U.S. Army intelligence report of the 16th indicated that there would be a trend on the side of the Japanese to lean more toward the Axis with the Army, rather than the Navy controlling greater influence.12 Grew reported from Tokyo that the German community there, was disappointed with the new Cabinet; hoping for what Grew labelled a more “interventionist Government.” And the Japanese, according to Grew, were regarded by their ally as “untrustworthy opportunists.”13

The following day, there occurred in the Atlantic an incident of the gravest nature: an attack by a German U-boat on the American destroyer U.S.S. Kearny. This was an outright act of war and there was suddenly much concern; not only for the ramifications of the attack per se, but whether or not the Japanese would join with Germany should the problems escalate. The fear became particularly acute

13 Grew, Ten Years, pp. 463-64.
when it was revealed on 30 October by Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, that the Kearny had been “engaged in active combat with the submarine at the time it was hit.”\textsuperscript{14} Despite much finger-pointing from the Nazis, including Hitler himself, the Japanese kept a discreet silence on the matter.

This was precisely the sort of scenario which Matsuoka had warned the Americans back in May, would bring the Japanese into conflict under Article 3 of the Tripartite Pact. But, according to Langer and Gleason’s appraisal: “It is clear that Tokyo successfully resisted German pressure to warn the United States against attacking German vessels in the Atlantic. The Japanese likewise evaded all Berlin’s attempts to invoke the Tripartite Pact pending the outcome of the Washington conversations.”\textsuperscript{15}

The Japanese had neither the time nor inclination to involve themselves in these affairs. Time was very nearly running out in the now desperate search for an accommodation with the United States. The conference of 1 November (Tokyo time) provided the latest forum for Japan’s Government and military leadership to seek out some sort of compromise with the U.S. which might avert impending warfare.

Various matters were discussed at the conference of 1 November 1941. What came to be known as the “A” and “B” plans—which will be discussed shortly—were a major topic of discussion. According to testimony given after the war by former-Finance Minister Kaya Okinori: “The conference was unanimous in the opinion that Japan should give in as much as possible in order to

\textsuperscript{14} See Schroeder, \textit{Axis Alliance}, p. 70. This was not the first episode of this nature. On 4 September, a German submarine fired two torpedoes at the American destroyer, U.S.S. \textit{Greer}.

\textsuperscript{15} Langer and Gleason, \textit{The Undeclared War}, p. 905.
settle the disputes."

Despite this agreement, the Supreme Command was not enthusiastic about the idea of concessions, proposing that Japan should begin immediately preparing for war; "a course the Japanese should be ready to decide on . . ." if current negotiations with the United States didn't show any possibility of settlement by the end of November.16

The war preparations which the Supreme Command were urging, were, in fact, already well-in-hand. The Japanese military had been steadily augmenting their strength in French Indo-China, wherein, a substantial number of troops and aircraft had already been stationed. A report from American Consul Charles S. Reed in Hanoi, related the current estimates of Japanese troop strength to the Secretary of State. Said Reed:

As of today [3 November], and based on information from military authorities, it is estimated that there are approximately 17,000 Japanese troops and 35 airplanes in Tongking. . . . The same sources estimate the Japanese troops in the south at about 26,500 and the airplanes at 75 (30 at Saigon)—making a total of 43,500 troops and 110 airplanes in Indochina.17

The Supreme Command, it seems, was extremely concerned about Japan’s dwindling capacity to engage the Allied powers. They were fast approaching a "critical point" at which, in Kaya’s words: "the Supreme Command [would] not be able to accept the responsibility of national defence."18

16 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 30,651 and 34,662.
17 Telegram from Consul Reed in Hanoi to Secretary of State Hull; dated 3 November 1941. See FRUS, The Far East, V: 332.
18 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 30,652.
According to a telegram dated 2 November from Ambassador Nomura to Foreign Minister Tōgō, the Japanese Government's "last effort to improve diplomatic relations" with the United States was to be discussed, in the presence of the Emperor, during an Imperial Liaison Conference scheduled for the morning of 5 November. However, by that date, war was looking more and more like a foregone conclusion: the decision to attack Pearl Harbor having already been set by the chief of the Navy General Staff, Admiral Nagano, on 3 November.19

On the same day (3 November) 1941, Ambassador Grew reported from Japan the following assessment:

...in Japan the pro-Axis elements gained power following last year's German victories in Western Europe; then Japanese doubt of ultimate German victory was created by Germany's failure to invade the British Isles, this factor helping to reinforce the moderate elements; and finally Germany's attack on the Soviet Union upset the expectation of continued Russo-German peace and made the Japanese realize that those who took Japan into the Tripartite Alliance had misled Japan.20

And, on the day scheduled for the Imperial Liaison Conference (5 November 1941), Admiral Yamamoto, as Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, issued detailed orders relating to the fleet's operations for war against the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.21

---

19 Ibid., pp. 10,317-18.
20 Ibid.; Grew, Ten Years, p. 467.
21 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 11,196.
The Decision for War

At the conference of the 5th, those in attendance confirmed the decisions of the 2 November (Tokyo time) Liaison Conference and a policy document taken up for discussion at the 5 November conference, included the following preamble and articles of intent:

Our Empire, in order to resolve the present critical situation, assure itself preservation and self-defence, and establish a New Order in Greater East Asia, decides on this occasion to go to war against the United States and Great Britain and takes the following measures:

1. The time for resorting to force is set at the beginning of December and the Army and Navy will complete preparations for operations.

