Paradise in Peril. Western colonial power and Japanese expansion in Sout-East Asia, 1905-1941
Bussemaker, H.Th.

Citation for published version (APA):
Chapter 6.

JAPAN.

6.1. Introduction.

The origins of the Pacific War are rather complex, and the war should certainly not be attributed to the Japanese alone. The Pacific War was caused by a complex interplay of American, European and Japanese internal and external developments in the 19th and 20th century. Japan as a cultural entity reacted to the pressure put upon it by expanding western states, and formulated in the process an effective answer to the challenge to its independence as a nation. After having annexed outlying parts of the Chinese Empire at the end of the 19th century, Japan strengthened its position on the Asian mainland after the Russo-Japanese War. The First World War brought a golden opportunity: the take-over of German Interests in China and German colonial possessions in the Pacific. Therefore Japan evolved into an expansionist state itself, which in its turn challenged the remaining colonial powers in Asia.

The phenomenal rise of Japan after 1853 is an event of world importance in itself. After only a few decades of internal unrest and civil war, Japan emerged as a formidable power from a past, which according to Western standards of the time, was considered rather backward. Moreover, for almost a century, it remained the only non-western power which could be seen as more or less equal to first-class western powers. This historical event in itself is so amazing, that its analysis by western historians has resulted in numerous publications. Although Japan lost its war of aggression against the West, its role in ending western imperialism in South-East Asia has been widely acknowledged in western historiography.

After the Second World War, a number of articles and books, and even movies, condemned Japanese aggression as caused by the ageless hold of militarists over the minds of the people, and over Japanese government and culture. The judgment of the victorious allied governments reflected this way of thinking by charging 28 of Japan's civil and military leaders as criminals before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE) in 1946. That charge however is an oversimplification, in which the internal dynamism of Japanese society has been overlooked. It was that same internal dynamism, that made Japan successful as an economic world power after its military bid for world power had failed so spectacularly.

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the events, which slowly but inexorably drew Japan into the abyss of a war of attrition, which it was not able to bring to a successful conclusion, as its leaders knew beforehand. In this context analysis of the role and responsibilities of these leaders and their complex interactions within the Japanese social and cultural framework is unavoidable, resulting in such a disastrous "Grand Strategy". Within that framework the position and influence of the Japanese Emperor towards an almost unavoidable war has to be scrutinised too. Only when the internal interplay of forces between these leaders has been made clear, can a sensible explanation be given of
the seemingly rudderless drift of Japan towards almost certain self-destruction as a nation, and of the enormous gamble which the Japanese leaders undertook, a gamble which they ultimately lost. The description and analysis of the historical evolution from a feudal state to a modern nation will therefore consume one-third of this chapter.

The internal evolution of Japanese foreign policy will also be analysed, as it forced the western powers to react to their perception of the growing threat to their position in South-East Asia, i.e. to the status quo. Without such a thorough analysis of the internal factors which shaped Japanese foreign policy, it would be impossible to put the reactions of the western colonial powers to the common threat from the North in a proper perspective.

After having explained the historical and political background of modern Japan, an attempt will be made to analyze the two driving forces which determined the course of history in pre-war Japan. These were the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN). Much has been made of their alleged differences of opinion, with the Navy putting the blame for the lost war on the Army, and vice versa. Many postwar western historians have tried to blame one or more factions within the Army elite for the drift to war, but it will be made clear that the differences between Army and Navy, and between the factions within these service departments were smaller than suggested in western studies. The overriding concern of both service departments, and of the factions within, was the aggrandisement of the Japanese Empire. The differences which appeared were about the direction, the degree and the speed of this expansion, but not on its ultimate goal. Japan pursued a "manifest destiny" which ultimately was the control of the four corners of the globe; a destiny which proved to be a mirage above a sea of blood.


The Japanese are a racially homogeneous people living in a group of volcanic islands at the rim of East Asia. The total surface of the four main islands is 381,269 km², or about eleven times the size of the Netherlands. Rather undisturbed because of their relative isolation from the East Asian power centers (the Mongolian and the Chinese Empire) due to the sea the Japanese developed a close-knit feudal society with one dominant religion, one language, and a unique Japanese culture which derived much from Chinese culture. Japan at that time was already heavily populated having about 30 million people in 1850, living on agriculture and fishing and practising birth control because of the small area available to agriculture. The Japanese Islands have 54 active volcanoes and 111 dormant ones, leaving only a small but fertile area for intensive agriculture. Therefore, up to the modernisation of Japan, no more expansion was possible for the Japanese population, which has remained constant for almost three centuries at between 25 and 30 million people. Lack of resources and a harsh sea-climate with severe winters made the Japanese as a people resilient, frugal and diligent.

Contrary to customary Japanese practice, all Japanese names in this publication are written as is customary in the west: given name first, followed by the surname or family name.
6.2.1. Early History.

As in Europe during the Middle Ages, the Japanese developed a feudal system in the same time period, with an Emperor at the top of the hierarchy. The Japanese Emperor at that time was comparable to the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire⁷⁷⁶. The power of the Japanese tradition is illuminated by the fact that the present Emperor looks back on an unbroken lineage of 124 imperial forefathers, making the Japanese Imperial family the oldest existing in the world. Although it was possible within the Japanese feudal system to adopt a son in case a male successor was lacking - and without doubt this might have happened a number of times in Japanese History - this continuity in the imperial lineage is still remarkable. The day when, according to Japanese tradition, the first Emperor mounted the throne (11 February, 660 B.C.) still is one of the few national holidays. The Japanese Calendar even starts from that event.

Moreover, the Japanese Emperor held an advantage over his European counterpart in that he was considered as a God within the pantheon of the dominant Shinto State religion. He therefore combined Papal and Imperial responsibilities and power, a position which was constitutionally codified up to 1945. According to Shinto ("the Way of the Gods"), which is based on animism and worship of Nature, the Emperor descended directly from Sun Goddess Amaterasu, who had chosen to stay in the "Land of the Rising Sun". But because the Emperor was sacrosanct, communication between him and his subjects had to be limited to bare minimum. The pre-modern Japanese therefore developed a state system, in which the Emperor had only a symbolic presence, like a myth. Real administrative powers were exercised in his name by a noble family known as the Shogun. This was not unlike the situation in early medieval Europe, where the Merovingian Kings also had their Court Mayors, until one of them (Pepin of Herstal) became so powerful that he deposed the last Merovingian King, and founded the Carolingian dynasty. The Shogun could not act that way, because of the religious respect for the mythical Godlike Emperor, who himself embodied the essence of the Japanese nation, for which the Japanese use the word Kokutai.

The Shogunate arose in 1192, after the so-called Gempei-war (1180 - 1185), in which the Japanese knights, the samurai, defeated buddhistic monastic warriors. The leader of the Samurai, Yorimasa Minamoto, killed himself ritually after his defeat in the battle of Uji in 1180, and this custom, which is known in the West as Hara-kiri, but which the Japanese themselves call seppuku, has been since codified in the Japanese Military Code of Honor, the Bushido.⁷⁷⁸ The first Shogun was the victor of the Gempei War, Yoritomo Minamoto.

---


In the 13th century a serious threat to the continuous existence of the Japanese state came from the Asian mainland. It was the Mongolian invasions under Kublai Khan in 1274 and 1281. Both times the invasion fleet was destroyed by a storm. Where the first storm was a case of plain luck, the entire nation had prayed for the second storm, including Emperor Kameyama, who addressed Amaterasu directly. On the evening of 15 August, 1281 the prayers were answered, and a typhoon completely destroyed the Mongolian invasion fleet. This typhoon became known as the Kamikaze, the Godly Winds.278 The event considerably strengthened the position of Shinto, as the Shinto priests argued that the Japanese nation was under divine protection, making them invincible. The effect was not unlike the interference of Jeanne d'Arc in medieval France during the Hundred Years' War, inspiring the French to the ultimate defeat of the English invaders. It resulted in the emergence of a very closed, masculine insular culture, stressing that all Japanese belonged to one tribe, the Japanese tribe. Being Japanese was something special, as expressed by kokutai, a mythical feeling of the Japanese essence. In outside contacts this culture manifested itself as inward-looking, arrogant, and discriminatory towards non-Japanese.

It has to be remembered, that at the time of the Mongolian invasions the Japanese lacked a strong navy, and were therefore unable to beat the invasion forces at sea. In both cases the Mongolian and Chinese troops actually landed on Japanese soil. It was also due to the lack of a navy that Chinese and Korean pirates started to interfere with the trade between Japan and the mainland. This trade was taken over in the sixteenth century by the Portuguese, who, with their powerfully armed caravels, were too strong for the pirates, and therefore monopolized the China - Japan trade, which brought them enormous profits and the envy of other western powers, including the ascending trading nation, Holland.

At the middle of the sixteenth century, the Shogunate had reached such a degree of consolidation and centralisation that a national army could be constituted, which could be used as a tool of expansion. However, this army also caused instability, in the hands of weak Shoguns in the period 1550 - 1600. That period was characterized by feudal quarrels, resulting in a weak central government. Shogun Hideyoshi Toyotomi tried to unify the Japanese factions by undertaking an effort to subjugate China with the national army.279 The Japanese, however, still lacked a navy, and because they had to march through Korea, they encountered the Korean fleet under the brilliant admiral Yi Sun Sin (1545 - 1598), who destroyed the Japanese supply fleets in a number of battles at sea, although he could not block the invasion of Korea itself on 24 May 1592. The Japanese Army occupied Seoul and even Pyong-Yang, but the Koreans started a lively guerrilla war and Chinese troops entered North Korea. Starving, the Japanese fell prey to dissension between Christian279a and Shintoist troops, and had to retreat from Korea in 1598. This defeat resulted in a national trauma, which would become a factor in the closing of their country from the outside world. The position of Hideyoshi became untenable, and a civil war developed. After the victory of leyasu Tokugawa in the battle at Sekigahara on October 21, 1600, leyasu became the new Shogun, and founded the Tokugawa-Shogunate which would last deep into the 19th century.


279a Portuguese missionaries had christianized the population of Kyushyu. See Turnbull, op. cit. 201 - 207.
leyasu centralised state powers even further. The feudal landlords or Daimyo, comparable with Europe's high nobility, all became his vassals. Japan was divided into so-called Han (districts), with a Daimyo heading each Han. Each Daimyo had his own personal army, with the officers of these vassal armies comprising the lower nobility, or Samurai.

The Daimyo could be subdivided in two groups. The Fudai Daimyo were the descendants of the Daimyo who had assisted leyasu Tokugawa in his struggle. Their territory formed a "cordon sanitaire" around the residence of the Shogun, Edo, which later would become known as Tokyo. Outside of this defensive ring were the Han's of the Tozama Daimyo, who were descended from the adversaries of leyasu. More than anything it was fear that the Tozama Daimyo would make a deal with the Westerners who had arrived in the meantime, that caused the Shogun to close Japan to all foreign contacts in 1639. Those same Westerners (particularly Portuguese) had destabilised the country in the previous century by importing modern firearms and particularly by introducing the christian religion as an alternative for the neo-confucianist state ideology. Preceding this action was the 1621 edict of Hidetaka Tokugawa, forbidding the Japanese to leave the islands. Thereafter, an edict by iemitsu Tokugawa in 1637 forbade the Japanese to build ships larger than 50 tons. This was followed by the edict of 1639 which forbade all foreigners to enter Japan (with two small exceptions, see below). The result was a self-imposed isolation of Japan for more than two centuries, called the Sakoku period.

There were some grounds for this rather extreme behaviour. The first Portuguese traders had arrived on Japanese shores between 1541 and 1543. The Daimyo of Satsuma on the island of Kyushyu promoted trade with these "barbarians", which the Portuguese used to start proselytising the Japanese. In 1549 the Jesuits arrived in Kyushyu under St. Francis cus Xavierus. To the horror of the Shinto Priests, even the Shogun, Yoshiteru Ashikaga, had himself baptized! The Jesuit Martinez became the first Roman Catholic bishop of Japan, with his seat in Nagasaki on Kyushyu. After the lost Korean War, a backlash followed and the first persecutions of Christians by the local populace started in 1597, ending with the expulsion of the Portuguese and a bloody suppression of Christianit-ty.279

During that time of upheaval and persecution, the first Dutch ship arrived. It was the Merchantman DE LIEFDE, which had left Rotterdam harbour with three other ships on 27 June, 1598. It was the only ship left of this small fleet when it reached the harbour of Utsuki on Kyushyu on 19 april 1600, with only 24 survivors on board. The ship would later be scuttled in Tokyo Bay, but leyasu Tokugawa used the ship's guns and the knowledge of the English and Dutch gunners to his advantage in the decisive battle of Sekigahara.279

The first mate of the ship, the Englishman William Adams, even reached a high position at the court of the Shogun. James Clavell used Williams as the central figure in his succesful novel "Shogun".

The Dutch were allowed to open a "factorij" (emporium) at Hirado on Kyushyu in 1609, to be followed by the English. When leyasu definitively forbade the Roman Catholic religion and expelled the Portuguese in 1614, he left those emporiums untouched. The Shimabara-uprising by Japanese Christians in Kyushyu in 1637 increased the lingering xenophobia

against all Westerners, which also reflected upon the Dutch. Their suggestion to use Dutch ships to transport Japanese troops to the (Spanish) Philippines in order to overthrow their hereditary enemy, the Spanish, fell on deaf ears, but illustrated the high esteem which the Dutch held for the military prowess of the Japanese.\textsuperscript{272} Up to the edict of 1637, the Dutch V.O.C. used Japanese mercenary soldiers for the defence of her fortresses in the East Indies. The Dutch Governor-General and founder of Batavia, J.P. Coen, wrote to his superiors in Holland that "the Japanese fought like devils".\textsuperscript{273} The Japanese mercenaries in Batavia had been allowed to form their own company of about 130 men, and this company covered itself with glory during the siege of Batavia in 1628. After 1637 however, the Japanese were called back to their homeland.

In 1641 the Dutch were forced to move from Hirado to Nagasaki, where they were installed on Deshima, a small artificial island in Nagasaki harbour which had been evacuated by the Portuguese. The freedom of movement of the Dutch was now severely curtailed, and all other Westerners were banished from the Japanese archipelago. Notwithstanding this state of affairs, the emporium at Deshima remained enormously profitable for the V.O.C. up to the 18th century because of its trade monopoly on Japan. It resulted in the situation that in Napoleonic times the small island was the only place in the world where the Dutch flag was still flying.

For Japan, however, Deshima became the only open window to Western developments for two and a half centuries, making it possible to follow those developments from a distance. And as the Japanese are very studious, a gathering of intellectuals came into existence who spoke Dutch fluently and called themselves the Rangakusha, after Oranda, which means Holland in Japanese. Up to 1870, the official language in which Japanese officials negotiated with representatives of the Western powers was Dutch. Numerous Japanese terms in architecture, navigation, astronomy and medicine therefore have a Dutch origin.\textsuperscript{274} Shiheii Hayashi (1738 - 1793) was a Rangakusha who studied Western military technology, and who openly warned in a book appearing in 1791 that for the survival of Japan as a nation it was essential to appropriate this technology.\textsuperscript{275} His anxiety however did not concern the Americans or Western Europeans, but did concern the Russians, who were very active around the northern island of Sakhalin.\textsuperscript{276} Although the Rangakusha were much respected by the Tokugawa Court, it kept the Dutch on a short leash, considering them as underlings. Dutch traders had to bear many humiliations inflicted on them by arrogant Japanese court officials. The reason was that in Japanese class society traders occupied one of the lower classes, somewhat comparable to that of the Jews in medieval Europe. Therefore, the Dutch chef de poste at Deshima had to make a yearly pilgrimage to Edo in order to acknowledge Japanese suzerainty and to placate the Shogun by offering him valuable presents, as a kind of tribute. The Dutch therefore were not even

\textsuperscript{272} De Graeff, Ibid, 25, Tumbull, ibid., 279.

\textsuperscript{273} De Graeff, Ibid, 15.

\textsuperscript{274} Grant K. Goodman: \textit{The Dutch Impact on Japan}. E.J. Brill, Leiden 1967.


aware that there was an even higher authority present in Japan, the Emperor. They equated the Shogun with the Emperor.

Due to the strong control over the Dutch, Japan remained a very closed society at the same time that Europe was experiencing the Enlightenment. Japan however remained a feudal country with a strong central government. In subchapter 3 a further analysis of Japanese society will be given. As Holland itself was in decline at the end of the eighteenth century, it lacked the power to act as a catalyst in the rebirth of a modern Japan. That task would fall upon other western powers in ascendency, like England, which had forcibly opened Chinese ports to its trade during the "Opium War" of 1842. The Dutch King, Willem II, undertook to warn the "Emperor" (actually the Shogun) against English incursions. The Japanese did not appreciate this gesture however, which they considered too direct. Moreover, they equated the other Europeans to the almost slavish Dutch traders; an assessment which would become almost fatal.

6.2.2. Impact of the Western Powers.

The only European Power which really caused the Japanese some anxiety during their isolation was Imperial Russia. In 1649 the Russians established a fleet base at Okhotsk, on the sea with the same name, in what is now Eastern Siberia. After exploration of Kamchatka, the Kuriles Archipelago and Sakhalin, they became interested in Japan itself, proof of which was a reconnoitering expedition to Honshu in 1739. In 1806 the Cossacks attacked Japanese settlements in the Kuriles and Sakhalin. In 1825 the Baku-fu, a noble who was charged by the Shogun with the daily administration of the Government, even ordered the firing upon of each ship which approached the Japanese coast, with the exception of Nagasaki.

In the United States, discontent was growing because of the xenophobic ways in which the Japanese treated American sailors who were shipwrecked on the Japanese coasts. The U.S. government had sent a mission to Japan under Commodore James Biddle in 1846, but he achieved nothing as he lacked the back-up of a naval squadron. As we have seen in Chapter 3, the Americans had been much more assertive in the case of the

---

278 De Graeff, ibid., 203.
281 Bakufu means literally a tent camp, figuratively the court of the Shogun. In the 19th century the term was used for the highest court official directly under the Shogun.
283 Beasley, op. cit., 78.
Acinese pirates, which led to the first American punitive expedition towards Asian shores. In 1849 the U.S. Government approached England, France and The Netherlands with a proposal to send a combined squadron to Japan. The Dutch refused, because of their longstanding relationship with the Japanese, but offered mediation. The chief of the trade post at Deshima, J.H. Donker Curtius, started conversations with the Bakufu in 1852 on the basis of a draft treatise. The Japanese, however, dismissed his proposals.

This caused the Americans to send a naval squadron under Commodore Matthew Perry to Tokyo Bay in 1853. He arrived on 8 July in Uraga, with a letter from President Millard Fillmore for the Emperor. His arrival caused panic in the Japanese Government and in the local population, because the Japanese realised that they could not resist superior American firepower with a few old V.O.C.-guns and musketry. At least the Japanese Government in Edo realised all too well the fate of China as a result of the Opium Wars. Moreover, Edo (Tokyo) was very dependent on seaborne supplies, and an American blockade would result in starvation. Happily enough, the Americans disappeared after delivery of the Fillmore letter, with the admonition that they would return the next year with an even bigger fleet to receive the answer of the Emperor. In fact, the letter had been received by Shogun Ieyoshi Tokugawa, who died not long thereafter.

His successor, Ieyasada Tokugawa, and his Bakufu, Masahiro Abe, decided to discuss the far-reaching American demands for opening up Japan with the Emperor and the Daimyo. This was a decision without precedent in Japanese history, and resulted in a considerable erosion of power for the Shogun with respect to the Daimyo because of loss of face. In October 1853 a Russian squadron entered Nagasaki, whereupon the edict of 1839 was recalled, and some harbours were opened to the foreigners (Hakodate on Hokkaido and Shimoda on Kyushu). Perry was informed accordingly when he arrived in Tokyo Bay in March 1854. The Japanese Government promised to undertake the protection of shipwrecked westerners, but at the same time the Dutch trade chief in Deshima was approached with the question as to whether the Japanese could procure some modern Dutch warships. The Dutch NEI Government decided positively, as Deshima did report to that Government and not to the Dutch Government in The Netherlands, and in July 1854 the Dutch Steam Frigate HNMS SOEMBING under command of Commander Gerhardus Fabius arrived at Nagasaki. He soon received hundreds of eager young Japanese sailors for training on board. The ship was handed over to the Japanese in October 1855, who renamed the ship the KWAN KOO MARU, the first Japanese naval vessel of an emerging modern Japanese fleet.

**On February 6, 1832 the U.S. frigate POTOMAC bombarded the Acinese harbour Kuala Batu. See David F. Long: "Martial Thunder: the first official American intervention in Asia" Pacific Historical Review, 42 (1973), 143 - 162.**

**De Graeff. Ibid, 208.**

**According to a Japanese account from 1864 the appearance of the Americans caused a flight of rich people from Edo to the countryside, when it became clear that the military lacked modern weapons to resist the Americans. See Beasley, op. cit., 89.**

In the meantime, the Japanese Government had speedily concluded a treaty with the Americans on 31 March 1854 (the Kamagawa-treaty), to be followed on 14 October 1854 by a treaty with the English, on 7 February 1855 with the Russians, and on 30 January 1856 with the Dutch, which also meant the end of the Dutch presence at Deshima. All these treaties had one clause in common, allowing Western foreigners the same access to specified harbours for trade purposes which had been defined in earlier treaties. The loss of face of the Shogun because of these treaties caused some Tozama Daimyo to act more independently. Some Daimyo, notably those of Satsuma, Chosen and Hizen on Kyushu, even started to modernise their military formations, as they correctly expected that the Western Powers would not acquiesce to the limited treaties which had been closed. They were right, for in October 1857 a Russian squadron under Rear-Admiral E.V. Putyatin appeared at Nagasaki, demanding more trade opportunities. On 16 October 1857 a much more liberal treaty was closed with the Dutch at Deshima, to be followed some days later by an identical treaty with the Russians.

America's first Consul in Japan, Townsend Harris, arrived in 1856 in Shimoda. He argued for even more liberalisation, and considered the "Dutch model" offered to him as not going far enough. He threatened American and British intervention. The British had indeed stationed a powerful Fleet at Hongkong after the Crimean War.\(^2\)\(^3\) Therefore, the Bakufu, Naosuke II, offered a treaty which opened almost all harbours and cities to trade with the exception of Kyoto, the city of the Emperor, which remained forbidden. The court of the Emperor, dominated by the Kuge, the Japanese high nobility, was flatly against this treaty. Because of rumors of an impending British naval expedition, the Bakufu had in the meantime signed a treaty with Harris on 29 July 1858, with Donker Curtius and Putyatin on 6 August and with Lord Elgin for Great Britain on 26 August, 1858. As he had done so without the consent of the court at Kyoto, he was murdered by Japanese nationalists on 24 March 1860, which began a period of disturbances all over Japan. The foreigners were also in danger, as in January 1861 the secretary of Townsend Harris, Heusken, was murdered by Samurai from central Honshu.\(^2\)\(^1\)\(^0\)

This episode has been treated a little more in depth, because it illustrates for the gunboat diplomacy which was then part of western foreign policy, and also because it shows clearly a typical Japanese reaction to adverse influences from outside: extreme chauvinism leading to murder attempts motivated by idealistic patriotism. The 1930's would see a stronger re-emergence of this pattern. Japanese over-reaction at that time however is also explainable as anxiety at meeting the same fate as Imperial China at the hands of the foreign barbarians, who, because of the trade treaties, almost ruined the Japanese economy. The clause in those Treaties, which limited Japanese import duties on Western products to a maximum of 5 % almost ruined the country between 1854 and 1868. The Japanese were however lucky that because of the near disappearance of the Italian and French silkworm culture due to an epidemic in that period the Japanese could export silk

---


to earn foreign currency.

6.2.3. Internal Strife.

The serious western challenge to the slumbering Japanese nation resulted in a split within the ruling élite. The Shogun, the Bakufu and a number of daimyo were of the opinion, that Japan could only get rid of these arrogant foreigners by adopting western culture and especially western technology as quickly as possible. They were opposed by the Shishi, the "Resolute Men", who wanted immediate expulsion of the white barbarians. The Shishi consisted of most of the Tozama daimyo, the lower samurai-class and the Imperial Court at Kyoto. As the Sankin-Kotai, the law which kept most Tozama daimyo as hostages at the Shogun Court, was repealed on 17 October 1862, most Tozama daimyo returned to their fiefdoms, and the Shogun was faced with demands from the Imperial Court to drive the foreigners into the sea. The new Bakufu, Keiki Hitotsubashi, agreed with the date of 25 June, 1863 for talks with the foreign consuls about their evacuation. But the hotheaded daimyo of Choshu, the most Western Han on the island of Honshu, concluded that this was the day of final reckoning with the hated Westerners, and on that day he opened fire on an American freighter which passed the narrow Shimonoseki Straits under the nose of his batteries. Some days later, Dutch and French freighters on their way to Shimoda were also shelled. In Kagoshima, the British trade commissioner was murdered. The British reacted furiously, and bombarded Kagoshima, the capital of the Satsuma-Han on Kyushu and of another hotheaded daimyo. The daimyo of Choshu did not escape either. Between 5 - 9 September 1863 an international squadron of 17 men-of-war of French, Dutch, British and American nationality destroyed the batteries along Shimonoseki Straits. Thereafter, the Bakufu had to sign a treaty in which the Japanese government was threatened with an indemnity of three million dollars if Shimonoseki straits should ever be closed again. Moreover, it was made understood that murders of Western subjects in Japan would cause even stronger military measures. This dictate must have been a shattering experience for the proud and racial Japanese, and severely damaged the prestige of the Shogun. For every infraction of foreigner's "rights" by a local Shishi the western powers held the Shogun accountable, thereby weakening his already decreasing authority over the Daimyo.

The daimyo of Choshu, Yoshichika Mori, (1819 - 1871) was not one of the timorous kind. He was convinced that only a fast modernisation of the army could save Japan, and he started to modernise his little samurai army immediately. The daimyo of Satsuma, Hisamitsu Shimazu (1817 - 1887) had come to the same conclusion, but concentrated on

---

281 The Japanese expression Sankin-Kotai is difficult to translate, but its meaning is something like "neighbour visit". Each of the about 250 Daimyo had to stay at the Court in Edo for a certain period each year. If the Daimyo was not at the Court, members of his family had to take his place. The rules for the Tozama-Daimyo were more strict than for the other Daimyo.

282 The victor of Tsushima, Admiral Heihachiro Togo, watched the Kagoshima bombardment in helpless frustration as a young naval cadet.


284 Beasley, op. cit., 211.
modernising his fleet. These powerful Tozama daimyo allied themselves with the daimyo of Chikushen (capital Fukuoka on Kyushyu), Hizu (capital Saga on Kyushyu) and Tosa (capital Kochi on Shikoku) and with the court of Emperor Komei. These five Han, all situated in the Southwest corner of the Japanese empire, developed far more quickly both economically and militarily than the other Han because of geographical location and more intensive foreign contacts. The driving force of this rapid modernization in this corner of Japan were the 5 Daimyo, and the lower samurai class. Japan at that time had a large, well-developed and literate Samurai class which was used to staff the Daimyo armies and their bureaucracies, based on merit. They wanted a reform of the feudal Japanese class-society, but were reined in by the Kuge. The pent-up social pressure was released when the long-expected civil war (the so-called Boshin rebellion) started between the Southwestern Alliance and the Shogun and his court in July 1866.

On 16 September 1866 the modernised army of Choshu defeated the troops of the Shogun near Hiroshima. On 19 September, Shogun lemochi Tokugawa died in Osaka, after which an armistice was signed on 10 October. Bakufu Keiki Hitotsubashi (1837 - 1913) was installed as the new Shogun on 10 January 1867, but under the jurisdiction of the Emperor, and no longer at Tokyo but at Kyoto. The Tokugawa-Shogunate ended effectively at this date, after a dominance of 268 years. A few weeks later, on 3 February 1867, Emperor Komei died and was succeeded by Emperor Mutsuhito (Meiji Tenno, 1867 - 1912), who, at that time, was a boy of 15 years of age.

The new Shogun energetically started the modernisation of Japan, aided by the competent French Minister, Léon Roches. French engineers built the first modern blast furnaces at Yokohama (1868), and the first modern ship-yard. Roches also advised the Japanese to structure their government according to the western model of the trias politica with a separation of the executive, legislative and judicial powers and with a responsible cabinet, but the Shogun needed imperial consent for this. He decided to offer all governmental responsibility to the young Emperor, hoping that the unexperienced boy Emperor would delegate this task to him. However, advised by the Tozama daimyo, the Emperor accepted the offer - a decision again without precedent in Japanese history. Keiki took flight to Osaka castle, and the Fudai daimyo mobilised their troops, as did the Tozama daimyo. The civil war now started in earnest, with the Tozama daimyo winning the small but fierce battles of Fushimi (27 January 1868), Toba (29 January), and Osaka (2 February). Keiki took flight over the sea back to Edo, which was then captured by the Tozama army. The Satsuma commander, Takamori Salgo, defeated the Fudai daimyo of Northern Honshu at the battles of Ueno, Utsunomiya, Nikko and Wakamatsu. Only the northern island of Hokkaido was still on the side of the Shogun, and was defended by a fleet under admiral Takeaki Enomoto (1836 - 1908). Enomoto had been trained as a naval officer at the Dutch Naval Academy of Den Helder, but was decisively defeated by the more modern Satsuma-fleet at the seabeatle off Hakodate, on 27 June 1867. This meant the end of the Shoguna-

---


The young Emperor now took responsibility for the re-organisation of the government, with the assistance of a number of competent advisors from the court, like Takayoshi Kido who had studied Western parliamentary democracy. In a five-point Imperial Rescript dated 6 April 1868 and later known as the "Oath-Charter" the daimyo, the samurai, and the common people were all called upon to share in the change of the nation's destiny. The broad formulation of its lofty aims was helpful in changing the mindset of both the elite and the people, and even Emperor Hirohito appealed to his grandfather's Oath-Charter to legitimise the new Constitution of 3 May, 1947.

In order to ensure acceptance of these sweeping changes, the Emperor broke with a long-standing tradition which isolated him from his people. In the first ten years of his reign, he made extensive travels over the whole of Japan - 693 trips in total. Moreover, he moved his palace to Edo (modern Tokyo). After the issuance of a number of important Imperial rescripts, the Emperor returned to isolation, as Gods are not expected to travel around and speak with common people. This isolation would last until 1945.

By Imperial rescript of 25 July 1869 all 237 daimyo were forced to cede their landholdings to the Crown, and all hereditary positions were abolished. As compensation, they received a state pension. The same rescript placed all private armies of the daimyo under direct command of the Emperor. That date, 25 July 1869, therefore was the birthday of a modern Japanese Army, the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA). In another Imperial rescript, dated 29 August, 1871, all remaining daimyo patronages were abolished, and Japan became subdivided in prefectures with prefects, appointed by the Emperor. The privileges of the Samurai class were also abolished, and compulsory military service was introduced in 1872. Japanese observers had watched the civilian's dedication in the defense of Paris during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and compared it to the aloofness of Japanese civilians during the Boshin-and Shogunate-rebellions, which were fought between samurai on opposing sides. The samurai did not revolt against this rescript, partly due to the immense prestige of the Emperor, but also because, according to Harootunian, their debts were taken over by the state, and their preponderant position in the modern Japanese Army and bureaucracy guaranteed, but only based on merit. Mutsuhito ended feudalism, and Japan entered the modern age.

One of the more daring acts of the young Emperor and his court was the Iwakura-mission. The mission was named after its leader, Tomomi Iwakura, and traveled for 21 months between 1871 and 1873 in the United States and Europe, talking to heads of state and other important persons. The 55 members of this mission would dominate Japanese governments in the late 19th and early 20th century. The mission even counted five women, to study foreign educational systems. In March 1872 the mission held extensive

---

2817 Enamot o forwarded his notebooks from Den Helder Academy to his opponent, with the remark that those were of greater importance for the new Japanese nation than for him. He was rehabilitated in 1872 and later on became Cabinet Minister. See Beasley, ibid., 298.

2818 Beasley, op. cit., 311.


conversations with Dutch Cabinet members and scientists[287]. Due to this mission, a large number of gifted Japanese students were admitted to European and American universities.

This sharp break with Japan's feudal past has been named the Meiji-restoration, named after the era which started with the ascension to the throne of the new monarch, Emperor Mutsuhito. It was however a restoration, not a revolution, as the Emperor assumed his divine position as sovereign over Japan, a position which had been gradually lost to the Shoguns over time. It is still unclear who had been the driving power behind this astonishing conversion. Was it the young Emperor himself? It is more reasonable to assume that a number of courtiers had been responsible, using the godly authority of the Emperor to achieve their goal of a modernised Japan. Courtiers like Hirobumi Ito, Shigenobu Okuma and Arimoto Yamagata knew full well what had happened to China in its confrontation with the West, and had drawn their conclusions.[282] They pushed Japan in the modern age, but with a power structure which even predated feudalism: the godly power of the Emperor, as that had evolved within Japanese culture. In fact, Japanese government of the late 19th century resembled that of 8th century Nara-period Japan, with a Council of State (Dayo-kan) consisting of elder Statesmen and Nobility assisting the Emperor. The Meiji restoration was therefore not a cultural break with Japanese tradition.[283] Western technology in this view could be adapted without destroying the fabric of Japanese society.

The price for this cultural continuity was high, however. Japanese society could adopt modern technology, but did not adopt modern government with it, with its separation of powers, and checks and balances. Stressing the divinity of the Emperor proved to be a retrograde change, for which Japan would pay dearly in the 20th century.

The building of a strong, centralised state, managed by a competent bureaucracy of erstwhile samurai, was realised with amazing speed. The year of 1871 also saw the introduction of compulsory education. At that time more than 40% of all children underwent primary education, a figure which was higher than in many a western country! By 1900, 100% primary education for all children, including girls, had been achieved.