2. Negotiations with the United States will be carried out in accordance with the attached document.

3. Co-operation with Germany and Italy will be strengthened.

4. Close military relations with Thailand will be established just prior to the use of force.

5. If negotiations with the United States are successful by midnight of December 1, the use of force will be suspended.22

The attached document referred to in Article 2 contained Japan’s last hope offer for an accommodation: Proposals A and B—proposals to which we shall turn our attention shortly.

During this conference, Admiral Nagano told the others in attendance that it was his estimate that the Navy’s war preparations would be “almost completed by the end of November. “Hereafter,”

22 Lowe, Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War, p. 264. For the full text, see Ike, Japan’s Decision, pp. 209-11.
he continued, "we will go forward steadily with our war preparations, expecting the opening of hostilities in the early part of December. As soon as the time for commencing hostilities is decided, we are prepared for war." In spite of this gloomy prognosis, and the decision to commence with full-scale preparations, all hope was not yet lost—diplomacy might yet triumph over warfare. Which of these two alternatives would prevail, depended upon the American reaction to the above-mentioned A and B proposals. For the Japanese, "the ball was," so to speak, "now in America's court."

One significant resolution which did arise out of the deliberations carried out at this conference, was unanimous agreement that war was inevitable if Japan's final proposals were rejected by the United States. The Japanese had now to take into consideration the weather factor. Monsoon season would soon be upon them and this only added to the mounting sense of urgency. Any delays resulting from violent weather conditions in the Pacific would have a critical impact on Japan's rapidly dwindling oil reserves and therefore, her ability to wage war. Addressing the Joint Army-navy Supreme Military Council meeting on 4 November (Tokyo time), Admiral Nagano gave a number of reasons why the Japanese could no longer afford to brook indefinite delays in putting their operations into effect. "Weather conditions in the anticipated theatre of operations," said Nagano, "... will not allow indefinite postponement of war. Therefore, in order to initiate our military operations immediately upon the completion of present operational preparations, I should like to set the time as early as December."

These "final proposals" referred to, were the above mentioned A and B proposals, the former of

---

23 Army Forces Far East, Military History Section, Monograph number 152, chapter 1 (Department of the Army: Washington, D.C., 1945), p. 11
which were sent to Nomura on the 4th. During the evening of 7 November, Admiral Nomura met yet again with Cordell Hull at the State Secretary’s apartment. He told Hull during this engagement, that he had come to present certain proposals which he said “represented the utmost concessions that they [the Japanese] could make.” He then passed Hull the dossier containing “Proposal A.”

According to Plan A, Japan would withdraw her military from French Indo-China, but only after the “China Incident” had been “brought to a successful conclusion” or a “just peace” had been established in East Asia; and for a “necessary period of time” (Nomura was told to “answer vaguely” that a twenty-five years period would be needed) after a Sino-Japanese peace treaty had been agreed upon, Japan would be permitted to maintain troops in specified regions of North China and the Mongolian border region; as well as on Hainan Island for a “suitable interval.” On the other hand, Japan would agree to recall her troops from other areas of China within two years of the establishment of peace. With regard to the “interpretation and execution of the Tripartite Pact,” Japan would act independently. In fact, nothing new was added as far as Japan’s membership in the Tripartite Pact, and her obligations under that pact. Nomura was told only that he should explain that Japan had no desire to see the European war expand into the Pacific.24 In the accompanying explanation for Nomura, he was told:

... when it comes to the last point concerning stationing and evacuation of forces, we have already made our last possible concession. How hard, indeed, have we fought in China for four years! What tremendous sacrifices we have made! They must know this, so their demands in this

connection must have been only "wishful thinking." 25

After he had "glanced over" the notes, Hull offered some hope, stating: "... if the Chinese were now to say that they desired real friendship with Japan and do everything in their power to work together along peaceful ways," this would be "a wonderful opportunity for Japan to launch forth on a real new order" and to adopt "a new policy of conciliation and friendship with China . . ." Hull hinted at the idea that such a gesture would help the Japanese to distance themselves from their Nazi allies, whom the American public looked upon with extreme disfavour. 26 Nomura seemed pleased with such a notion—as vague as it was. He would therefore refer it to his Government for consideration. Hull then reiterated his earlier and oft-repeated concerns regarding Japan's membership in the Tripartite Alliance and Japan's failure to give a "concrete statement" in this regard. Nomura merely responded to the effect that no further statement in this regard seemed necessary. 27

Essentially, these proposals were nothing new. The suggestion that the Japanese would remove their troops from French Indo-China after an equitable peace agreement had been worked out with the Chinese, had been discussed thoroughly back in September. And it will be further recalled that during that same month, Hull had already told Nomura, who in turn, told Toyoda, that he was looking at a time-frame of two years for the removal of Japanese troops when and if a peace deal could be struck with the Chinese. The only substantive alteration between these proposals and the many others which had come before them, was Japan's agreement "to recognise the principles of

26 FRUS, Japan, II: 708. Also quoted in Sanborn, Design for War, p. 443.
27 FRUS, Japan, II: 708-09.
non-discrimination in international commercial relations to be applied to all the Pacific areas, inclusive of China, on the understanding that the principle in question is to be applied uniformly to the rest of the world as well.\textsuperscript{28} However, as noted, the Japanese were still proposing to maintain their troops in North China, Inner Mongolia, and on Hainan Island "for a certain required duration after the restoration of peaceful relations between Japan and China."\textsuperscript{29}