This astounding result was based on a number of educational reforms, based on western models. The first educational reform of 1871 (the Gakusei) was based on the French educational system, as this was the most centralised and systematised of all the western educational systems which the Iwakura mission had studied. There were also strong influences from the German and Dutch education systems.[284] As this western education system proved to be alien to rural Japanese, and exerted too high a drain on Japanese society.

---


financial resources, it was abandoned in 1879 for an American educational model, in which rural communities could decide for themselves how much they wanted to invest in education. The results proved to be disappointing, due to lower attendance rates and a low quality of education. The Emperor, who personally visited many schools was disappointed, and in 1880 a Prussian educational system was introduced. The politically-oriented, conservative Prussian system with its cold efficiency and heavy emphasis on becoming a patriotic and obedient citizen seemed to be more adapted to Japanese cultural conditions, reinforcing the Confucian concept of the family state. It was this system which stuck and which was definitely adopted by the "Imperial Rescript on Education" of 1890. A distinguished historian, Saburo Ienaga, blamed this Imperial rescript after the war for turning out jingoistic and racial Japanese who, by their education, supported the rightist tendencies of their governments before the Pacific war.

In contrast to primary and secondary education, the Japanese universities were reasonably free of government control up to the 1930s. The first university (Tokyo University) opened its doors in 1877.

It has to be pointed out that the samurai-class still held a strong grip on national defence, which they considered to be their exclusive domain. Very prominent were the samurai from the two "Han" which had most strongly contributed to the downfall of the Shogunate. Samurai from Choshu Han took all leading positions in the emerging conscription army; samurai from Satsuma Han dominated the young navy. From 1887 into the 1930's the three Commanders-in-Chief of the Imperial Army were all from Choshu: Aritomo Yamagata, Masatake Terauchi and Giichi Tanaka. All three served their country as Minister of War and as Prime Minister. Yamagata in particular has been rightly called the "Father of the Imperial Japanese Army". Although the influence of the original samurai gradually disappeared, the two defence establishments developed along separate patterns which resulted in an almost total lack of communication between the two services, because of an ingrained distrust, which lasted until after the Second World War.

The first years after the Meiji-restoration remained turbulent. Due to high inflation, the state pensions of the daimyo quickly eroded, which caused considerable unrest. In combination with reactionary elements who of course were still present and who wanted the expulsion of all foreigners, this resulted in disturbances, the most serious of which was the Satsuma-rebellion of 1877. These reactionary elements were to be found at the daimyo and the high samurai in the five Han's which had caused the Shogunate-rebellion, because

---

282 Nagai, op. cit., 45.
they had not envisaged the powerful centralised bureaucracy of the Meiji-restoration, and resented this central control. One year before, the wearing of Samurai-swords had been forbidden, the sole exception being active-serving officers in Army and Navy. Takamori Saigo (1828 - 1877) was a samurai from Satsuma, who had earned fame as the military leader who ended the Boshin-rebellion, and who thereafter became a Minister, retired in 1874. Saigo assembled a small army of the discontented around him, and on 15 February 1877 he occupied the city of Kagoshima, from there invading the Kumamoto-prefecture. The government despatched a regular army unit under General Taruhito Arisugawa, consisting of conscripts. In the battle of Shiroyama on 24 September 1877, Saigo was wounded by a bullet fired by a simple conscript soldier, after which he killed himself by seppuku. With Saigo, the old feudal high samurai disappeared as a class in the mists of history, but the soul of the samurai, the code of honour called Bushido ("The Ways of the Warrior") as expounded by popular moralists like Inazo Itobe, would permeate the modern Imperial Japanese Army and Navy.²⁶¹ Saigo would be deified as a hero of Japanese militarism and nationalism.

The end of the Satsuma-rebellion brought internal stability, which would last until the 1930's. By discipline and hard labour under the leadership of Japanese entrepreneurs from Osaka, Japan changed in a few decades from a feudal fiefdom into a modern industrial state. In 1870, the first daily newspaper was published at Yokohama (the Nihon), and the same year the first railway line was finished between Yokohama and Tokyo. Japanese students were sent in large numbers to the best European and American Universities, and the Japanese government hired a number of foreign experts as advisers and educators. The army was trained by French and German experts; the navy by British advisers.

In effect, the Meiji government hired thousands of foreign consultants and instructors.²⁶² The Japanese called these assignees "live machines" or Yatoi, as the Japanese government took care to remain in undisputed control over the employment of these experts, replacing them by Japanese as rapidly as possible. The body of Dutch Yatoi ranked seventh in number, with 51 Dutch instructors or advisers in a total of exactly 2400 Yatoi.²⁶³

One of them, K.W. Gratama, introduced analytical chemistry in Japan.²⁶⁴ Eight Dutchmen were used in building harbours, improving streambeds and water courses and canalisation. Some of them, like C.J. van Doom and J. de Rijke are still being venerated in Japan to this day.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Turnbull, op. cit. 290.
By Imperial rescript of 11 February, 1889 Japan received a modern Constitution, the so-called Meiji-Constitution. This Constitution was of ultimate importance in Japan's road to Pearl Harbor, and therefore deserves some attention. In analogy to the German Constitution of that time, the Genro (the court advisers of the Emperor) led by the main architect of the Constitution, Hirobumi Ito, had decided to keep army and navy out of parliamentary control. The first draft of this constitution was in German, just like the first draft of the postwar Constitution of 1947 would be in English. The Constitution reiterated the Godly descent of the Emperor, and as the Emperor was also Commander-in-Chief of Army and Navy, no civilian could be responsible for the armed forces. It was also codified in the Constitution, that the Ministers of Army and Navy had to be officers or retired officers, and under no circumstances mere civilians. In the years leading to the Second World War this constitutional rule was exploited by the officer-class to force a cabinet into resignation by withholding their approval to undesirable proposals emanating from a civilian Premier or from other (civilian) members of a cabinet. Lenaga has illustrated that over the years, the military used the Meiji-Constitution to erode the power of Parliamentary Cabinets, aided by the fact that every ten years a war broke out (1895, 1904, 1914), which steadily increased their influence on Japanese government. Prince Hirobumi Ito unwittingly committed a serious error in separating the service departments from civilian control- an error which was only redressed with the new constitution in 1947.

The Meiji-Constitution introduced a House of Lords and a House of Commons, the Diet. Representatives for the Diet were chosen by voters who were wealthy enough to pay land tax. This restriction was abolished in 1920, but until after the Second World War, women were ineligible, and could not vote. The Council of State with its Genro (Elder Statesmen) remained in place, next to the House of Lords.

The Diet members were elected by a voting system based on districts, according to the Anglo-Saxon system. The district system was convenient to the elite, because it guaranteed the continuation of their power, based on rural support. Quickly, corruption and bribes made it possible for rich candidates to buy the necessary votes for a parliamentary seat. At the end of the twenties, election bribery was the norm rather than the exception.

Another consequence of the District system was the emergence of only two political parties of roughly equal strength. These were the Seiyukai and the Kenseikai, the latter being replaced after 1927 by the Minseito, the "party of popular government." As in Anglo-Saxon countries, the parties did not count for much, but it was their leaders who attracted the attention. These were wily men, like Kei Hara of the Seiyukai and Komei Kato of the Kenseikai. The district system made it almost impossible for urban-based parties such as

---

263 George M. Beckmann: *The Making of the Meiji Constitution; the Oligarchs and the constitutional development of Japan, 1869 - 1891*. Univ. of Kansas Press, Lawrence Kansas 1957.


240 See Peter Duus, op. cit., 215.
the Socialists or Communists to conquer a parliamentary majority in the Diet.\textsuperscript{284} As Duus has pointed out, the radical right did not capture the Diet as the Nazis did with the Reichstag in Germany, but bypassed the established political power structure by intimidation and murder, thus paralyzing the normal parliamentary process.\textsuperscript{284} The right understood that they could never win in an election struggle. Nevertheless, the weakness of the national party leaders in the late twenties and thirties helped the radical right to obtain its goals.

It must be said, that politicians in Japan never dissociated themselves from the administration, and never saw themselves as representatives of certain segments of the population, not even the communists. They identified strongly with the nation, even when belonging to one of the political parties.

### 6.2.4. External Expansion.

Modern Japan exhibited an early interest in secure borders. After the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) had reached a certain critical mass, the Japanese government annexed the Kuriles after a formal treaty with the Russians in 1875, in which the island of Sakhalin was ceded to Imperial Russia. In 1877 the Bonin Islands followed, and in 1879 the Ryū-Kyu Islands. This was significant, because Commodore Perry had used the harbour of Naha in Okinawa for preparing his forays into the Bay of Tokyo. Moreover, the suzerainty over the Ryū-Kyu’s was with the Chinese, and not with the Japanese. The annexation irritated the Chinese, and was one of the causes of the Chinese-Japanese war of 1895.

Around 1890, Japan had become a modern westernised state, with an army and navy trained by western instructors and equipped with modern weapons and ships. There was no fear for the “long-nosed barbarians” anymore, and Japan could now pursue a more aggressive foreign policy. Traditionally there had always been a feeling that Japan needed to control Korea, because the peninsula pointed towards Japan like a dagger.\textsuperscript{284} Steps to increase control over the Hermite Kingdom were the direct cause for war with China, which held suzerainty over Korea. The Japanese under General Maresuke Nogi defeated the Chinese army first at Tang-Jin south of Seoul on 29 July 1894, and then at Pyong-Yang on 15 September 1894. Two days later the Chinese fleet was decisively beaten by Admiral Ito in the Battle of the Yalu.\textsuperscript{284} The Chinese naval base at Port Arthur was captured by Field Marshall Oyama on 21 November 1894, and after a grueling winter campaign Japanese naval infantry captured another Chinese base on the Yellow Sea.


\textsuperscript{284} Peter Duus, Party Rivalry, op. cit. 247 - 248.


Wei-Hai-Wei, on 12 February 1895. This string of victories was marred only by foreign press reports of atrocities committed by the Japanese as they swept through Port-Arthur. Between 2,000 and 3,000 people, including women and children, were reported to have been slain.

The Japanese occupied also the Pescadores islands south of Formosa - a clear signal of Japanese aspirations towards the Nanyo (Southeast Asia). That action resulted in a wave of unrest in the Netherlands East Indies. Moreover, the Japanese forward base at the Pescadores would exert a strong influence on the future plans of the Japanese Navy, which would consider the Southern waters their natural area of expansion, in contrast to the Siberian dreams of the Army. Decisively beaten, the Chinese had to accept the Treaty of Shimonoseki of 17 April, 1895 in which the Chinese agreed to cede the Liaotung Peninsula with Port Arthur to the Japanese, together with Formosa and the Pescadores. The annexation of Formosa came somewhat as a surprise. Formosa was a really important prize, and in effect Japan's first colony. By acquiring this large island, the Japanese empire jumped 1,200 kilometers closer to South-East-Asia.

Directly after the publication of the Treaty, the European Powers of Russia, France and Germany rejected the contents of the Treaty, as those powers considered the Liaotung-peninsula in Japanese hands to be a direct danger to the integrity of China. This constituted the so-called Triple Intervention. Japan did not feel itself strong enough to attack those combined Powers, withdrew its troops from Port Arthur and handed over the peninsula to the Chinese on 8 November 1896. This was a very bitter experience, and the ensuing period was dubbed the period of the Gashin-Shoton, a Japanese expression difficult to translate, but meaning a period of weeping and the gnashing of teeth in preparation for a strike back. The Japanese ruling class would never forget the humiliation of the Triple Intervention, which meant loss of face, an almost unbearable affront in Japanese culture. The Japanese success in abrogating Western territorial rights in Japan itself in 1897 was only small compensation for the loss of face which had occurred.

During the following decade the Japanese watched with anger the Western interpretation of the integrity of China. In 1897 the Russians obtained a lease for Port Arthur, which was very advantageous to them, as that harbour was ice-free during the whole year, which was not the case with Vladivostok. In 1898 the Germans occupied Tsingtao, under the pretext of protecting German missionaries proselytising in that area. Tsingtao possessed an excellent harbour just south of the Shantung-peninsula, and was a direct naval threat to Japan. The German annexation gave the Russians the excuse to occupy the whole of the Liaotung-peninsula, and to base their Far Eastern Fleet at Port Arthur. Not to be outdone, the French obtained a lease of Kwang-Chou-Wan with its harbour in South China near Hongkong, opposite to the island of Hainan. England obtained a 99-year lease over the so-

---

2845 See also Nathan Chalkin The Sino-Japanese War (1894 - 1895), Martigny 1983, containing beautiful Japanese block prints illustrating the course of the war.


called "New Territories" on the Chinese mainland opposite to Hongkong, and also obtained a lease on the use of the excellent natural harbour of Wei-Hai-Wei on the Shantung peninsula. All these territorial infringements led to a massive uprising of the Chinese against everything Western, the so-called Boxer Uprising of 1900.

The Chinese-Japanese War had caused a re-appraisal within Japan regarding China as a source of Japanese culture. The age-old admiration for China as the cultural inspiration had been gradually replaced by feelings that the Japanese were at least equals to the Chinese. The victory in the Chinese-Japanese War resulted alas in racial superiority feelings in Japanese public opinion. Lenaga gives some shocking examples of this way of thinking. He points out that where it would have been quite normal for Japan to assist the Chinese and other Asian peoples in their struggle against western imperialism, the Japanese elite on the contrary imitated western imperialism, and projected this upon China. After some wavering, the Japanese wholeheartedly participated visibly in the suppression of the Boxer Uprising, together with troops from the western imperialist states.

The Americans considered the Chinese Empire as an enormous market for their industry, but they refrained from military intervention. In 1898 they had acquired the Philippines and Guam from Spain, in addition to the Hawaiian Islands, and Wake. As such, the Spanish-American War has been interpreted by some scholars as a war which had China as its ultimate objective. For the moment, however, American foreign policy accentuated the need for opening China to all western produce, including American goods, but also for leaving China peacefully intact. This was the so-called policy of the "Open Door".

After the suppression of the Boxers, Russia started to penetrate into Korea. The Japanese fleet, which up to then only consisted of armoured cruisers, was reinforced with battleships. In 1901 the Japanese already possessed 6 of them, all built in England. The Japanese defence budget expanded from 10 million dollars in 1893 to 65 million dollars in 1901. The British themselves felt threatened by the presence of a Russian battlefleet in Port Arthur and warily watched the expansion of the German Hochseeflotte at home. Therefore, a defensive treaty was closed with Japan in 1902 for a period of 5 years. This treaty was clearly aimed at France and Russia, which were allied at that time. The treaty stipulated, that if one of the treaty partners was attacked by another power, the other partner would remain neutral. If, however, one partner was attacked by two powers, the other partner would declare war on the two aggressors. If Japan became involved in a war with Russia, England would remain neutral. Whenever Japan became involved in a conflict with the combined powers of Russia and Germany or Russia and France, England would assist...

---


281 Lenaga, The Pacific War, op. cit. 6, 7.


Japan. The so-called Anglo-Japanese Treaty was a perfect treaty for both England and Japan, as it was within the tradition of English diplomacy with its checks and balances, and it gave Japan protection against a dual attack. The alliance made a repetition of the Triple Intervention of 1896 almost impossible, and vindicated the Japanese at last. The English however did not realise the enormous psychological prestige which this treaty bestowed upon the Japanese in the eyes of their colonially-oppressed Asian brethren.

Russian economic penetration in Korea gave the Japanese the pretext for war against Russia. After the negotiations in St. Petersburg had been abrogated on 5 February 1904, the Japanese carried out a pre-emptive attack with torpedoboats against the Russian Far Eastern Fleet at Port Arthur. Three of the seven Russian battleships were put out of action. The parallel with later events at Pearl Harbor is clearly evident.

On the whole, the Western reactions at the start of the Russo-Japanese war were restrained. Sympathy was with the Japanese, who were clearly considered to be the underdog. The military correspondent of the London Times even wrote: The Japanese Navy has opened the War by an act of daring, which is destined to take a place of honor in naval annals. Value judgments change over time indeed!

The Russians decided to send their largest fleet, the Baltic Fleet, to the Far East. Combined with the Far Eastern Fleet, they would have superiority over the Japanese. It became therefore mandatory for the Japanese, to destroy the Russian Far Eastern Fleet before the Baltic Fleet could link up. The Russians assisted by feeling superior to the Japanese, sending the Far Eastern Fleet under Admiral Vitefelt into the Yellow Sea to destroy the Japanese. In the Battle of the Yellow Sea on 10 August, 1904, the Japanese fleet under Admiral Heihachiro Togo nevertheless defeated the Russians, who limped back to Port Arthur.

The Japanese invested Port-Arthur from the land side, and on 6 December 1904 the Third Army of Lieut.-General Maresuke Nogi stormed and occupied Hill 203, which dominated the harbour. Thereafter the Japanese sunk the Russian fleet at its moorings with howitzer fire from Hill 203.

After a heroic voyage halfway around the globe, the Baltic Fleet under Admiral Rozhestvenski reached the straits between Korea and Japan in May 1905, where in a

---


battle close to the island of Tsu-Shima the Russians were utterly annihilated by the same Admiral Togo from the Yellow Sea battle. This sea-battle was one of the most complete victories in maritime history, and news of it reverberated all over the world and most strongly in the bazaars in the Far East. The lessons of the battle, as interpreted by the British Admiralty, caused Admiral Fisher to introduce the all big-gun battleship, the DREADNOUGHT, in 1905.

Although the Russian Army in Manchuria was far from beaten, and even started a new offensive, it was the threat of collapse on the Home front (Bloody Sunday at St. Petersburg, 22 January 1905) in combination with the news from Tsushima, that forced the Russians to ask for peace terms, using the good offices of President Theodore Roosevelt as mediator. Roosevelt's mediation resulted in the Treaty of Portsmouth (5 September 1905), which gained Japan the Southern part of Sakhalin, the transfer of the lease of Liaotung with Port Arthur, and the recognition of Korea as being within the Japanese sphere of influence. The end of the Russo-Japanese War brought Japan the status of a Great Power, and had an electrifying effect on all the subjugated peoples in the European colonies in the Far East. It heralded to the colonial powers, that from now on the threat to their colonial possessions did not come from an European power, but from Japan, an Asian power. The Russo-Japanese War has been rightly called one of the most decisive military conflicts in world History.

After this war, the Japanese increased their presence in that unfortunate country, Korea. The murder of the Japanese High Commissioner in Korea, Hirobumi Ito, by a Korean nationalist in 1910, gave the pretext for a Japanese annexation of Korea without much ado in 1911.

It was this imperialist behaviour at a cost to other Asian peoples, which made Japan's claim as the champion of Asiatic freedom very dubious, even in the eyes of emerging Asian Nationalists. For some of them, Japan became the leader and the light of Asia, but other Asian nationalists became aware that Japan acted as the latest and the worst of the imperialist powers, in particular because of her treatment of China.

---


The relation with the United States, which had been on an excellent footing after the Portsmouth treaty, soured gradually, however. The primary reason was racial discrimination of Japanese immigrants in Hawaii and in particular in California, which ultimately resulted into the adoption of the Alien Land Law by the Californian Legislature in 1913. (pages 27 - 28) According to this Law, buying land was forbidden to Japanese, who did not hold an American passport, while European immigrants, whether they were naturalized or not, could acquire land without any difficulty.

The Japanese, who remained strongly attached to their own racial superiority over both other Asians and over Europeans, were so thoroughly upset about American racial discrimination, that their diplomatic démarche and military preparations caused the "war scare" of 1908 in the United States. (pages 22, 52, 71). The U.S. Government under Theodore Roosevelt tried to induce the Japanese government to voluntarily curb the outflow of Japanese emigrants towards U.S. territory. The Japanese rejected this proposal, but later agreed, in 1908, on an informal basis that this emigration would be limited, on condition that the Japanese got a free hand in Southern Manchuria and Korea.

As we have seen, this "Lansing-Ishii Agreement" did not stop discrimination against Japanese in Hawaii and California.

A golden opportunity for Japan arrived at the time of the outbreak of the Great War in August 1914. Covered by the (renewed) English - Japanese Naval treaty, Japan declared war upon Germany on 23 August 1914. Within two weeks a Japanese invasion army had reached the Shantung (Shandong) peninsula, and after systematic preparations for a long siege, the German naval base of Tsing-Tao (Gingdao) was occupied by the Japanese on 7 November, 1914. The other German colonies in the Pacific (the Marianas, Carolines and Marshall Islands) were also occupied, and were in effect the most important prize, because their occupation drove a wedge in the sealanes between the American West coast and the Philippines, and moved the borders of the Imperium to the South for thousands of kilometers. The Australians realized the danger, and in a race against the Japanese they had occupied the German colonies of North-Eastern New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago and the Solomon-Islands before the Japanese arrived. (page 450). Afterwards, the Japanese contribution to the Allied cause was limited to their Navy, which chased the German Squadron of Graf von Spee over the Western Pacific, escorted Australian troop convoys over the Indian Ocean, and expedited a few squadrons of destroyers to the Mediterranean to assist in the U-Boat war.

The next step of the Japanese government was aimed at China. The Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs delivered a document to Chinese President Yuan-Shi-Kai on 18 January

---


1915, which became known as "The 21 Demands." The Demands were grouped into five different categories, of which the last group, when accepted, would have made China a protectorate of Japan. Although the demands were presented in deepest secrecy, the Chinese quickly leaked details towards the Western powers, causing an uproar in the English and American Press. The Japanese thereupon withdrew the last, and most offending, group of demands. The other demands, being more of an economic nature, were incorporated in a Japanese-Chinese Treaty, which was closed on 25 May, 1915. The Japanese Press however remained hostile towards England and America for the rest of the war. Japan succeeded in keeping almost all the territory it had occupied in the ensuing peace talks at Versailles. The reason was a secret deal made in February 1917 between Japan and England, France and Italy, in which the Japanese were promised the German Pacific territories in lieu of a number of destroyer squadrons in the Mediterranean to fight German and Austrian U-boats. When this secret agreement became public, it caused considerable bitterness within the American government, and became one of the factors resulting in decidedly cool diplomatic relations between the Anglo-Saxon powers up to the thirties. Because of these secret promises, Japan now possessed Micronesia, Isolating Guam and the Philippines from the United States. The Japanese however were deeply offended by the rejection by the victorious Western Powers of racial equality as a guiding principle for the newly established League of Nations.

The early Twenties were Japan's golden years. It dominated the Chinese economy and flooded the markets of South-East Asia with its cheap products. In Japan itself, prosperity increased dramatically. Japan had emerged from the First World War as a creditor nation, Japanese export trade had more than tripled. Both Japan and the U.S. had expanded their trade with China at the expense of Britain, Germany, France and Russia. Japanese exports to the United States also tripled, and American imports into Japan increased more than fivefold. Japanese officials realised that the country's postwar economic growth would depend on further expanding trade with the United States. Economic conglomerates like Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo meanwhile had developed

---


288 Noriko Kawamura, op. cit. 518.


into industrial giants, not unlike those in the West.\textsuperscript{284}

By the modernisation of voting laws in the early twenties, a middle class of entrepreneurs, civil servants and intellectuals could also manifest itself politically. Liberal political parties such as the Minseito and the Seiyukai dominated both Houses in Parliament. The leader of the Seiyukai, Takashi (nicknamed "Kei") Hara, became Premier in 1918, and he proved his mettle against the military. In 1920 the Army, on its own initiative, had occupied parts of Eastern Siberia from their base in Northern Korea, as Russia was involved in a raging civil war, and the Red Army was pre-occupied with a struggle in Western Russia. The Allies intervened, and in order to check Japanese ambitions, the American government sent marines into Wladiwostok.\textsuperscript{287} The Japanese Parliament, the Diet, publicly condemned the military intervention in Siberia, and withheld funds for paying the costs of this intervention. The Army had to withdraw, and afterwards could not push its modernisation plans.\textsuperscript{287} This action by the Cabinet and the Diet was very courageous indeed, as later events were to illustrate.

It was not appreciated in Western government circles, how delicate the balance was between civilian and military power within Japan. Because civilian control over the Military was the norm in modern Western societies, it was supposed to be the same in modernised Japan. The contrary was true. It is debatable nevertheless what Western governments could have done in the Twenties to reinforce civilian control over the military in Japan.


In the previous chapters, we have watched the amazing transformation of a feudal Asian country into a modern, westernised and aggressive, imperialistic state. The new Japanese society however lacked the innate feedback mechanism needed to sustain a really democratic government. In contrast to other totalitarian régimes in Europe, e.g. Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union, government was not taken over by a political party, either by peaceful means or by a revolution, but very gradually by the military itself. In every modern state, the military are controlled by the government, elected or not. Even in totalitarian states like Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union, the military were subservient to the Head of State. Japan was one of the exceptions, albeit under the disguise of a civilian Government, up to 1941. In order to comprehend this phenomenon, we have to analyse Japanese culture and society, and the methods used by Japanese leaders to communicate with each other. Due to the unique character of Japanese culture, decision making and the wielding of power are expressed in ways which are very different indeed from those in western civilisations.


\textsuperscript{287} See the description of the state of the Japanese Army in 1921 by General Araki, in IMTFE, Defence Document 674, partly quoted in Jones, op. cit. 5.
Without some insight in those processes, the development of Japanese History in modern times is inexplicable. Therefore, this sub-chapter is intended to analyse the cultural background of Japanese history, in order to better appreciate the role of culture in the Japanese political and military decision-making process.

Amazing for readers living in the global village of the year 2000, there was, within Western political circles in the first half of the 20th century, not much interest in understanding alien cultures, like those in Asia. The only exception may have been Indian religions and Chinese culture. Western scientists had studied the ethnography, archeology, history, languages and beliefs of the peoples of Asia, and had concluded that those peoples were utterly different from the superior and enlightened West. No synthesizing framework however had been formulated to help in really understanding Asian people and their institutions. The unfounded feelings of Western superiority, which were so much in evidence before 1942, obviously have to be partly blamed for this state of affairs.

The military successes of the Japanese in the Pacific War changed this. There arose a genuine need to understand the Japanese mind, military or civil, in order to successfully wage war against this formidable opponent. The American Army employed behavioral scientists to inform the soldiers about their Japanese enemy. One of those scientists, the social anthropologist Ruth Benedict, wrote a book which appeared just after the war and which has dominated the ways in which Westerners viewed the Japanese in the first three decades of the postwar world. It was not the only book on this subject, however, but it was the most influential.

Japanese culture has been mostly shaped by one internal religion, and has been influenced by two external religions. The internal influence was the old tribal nature religion, Shinto, meaning "The Way of the Gods". Shinto is a shamanistic, animistic religion, but in contrast to other nature religions it stresses the godly descent of all Japanese, epitomised by their godly Emperor, and therefore it has instilled in the Japanese a strong feeling of superiority over other people. This feeling of being Japanese is circumscribed by the Japanese word kokutai, and has no Western equivalent. It is vaguely comparable to French expressions like "La Patrie" and "La Gloire", words describing a mystical quality binding the French to their history and giving them an unique place in this world.

Japanese society has been and still is more or less a racist society, accepting without questioning the superiority of everything Japanese. It was as a society not alone in this, as racial discrimination was also very evident in the colonies of the Western powers. According to Shinto, the Japanese are a transcendentally "Chosen People", and just as with the Jews this strong belief shaped a common destiny and a strong social cohesion as a nation. Some writers even equate the Japanese people to a "Japanese tribe". In contrast to almost all other Eastern religions including Hinduism and Buddhism which are introvert, cyclical and closed, Shinto, like the three great monotheistic beliefs of the West, is future-...

---


oriented: not towards Paradise, but towards the Unity of all Nations of the Earth under the benign rule of the Japanese Emperor. This gathering of all nations from the eight corners of the earth under one roof is known as Hakko-Ichiu, which represents a very strong messianic belief.

Shinto however shares one characteristic with other nature religions: it does not recognise a Heaven or Hell, no Last Judgment, no guilt and no penance. There is no Good or Evil in the sense of European morality. The Japanese have no morality based on religion or philosophy.\footnote{\textcite{Buruma:1994:a}} The moral standard for the Japanese individual is the way in which he complies to the obligations imposed on him by Family and Fatherland. As clearly described by Benedict, Japanese culture is based on Honour and Shame.\footnote{\textcite{Benedict:1920:a}} He who does not live up to his responsibilities, heaps shame on himself and - more seriously - upon his family.

It is in this respect that the external influences upon Japanese culture come into play. These are Chinese Confucianism and Indian Buddhism. Confucianism emphasises the obligations of the individual towards his family, especially his father, and his forefathers in an unbroken chain of eternal continuity. In Confucianism, obligations towards father and family have traditionally always been more important than obligations towards central authority or the state. Shinto has modified this in Japanese culture: loyalty towards the feudal Lord, and implicitly towards the Emperor, has dominance over loyalty towards father or family. Confucianism also stressed studiousness, frugality and diligence, traits which have been indelibly stamped into the Japanese character.

Compared to Confucianism, Buddhism has had less of an impression upon the Japanese soul, but its influence in shaping Japanese culture and history should not be underestimated. Both religions are in fact not religions centered on transcendent God, but teachings on how to become an accomplished human being. Buddhism accomplishes this by a series of transformations called reincarnations. Here also heaven and hell are lacking; life is like a flower floating in the water, a state of mind called \textit{ukiyo} in Japanese. The Buddhist Nirvana, the situation of blessed nothingness, can only be attained by negation of all ties which bind humans to the earth and to other humans: love, possessions, lust. Buddhism is oriented towards individual salvation, where Confucianism is more oriented towards society, which made it perfect as a state religion in centralised Imperial China. Like western Protestantism, it emphasizes the work-ethic, making it possible for people to improve themselves by hard work and education. In Confucianism however the individual is only able to express himself in the context of a strict hierarchy, with clearly defined responsibilities towards his superiors and his inferiors. In such a stratified society all social relations have the tendency to become like the father-child relation, the "\textit{Oyabun-Kobun}". Loyalty and dependence are offered in exchange for protection and benevolence. The essence of the Japanese spirit seen from the individual is to find a master, who is worth to be served with unshakable loyalty.\footnote{\textcite{Byass:1942:a}}

A striking characteristic of Confucian mentality is the importance of personal dignity


\footnote{\textcite{Benedict:1920:a}} R. Benedict, opus cit., 192.

A shame-culture like the Japanese is founded on anxiety about criticism from other people, and therefore any person should avoid such critique by his peers or superiors by conforming as close as possible to the written and unwritten rules of the peer group. It would be harmful to express oneself too explicitly, thereby causing anxiety for loss of face. This anxiety is so strong, that it suppresses all urge to manifest oneself. All problems are solved by group action, based on consensus after long consultations with all those concerned. Even in government circles before the war there was strong disapproval for powerful personal leadership. Governing is only possible by reaching compromises, and one avoided being the sole person responsible for a certain decision. This also explains the tendency in Japanese culture to separate titular and real power, as was the case between Emperor and Shogun, and after the Meiji-restoration between the Emperor and the Cabinet.

An unintended consequence of this way of thinking is the typical Japanese phenomenon of Gekokuyo - an intervention in the decision-making process by inferiors, which is covered up by their superiors. The expression was already in use in the Tokugawa period. In the big civil bureaucracies created in the Meiji area, another expression was used: Ringisei. Silberman makes a convincing case that Ringisei is less a result of the Japanese consensus culture, but an organisational adaptation to fast job-rotation in top positions, which was (and is) indeed a characteristic of Japanese organisations. In the following subchapters we will encounter numerous examples of relatively junior officers taking decisions which strongly influenced the course of their national government's policy's. The contrast between strict discipline on one hand, and insubordination on the other hand, is one of the many examples of the inconsistent behaviour of the Japanese in Western eyes. The reality of the average Japanese differs from ours in the West, and that makes it possible for him to believe in the divine superiority of his race on the one hand, and on the other hand to integrate to good effect Western science and technology into his everyday life, without becoming schizophrenic.

Due to lack of a tradition of personal responsibility, the average Japanese was blindly obedient towards people in high positions. The tendency of politicians and bureaucrats to look up for decisions and sideways for group approval has been compensated by the tendency of their superiors to take decisions not on the basis of experience or knowledge, but on the basis of approval after consultation of the group they are supposed to lead. The Confucian relation between leader and follower was a two-way commitment: the follower had the obligation to be loyal and respectful towards his superior, who in his turn was expected to protect his follower. This could easily lead to weak leadership. Some Western historians have inferred that Japanese superiors terrorised their followers. This however was a question of power distance. Within a class like the officer class or the class of civil servants the mechanism described here-above was valid. Between members

---


See for example Dr. L. de Jong in Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog, Volume 11-a, 465.
of different classes however, superiors indeed terrorised their subjects, officers their soldiers, and teachers their pupils. In those situations power was expressed frequently by physical abuse: the beating of the hapless inferior in public in case of perceived misconduct. Japanese society therefore as a whole was rather violent before the war - a fact almost unnoticed by Western observers because of their isolation from the lower classes of that society.

Lack of personal responsibility also complicated communications between Western diplomats and their Japanese counterparts. The more holistic views of the Japanese were incomprehensible to Western eyes. Japanese mentality is well expressed by the word *Sayonara*, which is almost untranslatable, but means "so is it". Japanese are fatalistic as a result of their Buddhist legacy with its Karma. Therefore, in their mental world there is no strong discrepancy between transcendentalism and empirism, between nationalistic myths and modern technology, between beauty and cruelty, between courtesy and aggression, between idealism and murderousness, between love and death. The young radicals who, during the thirties, killed cabinet ministers were driven by idealism, and not by lust for power. They were not after personal gain, and were executed with the name of the Emperor on their lips. In the same vein the Kamikaze-pilots flew to their doom, earning the respect of their countrymen for their personal sacrifice. It is a mentality which negates personal safety and lust for life, and which therefore is still meeting with incomprehension in the West (see the self-immolating Buddhist monks in the streets of Saigon in 1962, or the fundamentalist Shi'ite Muslims in Lebanon and Israel).