Hull met with Nomura and Kurosu again on the 18th and, as he had done many times in the past, he launched into one of his familiar tirades against Japan’s alliance with Germany. He told his callers that it was doubtful "whether any agreement into which we entered with Japan while Japan had an alliance with Hitler would carry the confidence of our people." Kurosu indicated to Hull that the Tripartite Pact could not be abrogated, but he asked whether the Secretary had in mind any "concrete formula for dealing with Japan’s relations with the Axis," to which Hull responded, that that was something which the Japanese would need to work out on their own. The conversation came to an end with Hull telling Nomura that he would consult with the British and Dutch to see what were their attitudes concerning Nomura’s suggestion that it might be more desirable to work towards a return to the \textit{status quo ante} which had existed before the American freezing action in July.\textsuperscript{30}

Nomura’s suggestion was somewhat ambiguous, but it alluded to the concept of moving more slowly towards the restoration of normal relations rather than trying to tackle all of the complicated problems at one time. And although this idea seemed to offer some promise, the suggestion proved

\textsuperscript{28} Quoted in \textit{ibid.}, p. 710. See also 734; Schroeder, \textit{Axis Alliance}, pp. 74-75.

\textsuperscript{29} FRUS, Japan, II: 709.

\textsuperscript{30} \textit{Ibid.}, 363-66.
fleeting and negotiations were to continue in very much the same fashion as they always had.

Such matters aside, the “final form” of Proposal B was sent to Nomura on 14 November, although he was not to present it until 20 November. After Proposal A, had been rejected as an unsatisfactory modus vivendi, Proposal B was presented to Hull by Admiral Nomura. Kurusu, who had left Tokyo on the 5th (in Tokyo) and arrived in Washington on the 15th, was also present at the meeting; having been sent to assist Nomura at this now very delicate stage in the negotiations. It is interesting to note that some of the more zealous “Germanophiles” took exception to the fact that Kurusu would be taking part in the negotiations. Presumably, in Germany he was thought to have been a trusted confederate owing to his many years of service in that country, and his actions were seen by some as constituting a betrayal of German friendship. A telegram originating from Berlin says that the Japanese embassy in Berlin was embarrassed by the sending of Kurusu to Washington and that they resented it. Ambassador Ōshima even felt compelled to insist to the Germans that regardless of what took place in Washington, it was Japan’s intention to continue pressing forward with her southern advance.  

The plan which Nomura presented on this occasion represented Japan’s last-ditch effort to avoid war: there were no other counter-proposals left to fall back upon if these should be rejected. Under Plan B, the two Governments would undertake no armed advance in Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, except for French Indo-China, where Japanese troops were already in occupation. But with the conclusion of the agreement, Japan would move her troops from southern to northern Indo-China, and from the north as well upon the settlement of the “China Incident” or the establishment of

31 Grew, Ten Years, p. 482.
a "just peace" in the Pacific area. The United States, for her part, would co-operate in securing the commodities Japan needed from the Netherlands East Indies, restore trade relations to those existing before the freezing of the assets, and supply Japan with the oil that she needed. Finally, the United States was to take no action "as may hinder efforts for peace by both Japan and China." There was no mention of the Tripartite Pact, but Hull had no qualms about bringing it up once again, and he was prepared to be quite blunt, stating: "...there was a partnership between Hitler and Japan aimed at enabling Hitler to take care of one-half of the world and Japan the other half..."32

In essence, proposal B was a plan based upon a return to the position in June 1940—before the Japanese occupation of southern Indo-China and the American freezing of Japanese assets in July. Secretary of State Hull found these demands totally unacceptable; in which position he had firm British support. In particular, the final article, was a source of much concern for Hull. This article ran as follows: "The Government of the United States undertakes to refrain from such measures and actions as will be prejudicial to the endeavours for restoration of general peace between Japan and China. If accepted, America would be pledging itself to discontinue aid to China: a step which she was not prepared to take. The Americans were not going to consider any plan under which they could be construed as condoning Japanese aggression in China. The U.S. had consistently shied away from any suggestion which even intimated that they should back away from what they believed to be their moral duty to continue assisting the Chinese in their efforts to thwart Japanese attempts to crush them.

32 Quoted in Sanborn, Design for War, p. 463. The proposals which constituted "Plan B," may be found in their entirety in FRUS, Japan, II: 755-56. See also Hull, Memoirs, 2: 1,069.
Hull's reaction to this article was, in fact, quite brusque. The purpose of American aid to China was, said Hull, the same as that of American aid to Britain. American assistance to China would continue so long as Japan remained allied to Hitler and continued to insist upon her new order in East Asia. "...the fact of the Tripartite Alliance," he continued, "and the continual harping by Japanese leaders upon slogans of the Nazi type such as new order in East Asia and co-prosperity sphere served to strengthen the [American] public in their belief."\(^{33}\)

"United States policy," said Secretary Hull, "is to aid Britain on the one hand and Chiang's Government on the other. U.S. cannot accept plan B, because it implies cutting aid to Chiang's Government."\(^{34}\)

During a Liaison Conference which was convened on 22 November by Premier Tôjô, there was a further reaffirmation of the decision to go to war if the current negotiations with the United States were to end in failure. Obviously, this was the direction in which Japanese thinking had been moving for some time and Japan now sensed that she truly had her back against the wall. With each passing day her desperation continued to mount.