In the same mystic vein, philosophers like Masayoshi Miyazaki developed the idea of the "Co-Prosperity Sphere", which was to encompass first the whole of East- and Southeast Asia, and would later cover the whole world. Most Japanese philosophers were members of the Showa Kenkyukai, the Showa Study Association. They developed an ideology, which in their view was better suited to Japanese character and tradition than the political systems from the West. Remarkably, this ideology defined a form of Imperialism different from self-serving Western Imperialism (*Hado*). Japanese expansion however sought to free Asian peoples from Western tyranny, on the basis of partnership (*Kodo*). Because Japan was technologically more advanced, this partnership was not equal, but protection was offered by the Japanese ethic as defined in its national polity, *kokutai*. This philosophy gave the Japanese a messianic mission to free the enslaved Asian peoples and bring them to the same level of wealth as the Japanese, under Japanese guidance. This vision was broadcast after 1940, in numerous propaganda sessions to the oppressed peoples of Southeast Asia, and at least in the Netherlands East Indies, proved to be highly effective in eroding indigenous support for the Dutch government.

As discussed by Reischauer, the more interesting question is why these brilliant civilians rejected their intellectual freedom, and allowed themselves to think and reflect only within the narrow limits set by the then dominant militaristic and parochial outlook on the

---


outsiders world. This phenomenon, by the way, is also known in Western History.

One aspect of Japanese Society which therefore merits more study is that of thought control. In 1925 the Diet approved the Peace Preservation Law, which was directed against the Communists. Under this law, people who expressed "communist views" could be arrested and interrogated, and even sentenced to a "re-education camp". In practice this law was used to suppress all individual expression which was considered "un-Japanese". Thought control was specifically persuasive, it lacked mass terror, executions, deportations, forced labor, like in the European totalitarian states. But it was gruesome effective, because it relied on fear of losing one's standing within the social fabric of the close-knit Japanese community, and effectively could result in the loss of one's job, and in social ostracism.

According to Koschman, the ethnic homogeneity of the population, and its physical isolation from outside influences caused an attitude towards authority which can be described by four factors. These are: a) a view of authority as "given", which therefore could not be fundamentally challenged; b) the practice of "soft" rule based on the almost ideologised principle of benevolent patron-client relations rather than "hard" rule based on a monopoly of physical force; c) the confinement of resistance to retreatism (withdrawal from the system) or ritualism (in which individuals conceal dissent behind a mask of conformity; and d) occasional outbursts of protest as an expressive emotional outlet rather than an instrumental problem solving activity.

Koschman's theory accurately describes the rather servile attitude of the Japanese towards authority in general, and state authority in particular. It should be remarked however, that it also applies to other cultures, e.g. the Javanesse culture. The more or less spontaneous outbursts of rural discontent in Japanese history also fit into this pattern.


The Meiji-Constitution of 1889 was the foundation of a modern Japanese government, but would also prove to be the undoing of Japan. In order to understand the complexities of Japanese governing institutions, some information has to be provided about the contents of this constitution, and its flaws.

The constitution acknowledged a division of government according to the principles of Montesquieu into separate legislative, executive and judicial branches. Legislative power was vested in a two-camerall Parliament, the Diet. Compared to Western European legislations, the Japanese legislative branch had very limited powers of legislation, but both Chambers had the right of Interpellation (Shitsumon) and of (financial) Control (Ketsugi). Both Chambers could disapprove of the government budget, or parts of it. Moreover, individual members of Parliament had the right to ask individual Cabinet Ministers questions about their areas of responsibility (Shitsugi). During the twenties, this constitutional right was certainly used rather effectively by the political parties. Questions about military or naval matters however were exempt from public answer, if the affected Cabinet

---


Points a to d verbatim from J. Victor Koschman, Ed.: Authority and the Individual in Japan: Citizen protest in Historical perspective" Tokyo Univ. Press, Tokyo 1978.
Minister decided that an answer would be harmful for the security of the nation.

The Diet however could not promulgate laws. Parliament convened for 3 months each year, primarily to discuss and agree the budget proposals of the Ministries, including those of Army and Navy. However, when a budget proposal had been rejected, the latest approved budget (in most cases of the previous year) would also apply for the coming year. Moreover, the Diet could not change the Constitution, which was a prerogative of the Emperor. Even with its limited powers, the Diet in the twenties was able to tame the Imperial Japanese Army in such a way, that in 1930 the Japanese standing Army totalled some 250,000 men, organized into 17 divisions and 4 independent brigades. This was not a very large force, when one consids that Japan also occupied Korea, Formosa and Southern Manchuria.

The Diet was more or less structured like the British Parliament. The Lower Chamber consisted of Parliamentarians representing political parties, who had been voted into office by an electorate consisting of a little more than half a million people who had paid a certain amount of land tax. Therefore, the agrarian sector was disproportionately represented in the Lower House, which was to the liking of the Government as the agrarian sector was considered less open to Western influences than the city dwellers. The tax criterion was lowered in 1900 and again in 1920, and at last abolished in 1925, but women did not have any voting rights until after the war.

The Upper House was a real “House of Lords”, as it consisted of hereditary members of the Japanese Nobility, most with a daimyo lineage, but also including the Kuge, the Imperial court nobility. In addition there was a group of Imperial appointees, and last but not least, a group of people who were admitted to the Upper House because they paid the highest taxes in the realm.

The Constitution also guaranteed a number of fundamental rights. The judiciary was set free from government intervention; moreover freedom of speech, of religion and of the press were promulgated. These were no empty freedoms. Specifically in the first and second decades of the 20th century Japanese politics resulted in many political demonstrations in the urban centers, which sometimes turned into ugly riots. Even during the years in which Japanese politics became dominated by the militarists, representatives who disavowed the military were chosen in open elections - an impossibility in Western totalitarian States. There were alas too few of them, however. During the general elections of April 1937 the Social Masses Party and the Japan Proletarian Party combined still scored around 22% of the vote in Tokyo. (9 of 31 diet seats). In contrast to China, however, the Japanese Communists did not succeed in capturing the masses, perhaps because the Communists rejected the Emperor, and were too much a western product of the Enlightenment for Japanese culture and circumstances.

The Executive Branch of government was quite powerful under the constitution. The

---

2802 Jones, Japan’s New Order, op. cit., 9.
Executive branch consisted of the Cabinet, the Lord Privy Seal and the Council of Senior Statesmen, the Genro, which was presided over by the Emperor himself. In fact the Emperor still retained absolute power, which was acknowledged by the fact that the Constitution had been proclaimed by the Emperor himself as a "gesture of magnanimity". The Emperor could rule by Imperial Rescript whether the Diet was in session or not.

The character of the Emperor was a dual one. In "principle" he was an absolute monarch deriving his authority by divine right according to Shinto and Kokutai. However, in a modern Japan, there was organisationally no place for an anachronistic, absolute monarch. Therefore, the Emperor acted by tacit understanding as a constitutional monarch, respecting unanimous Cabinet decisions even if those decisions went against his own opinion. Thus while the ruling elite, in the interest of a rational conduct of state affairs, adopted the theory of constitutional monarchy, the general public was encouraged to worship the Emperor as a "living God", because this suited the military better for their purposes.

This fundamental dichotomy, not to say hypocrisy, existed within Japanese government until 1947.

Normally, however, laws were being prepared by the Cabinet Ministries, and then signed into law by the responsible Cabinet Minister. However, in the Cabinet there were two Ministers who had a stronger position than the other Ministers. Article 11 and 12 of the Meiji Constitution proclaimed that the Emperor was Commander-in-Chief of both Army and Navy, and this was taken as absolute, meaning that no Prime Minister could interfere with this Imperial prerogative. This was further elucidated in 1900 in an Imperial Rescript, declaring that the Ministers of Army and Navy had to be actively serving officers. In 1920 this rule was modified in order to enable retired officers to serve as Ministers, but in 1930 this was rescinded. The net effect of the rule was that in practice, the Chief of General Staff and the Chief of Naval Staff decided who would be appointed as Service Minister. However, they also could force the abdication of a Cabinet, by ordering "their" Minister to offer his resignation. Moreover, the two Service Ministers were the only ones, next to the Prime Minister, who had the right of free access to the Emperor (lakujoso). Therefore, no Prime Minister had any formal influence upon the two Service Ministers.

The position of the Minister of War, however, was not enviable. He was of course responsible for the military bureaucracy, but he was not responsible for the Army as such. Planning and Operations were functions executed by the General Staff, over which the Minister had no control, because that was vested with the Chief of General Staff. Moreover, he was not supposed to change his Chief of Staff, who was appointed directly by the Emperor. Therefore he could not take any disciplinary measure against the Army as an institution.

The consequences of this can be illustrated by the following casus. After the war, General Ryukichi Tanaka, who held the position of Army Chief of Staff in 1941, was examined before the Tokyo War Tribunal. On the question of who was really responsible for the decision to declare war, he answered that this was Colonel Masanobu Tsuji, Chief of the

---


\[226\] The strong position of the two Services was not based on the Constitution as such, but was based on Article VII of the Imperial Rescript regarding the organisation of the Cabinet dated 24 December 1889. See Ienaga, op. cit., 34.
Operations section of the General Staff, who in Western eyes held a rather subordinate position. This was *gekukujo* (or *ringisei*) in its purest form.

The separation of civilian and military powers was so extreme, that at embassies and legations in foreign countries, the military attaché was authorized to negotiate and conclude pure military agreements with the military of the host government. In such cases, no participation of the ambassador himself was tolerated. By using this prerogative, military attaché Colonel Hiroshi Oshima could conclude the Anti-Comintern Pact in Berlin on his own in 1936.

The less important position of the Navy Department under the Meiji Constitution is illustrated by the fact that the Naval Minister had the right to change his Chief of Naval Staff, if he wished so. That gave him more leverage over the Navy organisation than his colleague from the Ministry of War possessed over his organisation. The background was the fact that, in Japanese history, the Navy never had such a dominant position as the Daimyo and their Samurai (See page 587).

In view of the far-reaching executive power of the Emperor, there was a clear need for advisory bodies to assist the Emperor. The Meiji-Constitution had foreseen such a need, by instituting a Council of State, consisting of elder Statesmen, the *Genro Kaigi*. This institution in effect preceded the Constitution, as such a council already existed during the Shogunate. The Genro, who assisted Emperor Meiji during the first period of his reign in transforming feudal Japan into a modern state, consisted of the daimyo Prince Hirobumi Ito (1841 - 1909) from Choshu and his samurai generals Aritomo Yamagata (1838 - 1922) and Kaoru Inoue (1835 - 1915), and the elder statesmen Masayoshi Matsukata (1835 - 1924) and Iwao Oyama (1842 - 1916) from Satsuma. In 1916, Prince Kimmochi Saonji (1849 - 1940) was admitted to the Genro, to remain the only living Genro after the death of Matsukata in 1924. Saonji's principal task consisted of advising the Emperor about the appointment of a new Prime Minister after the resignation of a Cabinet, which happened quite frequently in the period between the world wars.

Saionji had played together with Mutsuhito as children when growing up at the Kyoto court, and when Hirohito ascended to the Throne in 1925, Saionji, as the living emblem of the Meiji Restoration, became the tutor of the young Emperor. Saionji enjoyed enormous prestige, and insisted that the Emperor acted "constitutionally" - i.e. on the advice of his counsellors. Even after Saionji's death in 1940, Hirohito would listen to his successor, Marquess Koichi Kido, as if he had been forced to it by the Constitution.

After the death of Saionji the *Genro* would cease to exist, but Saionji ensured its continuity by an Imperial Rescript in 1940 establishing a Council of Elder Statesmen or *Jushin Kaiji*. All previous Prime Ministers became members of this Council. Because there were many of them, the Jushin never exerted the same influence towards the Emperor as did the Genro. Other Institutions, which had however far less influence than the Genro or the Jushin, were the War Council (*Gunji Sanji In*) which consisted of retired Navy and War Ministers, and the Secret Council (*Sumitsu In*), consisting of important civil servants. The

---

2867 Yale Maxon, op. cit., 47.


2869 M & S. Harries, op. cit., 149.
Secret Council was used by the Cabinet as a sounding board for foreign policy decisions.

The three most important personal advisers of the Emperor were the Head of the Imperial Court (Kunai Daijin), the Great Chamberlain (Ji-jucho) and the Lord of the Privy Seal (Nai Daijin). The Head of the Imperial Court was a kind of manager of the Imperial Household, but had no political influence. The Grand Chamberlain in fact was the Adjutant of the Emperor, but gradually lost his political influence. The most important personal adviser of the Emperor was (since 1940) the Lord Privy Seal, Marquess Koichi Kido, who was the communication channel between Emperor and Cabinet. Kido took over Saionji’s task of recommending the new Prime Minister to the Emperor after a Cabinet had resigned. As this happened rather frequently, this gave Kido much political clout.

All three personal advisors, together with Saonji, successfully isolated the Emperor from too direct contact with the outside world. Kido in particular opposed any direct intervention of the Emperor in the governing of his country, in order to protect the Emperor and thereby himself. In his view, the Emperor had to be refrained from taking unpopular measures because of his Godlike status. There is some argument to support this position. In a constitutional democracy the Ministers are responsible for the conduct of the monarch and his or her retinue. In an absolute monarchy with, in addition, an Emperor descending from the Gods, he should be infallible due to his Godlike descent, therefore implying that unfortunate decisions have to be devolved upon his advisors. By advising the Emperor not to be involved in government decisions, the advisors therefore were protecting themselves. But at least Kido was quite aware of another transcendental advantage of such an arrangement: the enormous prestige of the Godlike Emperor could be used in dire situations in which the continued existence of the Empire was in real danger. Such a situation did indeed arise in 1945.

The communication between the court and the service staffs was the responsibility of the Emperor’s aide-de-camp. In 1941 this was Lieutenant-General Shigeru Hasunuma. Kido met him eighty-two times in 1941, whilst he had only five meetings with the Chiefs of Staff. Why did Hasunuma not transmit the wishes of the Emperor to the Chiefs of Staff? Or Kido to Hasunuma? He served as aide-de-camp to the Emperor until the capitulation of Japan in 1945, but until now his role as intermediary between Emperor and service chiefs is unclear and rather obfuscated.

All fatal decisions of the thirties were therefore presented by the Cabinet as unanimous government decisions to the Emperor in so-called Imperial Conferences, at which the Emperor did not utter a word. His presence sanctioned the decisions. There is enough evidence that the Emperor really understood the gravity of the decisions taken, but on the advice of his advisors, he did not intervene until after 1940, and then only in a very ambiguous way, causing much confusion.

The Meiji-Consttitution in fact had been written for a strongly dominating monarch, a "Kaiser", and indeed the Prussian Constitution was a model for the Meiji-Constitution. But

---


261 See Titus/Morley, op. cit., page xxxvii.

262 Titus/Morley, op. cit., page xxxii.
in Japanese culture, such dominating leaders are the exception rather than the rule. The lack of assertiveness in the two Emperors after Meiji (Taisho and Hirohito) caused a power vacuum, which was in effect the most serious weak point of this constitution and which had not been foreseen by its authors. It was this power vacuum which was gradually filled by Japanese militarists during the thirties, using the growing isolation of the Emperor for their purposes.\(^{290}\)

Certainly Emperor Hirohito, who did not possess a strong character, in reality never was the absolute monarch which the constitution allowed him to be, surrounded as he was by advisors who manipulated him, or even deceived him.\(^{294}\) In his name, however, the most atrocious and criminal acts took place during Japanese aggression towards China in the thirties, and thereafter in Southeast Asia,\(^{205}\) and it is a matter of historical debate what his share of responsibility was in these acts.

The political scientist Masao Maruyama has aptly defined the pre-war Japanese government as "a system of irresponsibilities". According to him,\(^{206}\) there were three layers of decision making in this system: on top was the sacred decision maker, the Emperor, whom he compared to a portable shrine. The shrine is carried on the shoulders of unimpeachable, respectable civil servants: bureaucrats, politicians, generals and admirals. However, they are being manipulated through \textit{gekokujo} by an invisible group of carriers, who really determine the direction of the procession: the nationalist fanatics and sometimes outright criminals in the lower echelons of civil service and Army. This system of irresponsibilities disrupts any chain of cause and consequence, resulting in Japanese interwar history being defined as a number of seemingly unrelated and accidental \textit{faits accomplis}, covered up by the sacred icon and the bureaucratic hierarchy under it, which in its turn is manipulated by lower-echelon bandits who claim, however, that their actions are for the well-being of the Holy Japanese Nation as represented by the Divine Emperor. This closes the chain, making the whole system ungovernable and uncontrollable.

One of the peculiarities of the Japanese Cabinet system was a rather fast change of Cabinets over the years. (See Appendix 3). Almost like the interwar French Cabinets and the postwar Italian Cabinets, the average life time of the Japanese interwar Cabinets was about two years. To foreign observers this was frightening, as it suggested unstable political relations. Like in Italy, however, in practice all the Cabinet members came from the same governing élite with close cultural ties and the same outlook, making Japanese foreign policies far more consistent than one would deduce from those "revolving-door" cabinets.