At this conference, it was decided that if there was a total rejection of the Japanese demands by the U.S., Japan would be left with no other recourse than to go to war. It was her desperate need for oil which took away any room for her to manoeuvre; no commodity was so critically important to her military operations. It would be no overstatement to say that it was this desperate need for oil which

\(^{33}\) FRUS, Japan, II: 754.

\(^{34}\) Army Forces Far East, Military History Section, Monograph number 147, chapter 1 (Department of the Army: Washington, D.C., 1945), p. 10.
was the driving force behind Japan's policy of southern advance.

The Fateful "Hull Note"

On 25 November 1941, Hull presented a number of demands and concessions of his own. The following articles were the product of joint review by the Governments of Britain, China, the Netherlands, and Australia, and they included the following:

(1) The Government of Japan will withdraw all military, naval, air and police forces from China and Indo-China.

(2) The Government of the United States and the Government of Japan will not support—militarily, politically, economically—any Government or regime in China other than the National Government of the Republic of China with capital temporarily at Chinking.35

The proposals further submitted that in union with the U.S. Government, Japan would endeavour to conclude a multi-lateral non-aggression pact with the ABCD powers, as well as Thailand and the Soviet Union. In addition, the Governments of both the U.S. and Japan were to work towards securing pledges of respect for the territorial integrity of French Indo-China, and if such integrity should become threatened, there would be immediate and mutual consultations designed to come to an understanding on such measures "as may be deemed necessary and advisable to meet the threat in question."36


36 The Hull Note can be found in its entirety in FRUS, Japan, II: 768-770. An abbreviated version
There were other proposals dealing with the problems related to multi-national trade and economics, the most important of which stated that the U.S. Government would “remove the freezing restrictions on Japanese funds in the United States . . . .” The Japanese would likewise, unfreeze American assets held in Japan. With regard to the Tripartite Pact, both Governments were to agree “. . . that no agreement which either has concluded with any third power or powers shall be interpreted by it in such a way as to conflict with the fundamental purpose of this agreement . . . .”

These articles, which came to be known collectively as the “Hull Note,” were received with a great deal of consternation in Tokyo on 27 November. The journalist Hashimoto Testuma, writing just after the war, noted: “In Japan it was regarded as an ultimatum unacceptable to her, and a war was started on that ground.” Former Vice Minister of the Navy under Admirals Shimada Shigetarō and Oikawa—Admiral Sawamoto Yorio—similarly recalled: “The American reply was interpreted in naval circles as a virtual ultimatum, revealing an unbending and non-compromising attitude that promised no hope of negotiations succeeding. I believe this note destroyed all but a faint hope for peace in the minds of many naval men who had previously held out against war.”

Admiral Shimada, himself, characterised the “Hull Note” as a “jarring blow,” stating:

---

37 The articles of the ten-point plan may be found in their entirety in Shaffer, ed., Toward Pearl Harbor, pp. 159-60. See also FRUS, Japan, II: 768-70. An abbreviated version can be found in Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 688-89.

38 Hashimoto, Untold Story, p. 103.

39 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 34,611.
There were no members of the Cabinet nor responsible officials of the General Staff who advocated acceptance of the Hull Note. The view taken was that it was impossible to do so and that this communication was an ultimatum threatening the existence of our country. The general opinion was that acceptance of the conditions of this note would be tantamount to the defeat of Japan.\textsuperscript{40}

In fact, he was to say that it was the "Hull Note" that had caused him to "step [over] the boundary line of peace when the final decision was made at the Imperial Conference of December 1, 1941."\textsuperscript{41}

This sampling of reactions—all of which echoed a similar theme—can perhaps be taken as representative of the profound sense of hopelessness with which the "Hull Note" was received in Japan. Given the investment the Japanese had made in blood and human sacrifice during the course of the previous four years in China, it is difficult to see how they could simply have walked away. Yet this is precisely what they were being asked to do. Surely Hull had to be aware of how the Japanese would react upon receipt of his ultimatum, but the negotiations had been going on \textit{ad nauseum} since March and they were no closer to reaching a settlement than they had been when the discussions first began. On the contrary, since that time, the Japanese had extended their occupation of French Indo-China and both sides had accelerated their preparations for war.

As a result of this ominous new development, a gravely concerned Emperor arranged for an informal talk with the senior statesmen or ex-Prime Ministers (\textit{ji\-shin}) to seek their advice before giving his sanction for war. Eight former Prime Ministers, including two Generals (Hayashi and Abe),

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 34,665.
\textsuperscript{41} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 34,666.
and two Admirals (Yonai and Okada), as well as President of the Privy Council Hara Yoshimichi, Tōjō, Shimada, Tōgō, and other Ministers, gathered at the palace on 29 November.

During the morning talks, the jūshin received an analysis of the situation from Tōjō, who explained why the Government felt that war with the United States and Britain was now inevitable. He also took the opportunity to ask questions of his Ministers about the negotiations in Washington and the country's (Japan's) war potential. Each was invited to give his views on a possible war against the U.S. and Britain, and these talks were continued later in the afternoon, after they had been given lunch by the Emperor.