Something has to be said about the Japanese bureaucracy, the "fourth power". It should be remembered, that Tokugawa Japan already possessed a well-organised bureaucracy based on a high degree of alphabetism with the general populace. This was one of the reasons for the more or less smooth transfer from the Shogunate to modern Japan. Therefore the transformation to a Western-oriented civil service was not so difficult.

\(^{200}\) Fumitaka Kurozawa: "Das System von 1940 und das Problem der politische Führung in Japan" \textit{Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft.} \textit{47:2} (1999), 130 - 152.

\(^{205}\) The military Aide-de-Camp of the Emperor, who served as a liaison to the General Staff, did not transmit the wishes of the Emperor, or only in adapted forms. See Ienaga, op. cit., 45.


\(^{205}\) See Ian Buruma, op. cit. Dutch edition, 177.
General Aritomo Yamagata was the statesman who introduced a professional Civil Service, based on individual merit, with applicants screened by tough examinations. Japan therefore possessed a dedicated, professional civil service which could have formed a countervailing power against the military. Although there was much distrust, this did not happen. As a reaction against the ruthless rational westernisation of the previous decades, Japanese society as a whole reversed during the twenties towards traditional mysticism and irrationality. Due to the same generational gap, within the civil service a faction of young, dedicated civil servants evolved, called "revisionists". All revisionists were committed to changing the existing order for the purpose of increasing the nation's spiritual and military strength. They became the natural allies of like-minded young officers in the military and naval bureaucracies.

The Okada-Cabinet of 1934 counted a number of prominent revisionists within the cabinet. Moreover, at that time the strict separation between Japan's civil and military services started to unravel, as the Okada-cabinet authorised the formal appointment of active-duty military officers to civilian positions. This process was speeded-up by the establishment from 1934 of Super-Ministries: bureau's which were under the control of the military hierarchy but which were taking over essential functions of civil ministries, like the Manchurian Affairs Bureau (1934), the Asian Development Board (1938) and the Planning Board (1939). The result was a decline in the possibilities for obstructionism or even passive resistance against the military within the civil service. Instead, support of the army became an imperative act of patriotism for every civil servant. The potential of the "fourth power" - the civil services - in shaping the destiny of Japan in the years up to the Pacific War was therefore severely curtailed.

Some consideration has to be given to the education of the Japanese masses. As we have seen on the previous pages, compulsory education was introduced in 1890. After the Russo-Japanese war, military influence within both primary and secondary education increased considerably under the camouflage of "patriotism". Children had to wear school uniforms, and were educated to become good, obedient, Emperor-loving Japanese citizens. In the thirties, both primary and secondary school pupils were trained in marching, fighting and other military activities. The indoctrination and thought control which started at such a tender age made the Japanese public in the thirties more jingoistic than Japan's top leaders. Ienaga gives some striking examples of this attitude. That was the reason that public opinion in Japan slavishly followed the governments' increasingly warlike stance towards the western powers. A parallel with public opinion in highly-educated but totalitarian states within Europe is easily made.

6.5. The Civil decade (1921 - 1931).

The period between 1918 and 1931 has been characterised by many historians as "The
Civil Decade”. That period began when the Diet, in 1920, exerted its constitutional rights and refused to agree with the yearly appropriations of the army, forcing it to withdraw from Siberia (See pages 615 - 616). This period of civilian governments dominated by political parties, was a period of expanding peaceful international relations.

However, not all was quiet. In contrast to most western historians, Akira Iriye2912 has pointed out that in that decade, the Far Eastern power equilibrium was being upset by active interference of the Soviet-Union in China, resulting in the establishment of a unified Chinese government over all of China, threatening Western and Japanese interests alike. He maintains that, even in the early twenties, Japanese officers in China and Manchuria were already plotting coups to secure Japan's privileged position in that area.2913 His central thesis that imperialism had been finished as a driving force of the diplomacy of the powers in the Far East is however not at all convincing, as it is based on a very narrow definition of imperialism as a western phenomenon.

As we have seen, the Diet won a conflict with the army in 1920, as it condemned the military intervention in Eastern Siberia by Japanese troops, causing a withdrawal of those troops. The next confrontation between civil authority and the military establishment would however be not with the Army, but with the Navy. It was caused by the Conference of Naval Arms Limitation in Washington at the end of 1921.

The historical developments leading up to this Conference have been dealt with in Chapter 1. Alarmed by unrestricted sea-warfare and arrogant English behaviour during inspection of neutral American ships for contraband, the Americans had started a Fleet Expansion Program in 1916, which would put the U.S. Navy ahead of the Royal Navy. After the Versailles Treaty, the Americans demobilised and decreased their army drastically, but fleet expansion continued, to the chagrin of the British. British diplomacy was aware of American resistance against a continuation of the British-Japanese Naval treaty of 1902, and therefore it could try to swap American restriction of their fleet expansion for an end to Anglo-Japanese friendship2914.

In the late summer of 1921 the Japanese Government under Prime Minister Takashi Hara received the invitation to join the International Naval Disarmament Conference. The Navy itself was divided. Navy Minister Vice-Admiral Tomosaburo Kato had come to the conclusion that the naval arms race was to the detriment of Japan itself, as he had studied the problem of international fleet reduction already since 1919.2915 His Naval Staff had concluded that if Japan wanted to stay in the Naval race, by the early thirties naval expenditures based on extrapolation would absorb 40% of the total national budget. Such a large fleet as planned could only have been maintained by arduous effort and an


2913 Akira Iriye, op. cit., 9.


2915 Evans/Peattie, Kaigun, op. cit., 192.
expenditure disproportionate to national income. Kato was afraid that no platform could be created within Japanese society to sustain such efforts short of war.

However, a large group of Japanese naval officers, represented by Vice-Admiral Kanji Kato (no kin of Tomosaburo Kato) rejected any internationally-agreed fleet reduction as being contrary to the authority of the Emperor. They were completely against accepting the American invitation. Hara however accepted the invitation anyway, appointed Tomosaburo Kato as the chief of the Japanese delegation, and had Kanji Kato selected as a member of the delegation. For this courageous decision, Hara had to pay with his life, as he was murdered not long thereafter by a nationalistic fanatic, Nakaoka Konichi.

The delegation itself was riven by the antagonism between the two Kato's, and only Tomosaburo's tact and diplomacy prevented an open split in the delegation during its stay in Washington. In the years to come, the followers of Kanji Kato would eventually triumph over those of Tomosaburo Kato, who died not long after the Washington Conference.

During the Conference, the American and British representatives offered Japan a battleship tonnage ratio of 5:5:3, which would place Japan in an inferior position in relation to the two other big Navies. Even accepting the fact that this normally would give Japan local fleet superiority in East Asia, this was hard to swallow, even for a Liberal Japanese Cabinet. Japan therefore demurred. In hindsight, it would have been psychologically smarter if the ratio had been set at 1:1:1, as Japan was economically not in a position to build and maintain a fleet as large as the two other navies.

The English saved the situation by proposing an amendment which would forbid the building of new bases, or enlargement of existing naval bases to any power in the Western Pacific, with one exception: Singapore. This proposal saved face for the Japanese, as Singapore was considered by them too far away from Japan to be a real danger, and moreover the lack of any anglo-saxon naval base in the Western Pacific would ensure regional dominance of the Japanese Fleet in that area. The Americans had their battlefleet divided between the Pacific and the Atlantic, and the Royal Navy was even more dispersed. Therefore, the Japanese government accepted the proposal.

In hindsight, the Washington Naval Disarmament Conference and the ensuing Four-Power, Five-Power and Nine-Power Treaties gave the western powers a false sense of security, which is evident from the fact that neither Britain nor the U.S.A. used up the battleship tonnage allowed to them, while Japan did so. The Four-Power Treaty of 13 December 1921, signed by The United States, Great Britain, France and Japan guaranteed the existing status-quo in the Far East, prompting a feeling of security within the Western colonial powers England and France. Because the Dutch had secured an extension of the provisions to cover their colonial empire, they also felt secure (page 307). The Five-Power Treaty of 6 February 1922, in which Italy joined the other four Powers, defined the Naval Arms Limitation provisions which had been agreed upon.

The most important agreements of this Treaty were the following:

---

1. No battleship or battlecruiser, to be built in the coming ten years, should exceed a limit of 35,000 tons.

2. The tonnages of the respective battlefleets were fixed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Tonnage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>525,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>525,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>315,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>175,000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>175,000 tons</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One recognises the 5:5:3 ratio in the first three tonnage figures given.

3. The new ratios would also apply to aircraft carriers. No aircraft carrier exceeding 27,000 tons would be built.

4. The limitation did not apply to cruisers, destroyers or submarines, but that would be the subject of subsequent negotiations in 1927 at Geneva (which failed) and in 1930 at London (which succeeded). But no warship in these classes was to exceed 10,000 tons, or was to be armed with guns with a larger calibre than 8 inch (213 mm), which would lead to the so-called "Washington Cruisers" in all navies.

These agreements would strongly influence the design of the warships which would fight in the Second World War. The Five-Power Treaty was the most important Arms Limitation treaty of the interwar period, but it could not prevent the outbreak of the Second World War.2917

Notwithstanding much opposition and loud noises from rightist circles the Japanese Government obeyed the Treaty conditions: the 12 battleships which were in the process of building were cancelled, converted into scrap iron, or even sunk after being used for test purposes (which happened to the TOSA2918). The battleships KAGA and AKAGI were converted into aircraft carriers and would write history in the Pacific conflict, like their American sisters SARATOGA and LEXINGTON which were also laid down as battleships. The AMAGI was destroyed in the great Kanto earthquake of 1923.2919 As we have seen, Premier Hara was murdered, but his successor was no less than the leader of the Japanese delegation in Washington, Katō. Katō even signed the Briand-Kellogg Pact for the banishment of War. Japan could not avoid doing this after the disastrous Kanto earthquake of 1 September 1923, which resulted in 33,000 dead and which destroyed

2917 Specifically in Great Britain and the United States there has been a raging debate after the 2nd World War whether the Washington Treaties were in the interest of the Western Powers, or not. The following works are being quoted:


2918 For information about these new battleships under construction, see "The TOSA- and AMAGI-Battleship Classes", Warship International, Vol. 3 (1966), no 1, 19 - 26.

large parts of Tokyo and Yokohama. The wave of sympathy and active support from the western world, and specifically from the United States, deeply impressed all Japanese, and supported the liberal government.\textsuperscript{200} Reconstruction had to be given first priority, and therefore the army budgets were curtailed too. The Minister of War had to reduce the Army from 21 to 17 divisions, and that almost caused a rebellion in the circles of ultranationalistic young officers. In typical Japanese fashion they were placated with expansion of the Air Forces, the foundation of an Armoured Corps, and the introduction of compulsory military training at all Japanese primary and secondary schools. This measure would result in such a strong indoctrination that by 1940 public opinion was clearly in favor of war (See also page 596).

The early twenties were the high point of Liberalism in Japan, which would recede in the years after 1923, although the civilians remained in control until 1930. The failure of political democracy in Japan, like the failure of democracy in a number of western states, has to do with a combination of influences at interplay, part of which were wholly external.

In the first place, there was the adoption of the U.S. Immigration Act of 1924, which forbade the immigration of Japanese subjects to the United States. No such barrier was erected towards European immigrants, although a more strict quota system was introduced. But for European immigrants the possibility of settlement in the United States remained, whereas for Japanese immigrants the door was slammed shut. The degradation of Japan to the class of backward Asian nations deeply wounded Japanese pride without any need. The Japanese ambassador Masako Hanihara informed Secretary of State Hughes that the adoption of this Law by Congress would lead to severe repercussions in Japan. The Law was also unnecessary, because secret negotiations had resulted in the so-called Morris-Shidehara agreement, which was acceptable to the Japanese government. The American Congress however rejected the agreement and adopted the proposed Law.\textsuperscript{201}

During the early twenties U.S. politics were dominated by the Republicans. Traditionally the Republicans have been more xenophobic than the Democrats. Moreover, in intellectual circles, the paradigm of Eugenics became very popular during that time.\textsuperscript{202} The same theory would lay the intellectual foundation in Central Europe for anti-semitism and the horrors of the \textit{Endlösung}. The Immigration Act strongly played in favor of conservative elements in Japanese politics and also decisively influenced the young Emperor. It must be remembered that at the same time Australia and New Zealand also adopted Immigration Laws which strictly reduced Japanese immigration. (See Chapter 4, page 435) These racist Laws damaged the credibility of those in Japanese society who were sympathetic to western values.

\textsuperscript{200} The earthquake and subsequent fires caused many racist disturbances which affected in particular the Korean minority in Japan. But also a number of leftist politicians were murdered or molested. See L. Mosley, \textit{Hirohito - Emperor of Japan}, London 1966, 81 - 85, 96.


In his soliloquy in March and April 1946, Hirohito complained about the "deep" causes of the Pacific War:

"When we look for the causes of the Greater East Asia War, they lie in the past, in the peace treaty after World War One. The proposal on racial equality put forth by Japan was not something the Allies would accept. Discrimination between yellow and white continued as before, as in California's prohibition against immigration, and this was more than enough to cause resentment among the Japanese people....With such popular resentment in the background, it was no easy task to bring the military to heel once it came to the fore."

Increasing trade protectionism was another cause for the demise of the Liberals. Trade restrictions in both the U.S. and the Western colonies in S.E. Asia led directly to a more accommodating attitude towards the expansionist Nationalists by the leaders of the large Japanese export firms. In particular the policy of the United States which had guaranteed an "Open Door" towards the Chinese market, but sealed its own huge internal markets for Japanese imports, was considered as pure hypocrisy.

Moreover, the Washington Treaties were used by conservative right-wingers in and outside the army to complain that these treaties limited the power of the all-mighty Emperor, and therefore they blamed the civil government for its acceptance of those treaties. In that sense the signing of the fleet reduction Treaty of London of 1930 by the Japanese government was of significance, because the militarists realised that if civil cabinets determined the level of rearmament of the Services by means of international treaties, their power would be quickly finished. Conservative militarist circles made it thus a habit to discredit Japanese civil governments and to use all loopholes in the Meiji Constitution in order to increase their power.

The widening gap in wealth between the peasant population and the traders and industrialists in the cities also radicalized the young subaltern officers, who like the rest of the army came from predominantly rural areas. They became easy prey to the "national-socialist" ideas of authors like Ikki Kita, Seikyo Gondo and Kosaburo Tachibana, who founded the Aikyo-juken (Native-Land loving School). Ikki Kita wrote an influential book ("General remarks on a re-structuring of Japan") in which he argued that Japan should be ruled by the army under the Emperor, and that personal wealth should be limited to a maximum of 1 million yen for each household. In effect he wanted a Socialist State under military government, what would have created pure "National-Socialism".

The economic crisis of 1930, resulting in more than 2 million unemployed, further alienated the officers from the established political parties with their corruption and close contacts with the zaibatsu, the great trading houses like Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo. Those three firms controlled at the time one quarter of the national wealth. Although the Communist Party, founded in 1922 but driven underground in 1925, never was a serious threat to

---

2823 Quoted in Titus/Morley, op. cit., xxxv.


the establishment, its anti-capitalistic ideas, and specifically its support for an authoritarian state structure appealed to many officers and therefore the influence of Communist ideas and literature went far beyond the confines of the party as such.\footnote{F.C. Jones: Japan's New Order in East Asia - its rise and fall, 1937 - 1945. Oxford Univ. Press, London 1954, 13.} The ideas of Ikki Kita were not that different.

Even more radical were the pamphlets of Shumei Okawa, who preached that it was Japan's divine mission to conquer the world and put the whole world under the reign of a benign Emperor. This was *hakko-ichiu*, as already formulated in the mysticism of *Shinto* (See page 617). His theories were expansionist and strongly militarist with his glorification of military violence. His followers among the officers of the General Staff founded the secret *Sakurakai* ("Cherry Society"), which would be responsible for two failed military coups in 1931, in order to establish a military government under General Matome Ugaki and General Sadao Araki respectively.\footnote{J.W. Morley, Ed: Japan Erupts, The London Naval Conference and the Manchurian Incident, 1928 - 1932, Columbia Univ. Press, New York 1973, 21. Volume I of the series *Japan's Road to the Pacific War* (Five Volumes). To be referred to subsequently as Morley, Japan Erupts. See also Akira Iriye: After Imperialism. Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge Mass. 1965, 285, 293.} The Sakurakai was headed by Major Kingoro Hashimoto, and counted among its members the Colonels Seishiro Itagaki and Kanji Ishiwarra of the Kwantung Army. These names will appear many times in this narrative.

In addition to these internal factors, which were partly induced by the West, there were two developments totally outside the control of any western power. These were the fast build-up of the Red Army in Eastern Siberia, threatening Japanese interests in Manchuria, and the rise of Chinese Nationalism, where General Chiang Kai-Shek started to consolidate power in that country. Japan therefore felt threatened from three sides.\footnote{A.J. Toynbee: Survey of International Affairs, 1926. Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford 1928, 386. Akira Iriye, op. cit., 227 - 277.}

In 1927, the Army forced the resignation of the liberal Wakatsuki-Cabinet. The issue was the abolition of Japan's extraterritorial rights in China, which the army wanted to keep.\footnote{Akira Iriye, *Imperialism*, op. cit., 289 - 291.} The new Cabinet was still moderate, consisting of members of the new Minsei-to-party, but the premier was the bellicose General Baron Gichi Tanaka, who succeeded in sowing hatred against Japanese aims in Chinese Society. He became best known for the so-called *Tanaka Memorial*, a document circulating in China from 1929 onwards outlining a Japanese policy aimed at complete domination of China, and thereafter of Siberia, Southeast Asia, India and even Europe.\footnote{\textsuperscript{283} This important document is almost certainly a falsification, and therefore should be considered with suspicion. Its full text can be found in Carl Crow: Japan's dream of *World Empire: the Tanaka Memorial*. Harper & Bros, New York 1942. Even if it is a falsification however, it still is mirroring the mythical and militarist philosophies arising in Japan at that time, and it is therefore an important document.} The document was based on sayings of the mystical founder of the Imperial dynasty, Emperor Jimmu, who ordered the unification of the eight corners of the world under one roof - a Japanese roof naturally. (*Hakko-ichiu*). The document gained credibility because the Mukden-incident of 1931 seemed to be inspired by it, but at present most historians agree that the Tanaka Memorial
was a fraud. In any case, with or without the Tanaka Memorial, Tanaka's diplomacy versus China ruined any possibility of a peaceful understanding with the emerging Kuo-Min-Tang controlled central government of China under General Chiang Kai-Shek.

During the period of the Tanaka-Cabinet Japan saw the rise of a number of Secret Societies, which were all founded on the same mythic-nationalistic way of thinking. These Societies were united in the Nikkyo, the Greater Japan Patriotic Society, under Dr. Uesugi. They named their fascist-militaristic beliefs the Kodo-Ha, i.e. the "Way of the Emperor". Many junior officers belonged to the Kodo-Ha, and were supported in the senior ranks by Generals like Araki and Mazaki. The Kodo-Ha faction or movement stressed rural life and was therefore anarchical in nature, defying centralized administration. The other main faction in the Army became the Tosei-Ha or Control Faction, which comprised many senior and general Staff officers, who realized the futility of creating an anarchic and medieval society. The Tosei-Ha was bent on capturing political power from the civilians in a gradual process of erosion of civilian power, in which they would occasionally use the potential violence coiled like a spring in the Kodo-Ha faction, whenever they saw fit to it. Although antagonistic to each other, both factions had the same goal: a militaristic, expansionist Japan. Maruyama has characterised the Kodo-Ha as "fascism from below" and the Tosei-Ha as "fascism from above", which are apt definitions.

One of the more senior Kodo-Ha members was Colonel Daisaku Komoto of the Kwantung-Army. Komoto and a group of like-minded junior officers murdered, without any authorization by higher authority, the Chinese Marshall ruling over Manchuria, General Chang Tso-Lin (Zhang Zhuolin) with a well-executed bomb blast on 4 June 1928. Their aim was to provoke unrest in Manchuria, thereby drawing Japan and China into a military conflict as a consequence. However, both governments avoided falling in this trap, and it would take another three years before a new attempt by young Japanese officers would succeed.

The true perpetrators of the attentual were uncovered, however, and the Emperor expressed his disapproval. Tanaka therefore had to act, but Komoto was protected by the Chief

---


2933 F.C. Jones, opus cit., 14.


2935 This Army was named after the Kwantung Leased Territory on the Liaotung Peninsula North of Port Arthur in Manchuria.


of Staff, General Hanyo Kanaya and the influential Chief of the Office of Military Affairs of the Ministry of War, General Gen Sugiyama. Both officers were impressed by the fiery patriotism of the Colonel, but in protecting him they displayed gekokuyo in its pure form. Because the Minister of War could not override the General Staff, he would lose face, and therefore Tanaka had to resign with his whole cabinet. In acting this way, the Cabinet had saved its honor in accordance with the Japanese value system. The Emperor, for reasons still not clearly understood, refrained from intervening against the military; an intervention which at that time would have been decisive in affirming his authority.

The outcome of this incident was that the Kwantung-Army had proven for the first time that it had more influence in the General Staff than the official Japanese Government in Tokyo. This was a very dangerous development, fraught with risks for the stability of Japan as a Nation. The incident diminished considerably the authority of the then still inexperienced and young Emperor, Hirohito, in the eyes of the military élite, which would have disastrous consequences in the near future. Paradoxically, the murder of Chang Tso-Lin improved the position of Chiang Kai-Shek, as the new ruler of Manchuria, General Chang-Hsueh-Liang, agreed to join the forces of the Generalissimo.

6.6. The Road to War (1931 - 1941).

6.6.1. Introduction.

The period between the announcement of the Meiji Constitution and the First World War could be characterised as the period of Imperial Bureaucracy. After the Russo-Japanese War, a slow conversion took place to more democracy, resulting in what could be called an Imperial Democracy. This gradually gave way to a political system, in the late thirties, which Gordon characterised as Imperial Fascism. The term Militarism would however be better than fascism, as the Japanese never really adopted Western political systems, whether democracy or the totalitarian systems of communism, nazism and fascism, because these western political systems were alien to Japanese kokutai.

In this subchapter we will discuss the internal factors which resulted in the militarist society which Japan had become in 1941. The driving force were middle-ranking officers in the army and navy General Staffs working together with so-called revisionist civil service bureaucrats, and this subchapter has therefore a decidedly military flavor. In subchapter 7 we will discuss Japanese diplomacy, which was also strongly driven by the internal factors we described here.

---

For a short biography of this general, see S. Hayashi: Kogun, p. 235.

Saburo Ienaga, ibid., 59.


Andrew Gordon, op. cit., 331.


A national election for the Diet took place in 1930. The Liberal Minseito won 273 seats, the more conservative Seiyukai 174 seats. It was a clear signal that the populace as a whole did not approve the military machinations in Manchuria. But by blocking the appointment of a Minister of War, the army command prevented the formation of a cabinet by the Minseito. The result was a minority cabinet of the Seiyukai with Tsuyoshi Inoue as Prime Minister, which contradicted the election results, however. In reality, but screened off from the general public, it was the Chief of Staff Lieutenant-General Sadao Araki, who pulled the strings.

One of the main reasons for the further radicalisation of the officer corps and for the establishment of the Sakurakai Secret Society (See page 632) was the signing of the Fleet Reduction Treaty of London in 1930. We therefore have to cover this subject in more depth.

The Fleet Treaties of Washington only concerned battleships. Every ship under 10,000 tons displacement was not considered a capital ship. Therefore, an arms race started in building cruisers. Before the Washington treaties, light cruisers were the norm, displacing about 7000 tons and armed with 15 cm (6 inch) guns. The result of the treaties were that the new norm became 10,000 ton cruisers with 24 cm guns (8 inch), a category of ships called heavy cruisers or Washington-cruisers. At the start of 1927, Japan possessed or had under construction 8 of these ships, England 14 and the United States 2. Also in submarines an arms race was developing. The League of Nations had called for a Naval Conference in Geneva in 1927 with the purpose of limiting the number of non-capital ships. The conference however foundered on unbridgeable differences of opinion between the United Kingdom and the U.S.A. on the subject of their cruiser ratio's. England, with its long sea-lanes, argued for a maximum number of light cruisers, which was however rejected by the United States. Thereupon the Conference was postponed.

The signing of the Kellogg-Briand pact on 27 August 1928 improved the strained relations between the two Anglo-Saxon Powers, resulting in direct dealings between the two Governments on this thorny issue in 1929 in London. After the successful conclusion of the bilateral conference in September 1929, the other major Powers were again invited for a Naval Conference in London in January 1930.

Japan at that time was governed by a Minseito-Cabinet presided by Osachi Hamaguchi as Premier. Minister of Foreign Affairs was the Liberal internationalist Kijuro Shidehara, Minister of Finance was the Liberal Junosuke Inoue, who was reputed to be critical about higher defence outlays. The recession of 1927 forced the government to cut its expenditures, and Hamaguchi therefore announced on 8 July 1929 that the Cabinet had to reduce military expenditures. As Japan was invited for the Naval Conference, he realized the potential for further reductions in naval outlays. The Japanese ambassador in London, Tsuneo Matsudaira, was instructed to go for 70% of the number of American heavy and light cruisers each, and for 80,000 tons on submarines. It should be remembered that

---

234 For a short biography of this important and politically influential general, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 84.
Japan obtained 60% of capital ship tonnage in Washington.

The Naval Disarmament conference started on 21 January 1930, and soon evolved into separate talks between the U.S. and Japan, and Great Britain and Japan. On 14 March, the Japanese and American governments announced the Matsudaira-Reed agreement. The Japanese obtained a 60% ratio over the U.S. in heavy cruisers, on the condition that this ratio would not be reached before 1938. Up to that time the Japanese had a 72% ratio over the U.S. with respect to heavy cruisers. In light cruisers Japan was allowed to build up to a limit of 70% of the U.S. tonnage. In submarines Japan possessed, in 1930, a tonnage of 77,842 tons, which had to be lowered to 52,700 tons in 1938, i.e. equal to the U.S. tonnage in that year. The Japanese delegation considered this a fair compromise and asked the government to agree to the compromise.

The telegram from the delegation caused a stir in Japanese government circles. The reason was a split within the navy about the interpretation of the Matsudaira-Reed agreement. Within the Navy, two factions were warring with each other. The so-called Treaty faction consisted of the Vice-Minister of the Navy (Admiral Katsunoshi Yamanashi), the Chief of Naval Affairs at the Navy department (Rear-Admiral Teikichi Hori) and the adjutant of the Navy minister, Captain Mineichi Koga. All three officers had befriended Admiral Tomosaburo Kato, the man who had signed the Washington Treaties. Opposed to the Treaty faction was the Fleet faction, which consisted of the almost complete Naval Staff headed by Vice-Admiral Kanji Kato, Chief of Naval Staff. The reason for this antagonism was the Japanese Fleet doctrine in case of a war with the U.S. In that case the Japanese heavy cruisers and submarines would maul the U.S. battlefleet by surprise attacks during its breakthrough to the Philippines, with the purpose of reducing the number of battleships to a figure which could be handled by the Japanese battlefleet in a seabattle of Jutland proportions. For the Fleet faction, a 60% parity with respect to the U.S. was thus unacceptable.

The Government however could not risk a failure of the conference at this stage. Moreover, under the Meiji Constitution, the Navy Minister could fire the Chief of Naval Staff. Therefore, the Fleet Faction acquiesced in the signing of the London Naval Treaty, under the explicit condition that Japan would not feel itself bound to participate in the next Naval Conference, planned for 1935. Thus, the London Treaty was signed on 22 April 1930 between the representatives in London of the governments of Great Britain, the United States and Japan.

Afterwards, the agreement had to be approved by the governments concerned. In Japan this resulted in a national debate. Directly after the cabinet had cabled its agreement to the negotiators in London, the Naval Chief of Staff requested an audience with the Emperor, to which he was constitutionally entitled. At this audience, he informed the Emperor about his qualms with respect to the proposed treaty, after which he aired his disagreement in a press release. In the Diet, the Seiyukai sensed the possibility of a political victory over the Minselto-Cabinet, and on opportunistic motives the Seiyukai fraction in parliament declared itself in support of Admiral Kato. The Admiral argued that Premier Hamaguchi had interfered in the operational command over the navy by agreeing with the Matsudaira-Reed agreement. Professor Tatsukichi Minobe of Tokyo University who was a specialist in

\[\text{Ibid., 169.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 170.}\]
Constitutional Law, opposed the arguments of Kato and was supported by Professor Soichi Sasaki of the Imperial University of Kyoto. This public interference into military matters by two civilians angered radical rightists, who threatened the two professors with murder. The public debate also caused a flowering of all kinds of secret radical societies. The army Staff also joined the conflict on the side of their naval colleagues. Admiral Kato strengthened his position by securing the support of Prince Hiroyazu Fushimi, uncle of the Emperor and member of the Defence Council, and most important of all, of Admiral Heihachiro Togo, the victor of Tsushima and a living legend.\textsuperscript{295}

However, the British and American legislatures had approved the treaty, notwithstanding the negative opinions of their own Naval Boards.\textsuperscript{296} (Page 144) A major factor in this approval had been the economic crisis after the Wall Street crash of 1929, and the resulting unequivocal public demand to reduce armament expenditures in the West. If Japan would not ratify the treaty, it would be seen internationally as a spoilsport, and that was the strongest argument of the cabinet in internal discussions. Thereupon the Admirals Kato and Suetsugu (his Vice-Chief of Staff) resigned, and were replaced on 10 June 1930 by Vice-Admirals Naomi Taniguchi and Osami Nagano as Chief of Naval Staff and Vice-Chief of Staff respectively. It took the unexpected approval of the Council of State on 25 September 1930 to have the treaty approved by the Emperor on 2 October 1930. For this political victory Premier Hamaguchi paid with his life - he was murdered somewhat later by an ultra-nationalist.

It was however a pyrrhic victory.\textsuperscript{296} When in power, the fleet faction represented by Navy Minister Mineo Osumi strongly backed by Vice-admiral Kanji Kato, replaced in a notorious purge in 1933 - 1934 all dissenting flag officers of the treaty faction, resulting in the removal of very able flag officers, who according to Marder,\textsuperscript{297} could have made the difference between war and peace in 1939 to 1941. When in 1935 the negotiations were resumed in London, the Japanese delegation torpedoed all results by insisting on a 70% parity. Thereafter, the "battleship holiday" was over, and an unbridled expansion of the navy could take place, which would result in the long term in Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War. In retrospect the public debate on the London Naval Treaty and the opportunistic support of the militarists by the Seiyukai was the undoing of responsible civil government and therefore a watershed in Japanese History.

6.6.3. The Mukden-Incident.

On 18 September 1931 a bomb explosion destroyed part of the railway line near Mukden (at present Shen-Yang) in Manchuria. This act of sabotage was followed by a quick capture of the whole of Manchuria by Japanese troops. The so-called "Mukden-Incident" was illegally engineered by officers of the Kwantung-Army, and this was the beginning of Japan's long road to the Pacific War.

\textsuperscript{296} For an account of all political machinations see Tatsuo Kobayashi: The London Naval Treaty in J.W. Morley: Japan Erups, op. cit., 11 - 117.

\textsuperscript{296} In the U.K., the naval heroes Jellicoe and Beatty both publicly disagreed with the terms of the Treaty.

\textsuperscript{296} Ian Nish, Foreign Policy, op. cit., 172.

According to the Portsmouth Peace Treaty of 1905, Japan was allowed to protect the strategic South Manchurian railway running between Port Arthur (at present Lushung'kou) and Changchun, a distance of about 400 km. Japan had the right to station 15 soldiers per kilometer of railroad. In total the Japanese Kwantung Army,\(^{296}\) which was charged with the protection of Port Arthur and the railway, had a strength of about 10,000 men, with the 2nd Division (the Sendai-division) at the Liaotung peninsula, and small guard detachments along the railroad, commanded by young and enterprising officers. Manchuria at that time was populated by approximately 30 million people, most of which were Han-Chinese, with, along the western, northern and eastern borders, Mongolians living off their livestock on the open grasslands. There were about 200,000 Japanese residents in Manchuria living in the cities and on the Liaotung Peninsula. Manchuria was rich in iron ore and coal, and produced wheat and wood in sizeable quantities.

After General Chiang Kai-Shek had made his entry in Peking on 6 June 1929, the Chinese Revolutionary Party, the Kuo-Min-Tang, started to penetrate into the as yet unpolitised Manchurian society. The largest part of Manchuria at that time was under control of a war-lord named Chang-Tso-Lin, who, after having been murdered by the Japanese colonel Daisaku Komoto, was succeeded by his son, Chang-Hsueh-Liang. The latter accepted the suzerainty of China over Manchuria, and even asked the Chinese central government for funds to pay for the laying of a new railway line with the intent of breaking the monopoly of the Japanese-controlled South Manchurian Railway. This, and rising Chinese nationalism prompted the Japanese Army in Manchuria into action.