Most of the senior statesmen spoke out for moderation and peace, whether for doubts about the self-defence rationale as necessitating war (an argument being advanced by the "war party") or because of lingering fears as to the outcome of a prolonged war, given the country's inadequate raw materials. There was also much concern as to how the public would react to a protracted war. To Wakatsuki, "... war with the U.S.A. should be fought to the last, even if there was no chance to win, if it was a defensive war for our national existence and independence."\(^{42}\) The suspension of negotiations, he pleaded, did not necessarily mean the start of war immediately; there should be a cooling-off period. Konoe also asked for a cooling-off period. Yonai and Okada pledged their support to the Government if it came to war, but hoped there would be none, and that even if these negotiations failed, they should plan for new ones, with Yonai arguing that they should not take the road to sudden decline, war, in an attempt to avoid a gradual decline. Okada gave a number of reasons for it not being the time to begin war. Thus, he raised questions about the sufficiency of oil

tankers and about Japan’s ability to wage war in the south as well as in China, and to cope with a concentration of U.S.–British power against Japan after the end of the war in Europe. He sharply attacked the national policy of the establishment and maintenance of the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, equating it with the robbery of native peoples, whose hatred of Japan would jeopardise the supply of raw materials. Only three senior statesmen, Hirota, Abe, and Hayashi, spoke out for war as the only option left after the collapse of the negotiations. Tōjō “argued against each opinion for the maintenance of the present conditions, and finally all the senior statesmen were obliged to acknowledge the determination of the Government for commencing hostilities.”

The general atmosphere throughout this conference was one of helplessness, and the Emperor, who was to speak with the participants individually later in the day, said not a word during the entire course of the discussions. A second Liaison Conference of that same day was also held, during which time Tōgō pleaded to be told the “zero hour” so that he could carry on with diplomacy. Nagano replied, that it was to be 8 December (Tokyo time).

On the 27th, under presidential command, messages had been sent out to American military commanders warning of a breakdown in negotiations with the Japanese and alerting to the possible occurrence of aggressive moves from the Japanese “at any moment.” The message from the Navy Department was more specific, indicating that a possible attack would be directed “against either the Philippines, Thai or Kra Peninsula or possibly Borneo.”

43 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 16,187-91. Certain portions of the conversations which took place at the meeting of the 29th, may also be found in Kase, Journey to the Missouri, pp. 63-64.
44 Toynbee & Toynbee, Survey of International Affairs, vol. 11: 534.
On the same day (it was 28th in Washington) the “Hull Note” was received in Tokyo, the American War Council gathered in Washington to discuss contingency plans should the Japanese make further military advances; particularly into Thailand. Some of those present believed America should strike first. However, Roosevelt, fearing a divided nation, preferred to wait for Japan to strike the first blow. In lieu of military action, agreement was reached to do the following: (1) Send a stern warning to Japan informing them that the U.S. would fight if Japan “overstepped a certain limit”; (2) have Roosevelt send a message to Congress advising them of the urgency of the situation and; (3) send a final appeal to Emperor Hirohito.45

During the afternoon of the 30th, the Emperor summoned Kido to inform him that according to Prince Takamatsu, the Emperor’s youngest brother, the Navy had misgivings about the war: that they were, in fact, “opposed to war . . . .” Kido told the Emperor that any decisions made at this late stage would be not only “of a grave nature,” but “irrevocable.”46 The Emperor then sent for Nagano and Shimada that same afternoon to determine the Navy’s thinking. The three of them met for two hours and after the admirals had left, the Emperor once again summoned Kido. He told him that: “In view of the fact that the Navy Minister and the chief of the Navy General Staff had given affirmative answers as to the success of war, he had told the Premier to act accordingly.”47 At the “Tokyo Trials,” Shimada explained: “[T]he question of confidence in the ultimate outcome of the war was not the theme of our conversations but only whether we were confident of the preparations which the

46 IMTFE, Transcript, p. 31,045.
47 Ibid., pp. 31,046-47.
Navy had made."^{48}

As it turns out, the enquiry from the Emperor to Nagano was: "What was the state of the operations plans?" The Emperor also wanted to know: "What were the state of the preparations in so far as the Navy Ministry was concerned?" Both Nagano and himself had answered (Shimada claimed) that preparations "were completed." That is, that the Navy had made adequate preparations. In essence, the Navy affirmed that it was "better prepared to fight at that time than at any later date."^{49} The Emperor, who had previously told Premier Tōjō to postpone the conference scheduled for 1 December, now suggested that Tōjō should convene that meeting.^{50}

The following afternoon, 1 December, an Imperial Conference unanimously accepted Tōjō's opinion that a peaceful settlement having finally failed, Japan must go to war with the U.S. Britain, and the Netherlands. The American demands, said Tōjō:

... not only belittled the dignity of our Empire and made it impossible for us to harvest the fruits of the China Incident, but also threatened the very existence of our Empire. It became evident that we could not achieve our goals by mean of diplomacy... Under the circumstances, our Empire has no alternative to begin war against the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands in order to resolve the present crisis and assure survival.^{51}

Nagano then affirmed that arrangements for war were finalised and they were militarily prepared

\[\text{Ibid., p. 34,700.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 34,666-67.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., p. 34,701.}\]
\[\text{Marder, Old Friends, New Enemies, pp. 250-51.}\]
to commence operations. The Emperor said nothing; he simply "nodded in agreement with the statements being made." Following the 1 December Imperial Conference, Tanaka Shin’ichi, upon receipt of orders from General Sugiyama, issued notice to field commanders in the South Seas—so that they should be prepared—as "war with the United States, England and Holland was imminent," and "would commence on X-Day." Tanaka revealed to the Tokyo Tribunal, that this so-called X-Day "would be December 8, 1941."

Just days after the meeting of the War Council in Washington, Roosevelt and acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles agreed to defer the President’s message to Congress and the issuance of a warning to the Japanese until after Emperor Hirohito had time to respond to America’s final appeal. The appeal to the Emperor was sent on 6 December, the warning to Japan was never made. On the same evening (6 December) the Americans decoded the fateful message which Nomura was to deliver to the U.S. It was a message which prompted Roosevelt to turn to Harry Hopkins and say: "This means war!"

On the morning of 7 December—Roosevelt’s "Day of Infamy"—Japanese military aircraft began their surprise assault on ships of the American Pacific Fleet as they lay at berth in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Almost simultaneously, Japanese military forces were attacking Hong Kong, Malaya, Guam,

52 Ibid., p.251.

53 IMTFE, Transcript, pp. 16,146-47.
Wake, Midway, and the Philippine Islands. The following day, President Roosevelt stood before the American Congress where he asked for—and received—a declaration of war against Japan.

---

54 Toynbee & Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, vol. 11: 536.
CONCLUSION

The German seizure of Denmark and the Netherlands, the fall of France and the enormous difficulties facing Britain whetted the appetite of the Japanese aggressors. The influential press more and more openly called on the Government to take advantage of the situation for the realization of the far-reaching plans of aggrandizement. However, the Japanese leaders, who intended to extend their sphere of expansion at the expense of the colonial powers, still feared to start an open war.¹

With the above synopsis, Leonid Kutakov has fairly summarised the essence of the Japanese dilemma on the eve of the Pacific War, and reiterated those words which were used to introduce this dissertation. This thesis postulated at its outset, that the achievement of the Japanese war strategy termed nanshin or southern advance, was predicated upon German military successes in Europe. In other words, the war in Europe appears to have provided opportunities through which the Japanese could exploit the discomfiture of the European powers: to encroach continually further southward; infiltrating or threatening to infiltrate the overseas colonial holdings of Great Britain, France and the Netherlands.

Ernst Presseisen, for example, has astutely noted: “... the Tokyo Government was always eager to absorb the European colonial spoils after Germany had defeated the home countries. Rather than participate in the coalition’s struggles, the Japanese shrewdly sought to profit from Germany’s

¹ Kutakov, Japanese Foreign Policy, p. 198.
military efforts.” And from the Japanese standpoint, we get the evaluation of Satô Kenryô, in whose opinion: “... the Japanese military doctrine was to hitch a ride aboard the German “victory bus” (doitsu no kaishô basu ni binjô) and by relying on others, exploit changes in the world situation.”

Even the notion that Japan, an Oriental nation, should find herself allied with Germany and Italy—two of Europe’s fascist powers—is a thought-provoking curiosity. At first glance, there would seem to be so little to recommend a workable partnership. The differences which separated these nations are more readily apparent—at least to the casual observer—than are their similarities. It should be said, however, that the efforts to capitalise on the exploits of an ally, was a two-way street: working to the advantage of both Germany and Japan; for Germany, too, gained some measure of comfort and relief from any Japanese action(s) which might have proved a setback to those enemies whom they held in common. With just a hint of sarcasm, Presseisen has rightly observed: “The alliance with Japan served a certain useful function for Germany’s international position, and Hitler was enough of a politician not to let his ideology get in the way of his diplomacy.”

While the main focus of the paper has been upon Japanese diplomatic and military affairs during their southern advance, I have sought to reveal how these activities were carried out in the context of Japan’s relationship with Hitler’s Germany. Perhaps the most fundamental question connected with this peculiar partnership between Japan and her European ally is, quite simply: What were those elements which brought about this implausible pairing? While it is possible to delineate certain

---

2 Presseisen, *Germany and Japan*, p. 281.
3 Satô, *Dai tôa sensô*, p. 150.
4 Presseisen, *Germany and Japan*, p. 6 and 13.
elements which could be considered conducive to the formation of a Japanese–Germany alliance, those factors which would seem to make them odd coalition partners are also many. The most readily apparent difference between the two was, quite obviously, that Japan is an Asian nation while Germany is European. From this single fact of geography, it should follow that there also exist numerous differences in their respective histories, cultures, religions, etc. Not only were these two powers by almost every criteria, distant from one another, they both entertained feelings of their own superiority to a degree that should have totally mitigated against their association. One historian has asked: "How could a racially superior Germany conclude an agreement on equal terms with a supposedly inferior nation like Japan?" Again, I quote Ernst Presseisen, who, after extensive research into this question, has concluded that there is only one possible answer: "expediency." For the purpose of the present thesis, however, the most salient factor in explaining the Japanese–German alliance was, quite simply, that they shared certain common enemies: Soviet Russia and the "Western" powers.

When the final analysis is made, it is difficult, however, not to conclude that the Japanese–German alliance was really little more than an alliance on paper only. Instances abound which indicate a total lack of co-operation between the Japanese and the Germans; and in certain cases, these allies are seen to be working at cross-purposes to one another. It should not be necessary to recount the many examples of discord between these supposed allies, for these have all been covered within the body of the thesis. However, we may review very briefly some of the more important areas of incongruity.

\[5\] Ibid., p. 6.
The lengthy discussions relating to the formation of the Triple Alliance were, for example, fraught with disagreement from the outset; most of these difficulties having to do with the Japanese and the Germans holding differing beliefs in designating the principal target(s) of the alliance. The Japanese were essentially interested in an agreement in which the Soviet Union was named the primary belligerent, while Germany was seeking a more inclusive list of potential adversaries owing to the fact that by 1939, they were already "officially" at war with a number Europe's major powers. That such a major discrepancy in confirming their respective target options should have existed, well illustrates their disparate priorities.

The assault against Singapore provides us with another conspicuous illustration of the lack of co-operation between Japan and Germany. It will be recalled from the main body of the paper that the Germans had been urging the Japanese to launch an attack upon that British bastion at least since the spring of 1940. Particularly during the time of Matsuoka's talks with Hitler and von Ribbentrop, the Germans had employed every strategy to convince the Japanese that the time was ripe for an assault on Singapore, and that it would be in Japan's best interests to move quickly. But Matsuoka was only able to provide them with vague promises of Japan's good intentions in that regard, and even he would have preferred to move north against the Russians following the commencement of Operation Barbarossa. The Japanese Army, which had been most in favour of the Tripartite Pact had even cautioned Matsuoka to make no commitment for action against Singapore during his European tour.

It will also be recalled that even as the Japanese were engaged in their unceasing conflict with China, their German allies were supporting the Chinese with armaments and advisors. Despite Japanese protests against this aid being provided their enemy, it was only the imminent threat of a
Japanese withdrawal from the Anti-Comintern Pact which forced the cancellation of German arms transfers and the departure of German advisors.

Without a doubt, the German invasion of Russia is the most significant breach of trust between these nominal allies. The launching of Operation Barbarossa was in fact, a direct violation of Article 2 of the Anti-Comintern Pact. And coming as it did, on the heels of Matsuoka’s neutrality pact with the Soviets, the Japanese were thrown into a quandary. Although the Germans had strongly hinted at the possibility of such an attack, when it finally occurred, it still took the Japanese by complete surprise. It is difficult to conceive of the United States military launching an attack of such magnitude, without having given an unequivocal statement of their intentions to Great Britain beforehand.

If we are convinced, for whatever reason, that the Japanese–German alliance resulted from little more than expediency on the part of its signatories, it becomes that much more plausible to presume that the Japanese were merely using German victories to advance their own agenda. And, until the Japanese launched their 7 December attacks in the Pacific and Asia, the Germans received very little in return. Although they did share common enemies, Japan and Germany were engaged in building separate—and geographically distant—spheres of influence. There were no Japanese and German troops fighting together side by side in a co-operative effort, there was little in the way of shared intelligence, and but for the efforts of a handful of individuals, the two allies remained diplomatically aloof from one another.

For such reasons as these, perhaps it was easier for the Japanese to justify their talks with the Roosevelt administration which began in the spring of 1941. Not surprisingly, the Germans were none-too-pleased to have their allies endeavouring to seek a separate peace with the common enemy.
After all, what advantage could they expect to gain from the Japanese should they [the Japanese] reach a compromise solution with the United States? On the contrary, they could expect only that they would find themselves under increased pressure from a U.S., now unfettered by anxieties related to Japanese belligerence in the Pacific.

Kase Toshikazu, who worked for many years at the Japanese Foreign Ministry, claims that his colleagues at the Ministry as well as at the embassy in Washington never clearly understood the main issues during those critical months during which the Hull-Nomura talks were in progress. According to Kase, his associates at these institutions believed that the withdrawal of Japanese troops from China was practically the only issue at stake. But, says Kase, it was Japan's alliance with Germany and their pursuit of expansionist policies—what he describes as "one and the same thing in the mind of the American Government"—which were the most critical issues. Secretary of State Hull's constant reminders to Admiral Nomura of the deleterious effect this alliance was having on Japanese-American relations appears to bear out Kase's observations.

That the Japanese took advantage of the duress suffered by Europe's colonial authorities in Southeast Asia, and were abetted in these efforts by German aggression in Europe, is difficult to dispute. It would be superfluous to recite once again, all those examples which bear testimony to this reality. However, a brief review of some of the more pertinent episodes should serve to remind the reader of the feasibility of this assertion. As we have seen, the Government of French Indo-China was particularly vulnerable to the strong-arm tactics of the Japanese, and the timing of the Japanese pressure brought to bear upon the Indo-Chinese colonial officials, speaks volumes in this regard.

---

6 Kase, *Journey to the Missouri*, p. 56.
As a result of the Japanese-brokered deal they made with Thailand, the French suffered their first territorial losses in Southeast Asia when they were forced to give up certain domains which they had held for decades. The French had shown that they were quite prepared to militarily resist the Thai, but under the combined pressure of both Thailand and Japan, particularly the latter, they were only able to postpone the inevitable, while, at the same time, the Japanese were doing all they could to ingratiate themselves with the Thai at the expense of a nearly prostrate French.

The story of Thailand presents a case which doesn’t so easily fit the mold, but its inclusion here is highly important. Although it was the only country in Southeast Asia which was not under colonial rule, it did not escape the attention of the Japanese military as they planned their drive to the south. Geographically, it was ideally suited as a staging-ground for launching an attack against Malaya; with Singapore and the oil fields of the Dutch Indies as the ultimate goals and, as noted immediately above, Japan was able to exploit the simmering tensions between the Thai and French over their long-standing border dispute. As we have discussed at length, the Japanese sought to capitalise on these tensions by offering their services as mediators. When they were politely rebuffed by the French, they simply forced themselves upon the hapless authorities of French Indo-China. By taking on the role of mediator, there were high hopes—particularly amongst certain high-ranking officers in the Japanese Army—that a settlement of the border dispute (which was favourable to the Thai) could later be used as leverage to exact some return favours.

The French were to suffer still further humiliation at the hands of the Japanese. On 17 June 1940, less than a week before France submitted to the German onslaught, the Japanese demanded the closure of the border between northern French Indo-China and southern China, and three months
later in late September 1940, the Japanese foisted upon the French Indo-Chinese authorities, an agreement permitting them (the Japanese military) the use of several bases in southern Indo-China. How could the French have realistically resisted these demands at a time when they were consumed by their attempts to resist German aggression on the home-front? Thereafter, the Japanese ultimatums placed before the ill-fated French were to become increasingly intolerable.

Similarly, the Japanese brought great pressure to bear upon the colonial Government of the Netherlands East Indies. Fortunately for the latter, they were better able to defy Japan's advances. Without doubt, their resistance owes in no small measure to the resolute attitude adopted by the Dutch colonial Governor. On the other hand, the wealth of the Indies' natural resources, particularly petroleum, provided them with a leverage which the French simply did not possess. Any threats to the security and independence of the Netherlands East Indies were certain to be met with a much stronger response from the Western powers than the Japanese were likely to inspire by threatening the French. It will be recalled that appeals for American assistance from French Ambassador Saint-Quentin to the American Government were met with polite rejection. Conversely, the U.S. State Department consistently urged the Netherlands' authorities to offer the Japanese no concessions detrimental to their economic independence.

The Japanese were much more subtle in their dealings with the Netherlands East Indies. Their conniving began in January 1940, with the cancellation of a 1935 treaty of arbitration which bound both parties to settle any commercial disputes by "solely peaceful means." When this subtle omen failed to rattle the Dutch, it was followed by Japanese attempts to negotiate a preferred position for themselves as clients for the purchase of the Indies' natural resources. The Dutch were polite yet firm
in their rebuke; telling the Japanese that they had no interest in becoming a member of Japan’s envisioned “Co-prosperity Sphere.” Hubertus van Mook was to say at the time: “It is noteworthy that Japan not only grasped at the opportunity, provided by the circumstances of war, to renew her attempts at a more privileged position, but that she also showed concern about her access to raw materials at this early date.”

The British too were somewhat fortuitous in having escaped out-and-out Japanese hostility, at least until the actual outbreak of war on 7 December. We can only speculate as to the fate of their colonial holdings in Southeast Asia had Great Britain too, been crushed by the German military juggernaut. Recall that the Japanese continually waffled on making any firm commitment to invade Singapore despite the urgings of their Nazi allies. Even after the German invasion of the Soviet Union had provided them with some reprieve from their fears respecting the “enemy to the north,” they failed to act decisively.

The reader may well ask how different might things have turned out, had Japan not allied herself with Germany; or how differently might events have unfolded in the Pacific had the Germans not stacked up such rapid victories across Europe. In the end, one can only speculate on such matters; for we remove too much from the total equation when we get into such hypothetical scenarios. Certainly Japan would still have had her China “quagmire” to deal with; for her problems on the Asian continent pre-dated German aggression in Europe. And the issue of procuring enough natural resources for the execution of “total war” would not have disappeared. Of all those issues which we might pause to consider, surely the most important difference would have been, that without having

---

had the war in Europe to occupy their collective minds, the Western powers would have been free to throw their total weight into the war effort in the Pacific. In such a scenario, Japan’s defeat would most certainly have been even more absolute than was the case. In this sense, then, Japan’s alliance with Germany and the thoroughness of Germany’s military successes in Europe, can likely be judged to have forestalled an even more potent response to Japan’s hostile behaviour in the Far East.
List of Abbreviations Used in the Notes

DAFR ......................................... Documents on American Foreign Relations.
DGFP ......................................... Documents on German Foreign Policy.
DSKK ......................................... Daitōa sensō kaisen keii.
FRUS ......................................... Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers.
IMTFE ......................................... The International Military Tribunal for the Far East.
NGS ............................................. Nihon gaikō shi.
SGS ............................................. Shōwa shi no gunbu to seiji.
TSM ............................................. Taiheiyō sensō e no michi.
TTJ ............................................. The Tokyo Judgement.
USWA ......................................... The United States in World Affairs.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources


Books


1946.


**Memoirs and Diaries**


**Japanese Sources**


Nishi, Haruhiko. 西春彦 Kaisō no nihon gaikō 回想の日本外交 [A Retrospective on Japan’s


**Bulletins and Monographs**


———. Monograph no. 147, chapter 1 (Department of the Army, Washington, D.C.: 1945).
Articles and Book Chapters


Flood, Thadeus E. "The 1940 Franco-Thai Border Dispute and Phibun Sonkroma’s
Commitment to Japan.” *Journal of Southeast Asian History* 10 (Sept. 1969), pp. 304-25.


**Dissertations**


Anonymous Articles