Two young staff officers at the Kwantung Army HQ at Port Arthur decided that the time was ripe to do something. Colonel Seishiro Itagaki and Lieut.-Colonel Kanji Ishiwara both had been influenced by Komoto, who had been replaced in 1930 by Itagaki. Itagaki, who would be hanged at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo as a war criminal in 1948, was a protégé of Lieut.-Gen. Tetsuzan Nagata\(^{296}\) of the Imperial General Staff (IGS) in Tokyo. Nagata was a member of the Dojinkai, a group of officers who did not belong to the, at that time very dominant, Choshu-clan officers in the IGS. From 1920 officers of the Dojinkai began to fill important positions at the IGS. Some of them would be promoted to important positions, like Teichi Suzuki, Daisaku Komoto, Kanji Ishiwara, Yasuji Okamura, Hideki Tojo, Kenji Doihara, Tomoyuki Yamashita and Seishiro Itagaki. It was the Dojinkai, which successfully protected one of its members (Komoto) against reprisals from the government after his murder of Chang-Tso-Lin, resulting in the demise of the Tanaka-Cabinet (See page 625). After this victory about forty officers of senior rank at the General Staff from the Dojinkai formed the Issekikai (Thursday evening Club), which was extremely nationalistic and strongly expansionist.\(^{294}\)

Kanji Ishiwara (1889 - 1949) was a man of destiny. He was flamboyant, a brilliant orator, a visionary, who was courageous, intelligent and persistent. In displaying these characteristics, he could not be considered a typical Japanese, but a non-conformist like the diplomat

\(^{296}\) Kwantung means literally "East of the (Chinese) Wall", delineating all of Manchuria East of the Great Wall, which runs up to Shanhakuan at the Yellow Sea. It has nothing to do with a Chinese or Manchurian province named Kwantung, as suggested by de Jong, op. cit., Volume 11-a, 481.

\(^{296}\) For a short biography see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 162.

\(^{294}\) J.W. Morley, ed.: Japan Erupts, op. cit., 132.
Yosuke Matsuoka who we will meet further on. He was known as "the genius of the Army". He was strongly influenced by the Pan-Asiatic movement, and therefore pro-Chinese. His vocal opposition to the continuation of the war in China led to his early retirement in 1939. His thoughts and opinions have been the subject of a remarkable book, on a remarkable personality.

During his stay in Port Arthur in 1930 Ishiwara prepared a plan for the military occupation of the whole of Manchuria, and for a Japanese administration of this immense land. He was convinced that Japan had to take the western powers to war, and in particular the United States. Japan therefore needed the iron and coal of Manchuria, and had to build a heavy industry around Mukden, which had to become a kind of Japanese Ruhr area. This was the theme of numerous lectures he presented at gatherings of the Kwantung Army and IGS. The acceptance of his message in those circles was alleviated by a number of developments, which ran parallel, but also reinforced each other.

First there was the Communist Chinese infiltration in Manchuria. The Communists aimed at the Chinese in the cities and at the Koreans living on the border between Manchuria, Korea and the Russian Maritime Province. These Koreans were rather anti-Japanese. Here, in Chientao, the Communists succeeded in fomenting the first anti-Japanese demonstrations. The Japanese officers of the Kwantung-Army took this communist agitation very seriously.

The Chinese Nationalists clamored loudly about the cancellation of all extra-territorial rights, and, to the annoyance of the Japanese, the western powers agreed in principle to rescind their rights. This meant that the Japanese had to renounce their extraterritorial rights too, or to lose their reputation of defenders of Asian freedoms.

Moreover, in the Soviet-Union the Second Five-Year Plan had been announced for the period 1929 - 1934. The strong industrialisation of the Soviet Union resulted in increasing firepower of the Red Army in Siberia, with a larger number of planes, artillery and tanks becoming available. As a reaction against the increasing Russian power on the borders and the Chinese agitation from within, the Japanese colonists in Manchuria formed their Manchurian Youth League. This colonial-fascist movement strongly influenced the Japanese Press and Broadcasting in the years 1930 - 1931, and convinced the conservative Seiyukai political party that it should support the aims of the Youth League.

Most important of all however was the deepening economical world crisis, which caused bitter hardship for the unemployed masses. Japanese exports fell 43% in value between 1929 and 1931. After the murder of Hamaguchi, the Minsuito-Cabinet under Premier Reichiro Wakatsuki had to reduce budgets even further, including the military budgets. In a


267 J.W. Morley: *Japan Erupts*, op. cit. 137.

letter to all divisional commanders the Minister of War, Lieut.-Gen. Kazushige Ugaki, declared in January 1931, although the military should not normally interfere with politics, where a civilian government now threatened to reduce the Army in such a way, that national security was threatened the officers should involve themselves in politics in order to save the country. A large number of Japanese officers fully agreed with this statement, and within IGS after a meeting on 19 June 1931 plans were made to occupy Manchuria without political consent of the Cabinet, after public opinion had been sufficiently exposed. The reason for this expansionism was the fact that exports to areas under Japanese control like Korea and Taiwan had suffered less, and the conclusion therefore was that annexation of the whole of Manchuria would be in the interest of Japan. According to the historian Hiroharu Seki, the Mukden-incident was not an unplanned action undertaken by isolated officers of an equally isolated Kwantung-Army, but was in reality a carefully planned action to begin the occupation of Manchuria, which had been meticulously planned at IGS months earlier.

In a press release dated 4 August 1931, the new Minister of War, Lieut.-Gen. Jiro Minami explicitly mentioned the possibility of Japanese military intervention in Manchuria. This caused the Chinese Ambassador at the League of Nations in Geneva to accuse Japan of plans for such an intervention. Meanwhile the Emperor had received information from Prince Saonji, the last of the Genro, that the military were indeed scheming. On instructions of the Emperor, Saonji informed Minami on 12 September in no uncertain terms, that discipline in the Army had to be re-established. On 15 September the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shidehara, received a telegram from his Consul in Port Arthur that the Kwantung Army was obviously preparing some kind of action. Shidehara brought this to the attention of the other cabinet members the next day, and Minami promised to look into it. He thereupon dispatched to Mukden the Chief Operations of the IGS, Maj.-Gen. Yoshii Tatekawa to investigate the matter.

---

298 For a short biography of this political general, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 225.

299 S. Masawa and S. Ninomiya in The Role of the Diet and the Political Parties, in Borg/Okamoto, op. cit. 325.

300 J.W. Morley: Japan Erupts, op. cit., 176.


303 For a short biography, R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 153.

304 Ibid., 186.

305 Ibid., 199.

306 Ibid., 203.

307 Ibid., 205.

308 For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 214.
Indeed the Colonels Ishiwara and Itagaki had-prepared a plan to demolish part of the South Manchurian Railway near Liuiaokow using explosives. The village is situated directly South of Mukden. Thereafter the Chinese would be accused of sabotage, and Japanese troops would quickly occupy all Chinese barracks and disarm the Chinese soldiers. The reason for this stealth and speed was the fact, that the Kwantung Army was heavily outnumbered and not particularly well equipped, although of course better equipped than the Chinese troops.\textsuperscript{2870} Thereafter the whole of Manchuria would be speedily occupied. On September 15 Major Kingoro Hashimoto\textsuperscript{2871} at Tokyo IGS warned the conspirators that their plot had been discovered and that Tatekawa was on his way to put a lid on the whole affair. As Tatekawa was travelling by train, and not by plane, the conspirators still had 2 days and they decided to go forward with the plan, even with Tatekawa in Mukden. An officer of the Kempei-Tai or Military Police, 1st Lieutenant Suemori Kawamoto, demolished part of the railway at the planned spot, at 2220 hours on the evening of 18 September 1931. The soldiers of the 29th regiment of the Kwantung Army then stormed the Chinese barracks in the vicinity. The first shots had been fired in a Japanese drive which would lead straight to Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War.\textsuperscript{2872}

Ishiwara, who was at Port Arthur, informed the newly arrived commander of the Kwantung Army, Lieut.-General Shigeru Honjo,\textsuperscript{2873} that he had to order the Army into action against the Chinese. Honjo gave in, and after midnight ordered the other units in his command to disarm the Chinese in Manchuria. He had not been informed about the scheming of his Staff officers, but was confronted with the results of their scheming "in the name of the Fatherland". Honjo accepted responsibility for the devious acts of his officers.\textsuperscript{2874} This again was pure gekokujo. After learning that he would be tried at the IMTFE because of his role in the Mukden-incident, Honjo ended his life by seppuku in November 1945.

Due to the absence of Tatekawa, his deputy, Colonel Hiroshi Imamura\textsuperscript{2875} had to contain the Manchurian crisis as deputy chief Operations of the IGS. Like many officers of the IGS, he sympathised with the unlawful action of the Kwantung Army, but there were two problems.

In the first place Lieut.-Gen. Senjuro Hayashi,\textsuperscript{2876} Commanding General of the Korea Army, had decided in the morning of 19 September to despatch 2 squadrons of the 6th Army Air Regiment based at Pyong-Yang to Manchuria, as the Kwantung Army did not possess any planes. Moreover, he had ordered units of his army to cross the Manchurian

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{2870} Beasley, Imperialism, op. cit., 192.
  \item \textsuperscript{2871} For a biography of this firebrand see Saburo Hayashi: Kogun, op. cit., 223.
  \item \textsuperscript{2873} For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 103.
  \item \textsuperscript{2875} Imamura would command the Sixteenth Army which conquered Java in March 1942. For his biography see R. Fuller, op. cit., 111 - 112.
  \item \textsuperscript{2876} For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 97.
\end{itemize}
border. Hayashi defended his order on the basis of the doctrine of *dokudan senko*, which stipulated that officers could act on their own if a tactical situation demanded immediate action, which was not or could not be foreseen by higher levels of command. Since the Boxer rebellion of 1900 however, the sending of troops into foreign countries had to be authorized by the Emperor with an imperial rescript. It fell on the IGS to obtain such a rescript ex post from the Emperor.

Moreover, the Incident now had to be fitted within the larger framework of a solution to the problem of Manchuria, in order to be acceptable for both the Emperor and the cabinet. The IGS based itself on the plan of Ishiwa, foreseeing the occupation of the whole of Manchuria, which had already been discussed with Minami.

Imamura solved the first problem by ordering a halt to the movement of Japanese troops into Manchuria, which gave him some time to discuss matters with the cabinet. On 22 September however, Hayashi informed IGS that he had ignored this order because the Kwantung Army urgently needed reinforcements. This was insubordination at the top, but nothing happened to Hayashi. On the same day the Wakatsuki Cabinet meekly accepted the invasion of Manchuria as a fait accompli. Even Shidehara did not have the courage to express himself against the actions of the Korea Army. Wakatsuki went to the Emperor, and obtained Imperial approval. Hayashi had scored a major victory over the civil government, with full cooperation of the IGS and the Ministry of War. The Japanese Government, headed by the weak and nervous Premier Reijiro Wakatsuki, was totally surprised by the actions of the army, but in order not to lose face it upheld the impression that the Japanese initiatives in Manchuria were commanded from Tokyo. The outside world was informed that Japan did not maintain any territorial ambitions with regard to Manchuria, and that the Japanese troops would be withdrawn after some "problems" with the Chinese had been solved. But in fact the rules of the game became now fixed: junior staff-officers of the Japanese occupation armies overseas decided what would happen, because they had operational responsibilities. Their commanding generals would support them out of *gekokuyo*. The General Staff in Tokyo would give informal but effective support, and the Minister of War would assure the Premier and the cabinet that the destiny of the country was still being decided upon by the cabinet, but that military actions were a result of the operational necessity to interfere on a tactical level. The consequence was that the Foreign Office had to produce statements to the outside world which were irrelevant to the true military situation, and which made Japan totally irresponsible in Western eyes.

This phenomenon by the way is not uniquely Japanese. In military history it is well known that occupation armies tend to follow their own policies. Reference is made to the actions

---


879 T. Shimada, ibid, 247.

880 T. Shimada, ibid., 251 - 252.

of MacArthur during the Korean War, the revolution of the French Generals in Algeria, the uprising of General Franco in Spanish Africa in 1936. But also in the Netherlands East Indies in the nineteenth century, it has been well-documented that local commanders in many cases interpreted the instructions from Batavia in their own way, not to say how instructions from far-away The Hague were interpreted. During the second political action in Indonesia at the close of 1948, the Dutch commanding general S.H. Spoor even delayed an order from his government to stop fighting by two days in order to consolidate the gains of the action.

An urgent problem now for IGS was how to handle the generals in Manchuria. The Kwantung Army had occupied Mukden, Changchun and Kirin (Jilin), and asked for reinforcements with 3 infantry divisions. IGS still did not want a complete military occupation of the whole of Manchuria, and therefore demanded from the Kwantung Army that explicit authorization had to be asked for any forthcoming military initiative, like the occupation of Harbin. In fact the IGS accepted thereby by default the insubordination of the Kwantung Army. The reason was that IGS in fact approved those actions, but refrained from the occupation of Harbin due to fear of the Russians. Harbin, the capital of the Manchurian province of Heilungkian (Heilongjian) had been the main base of operations for the Tsarist Armies during the Russo-Japanese War, and the Soviets could use the occupation of Harbin by the Japanese as a pretext to occupy the railway line from Harbin to Wladiwostok, or to invade Heilungkiang. The presence of around 4000 unprotected Japanese civilians in Harbin compelled the IGS not to provoke the Soviets by an occupation of the city.

The Kwantung-Army however provided new surprises, which kept IGS running after the facts. At the end of October Chinese troops blew a few bridges over the Nonni-river on the Taonan-Tsitsihar railway line, which runs partly in Heilungkiang province. A regiment of the Japanese 2nd Division occupied parts of the railway line in order to repair the bridges. IGS disapproved of these actions, because negative reactions were expected from Emperor, cabinet and the outside world. Again, the timid action of the Emperor aimed at stopping the incident ultimately failed, further weakening the position of the Emperor as an arbiter of peace. In retrospect, he was politically the biggest loser of the Mukden-Incident. The ambivalence of the officers in IGS with respect to the actions of the Kwantung and Korea Armies was also due to them looking on Manchuria as the political and cultural trial field for a situation they hoped to realize in the future for Japan.

Although a military administration of Manchuria had always been foreseen by the Kwantung-Army, the displeasure at home caused the army to act more prudently. Therefore it was decided to set up an independent "Chinese" state in Manchuria, called Manchukuo,
with the last descendant of the Manchu Dynasty, Henri Pu-Yi, as its head of state. Thus the Kwantung Army reorganised a new state, without any involvement of civil or military authorities in Tokyo, presenting the Japanese Cabinet with a fait accompli. This also caused communication problems, because the Commander-in-Chief of the Kwantung Army also acted as the Japanese Ambassador to Manchukuo, and therefore was suber- vint in that capacity to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, from whom he did not of course take orders.

The Mukden Incident and the actions of the Kwantung Army thereafter had already caused condemnation of Japan by the League of Nations in Geneva on 30 September 1931 (See subchapter on Japanese Foreign Policy). Although the Japanese actions were a clear violation of the Nine-Power Treaty of 1922, no further actions against Japan were taken. China however started an economic boycott of all Japanese goods.

IGS however was now thoroughly alarmed about the lack of discipline shown by the Kwantung Army Staff, and the new Chief of Staff, Lieut.-General Hanzo Kanaya, decided to ask the Emperor for the drastic step of the Rinsan imei, or the delegation of command from the Emperor to the Chief of Staff, a measure which was last taken during the Russo-Japanese War. This delegation had been provided in order to avoid that the Chief of Staff having to put each operational decision with possible political implication before the Emperor. It was clear that Kanaya indeed feared severe political complications because of the way the Kwantung Army acted.

A political change at home saved the Kwantung Army however. In early December 1931, the Wakatsuki-Cabinet had resigned due to loss of face over the Manchuria-incident. The military let it known to the advisers of the Emperor that a new Minseito-cabinet would not be supported by the army. Thus the conservative Seiyukai-Party formed a new cabinet, with as premier the leader of the Seiyukai, Tsuyoshi Inukai. Lieut.-Gen. Sadao Araki became Minister of War. Araki was a well-known supporter of the occupation of Manchuria, and was selected by Kanaya for that reason. Araki refused to discipline the commanders of the Kwantung- and Korea-Army, which decision would prove to be, in the long run, fatal for the Japanese Army, and thus for Japan. As we will see further on, top-level insubordination in the field army would increase up to the occupation of Northern French Indochina (See Chapter 5, page 590) He would also instigate the naming of two Imperial Princes, uncles of Hirohito, as the new chiefs of staff. Field-Marshall Prince Kotohito Kanin became chief of staff of the army, and Admiral Prince Hiroyasu Fushimi chief of naval staff. The
two princes held this titular responsibility up to October 1940, and April 1941, respectively. Of course, real power was exercised by the professional deputy chiefs of staff, but it was a shrewd move by Araki, because the civil members of the cabinet now had even less opportunity to criticise the army and navy because of the involvement of members of the Imperial Family.

The new deputy Chief of Staff under Prince Kotōhiko Kanin was Lieut.-Gen. Jisaburo Mazaki. The new Minister of Foreign Affairs became the civilian Yasuya Uchida, who proved to be a staunch supporter of the Kwantung Army, and who was instrumental in the withdrawal of Japan from the League of Nations. Uchida was a protégé of Araki.

With the moral support of the new Cabinet in Tokyo the Kwantung Army gradually occupied Manchuria, including Harbin on 5 February 1932. On 1 March 1932 the "independent" State of Manchukuo was proclaimed, with Henri Pu Yi, the last offshoot of the Manchu-dynasty of Chinese Emperors, as a President. Of course his was a puppet regime, as planned by Kanji Ishiwara.

6.6.4. The Shanghai-Incident.

After the successes of the Army, the junior Service could of course not remain sitting on the fence. The Manchurian Incident stirred the Chinese into action with an economic boycott of Japanese goods. This boycott hurt, and Japanese trading firms suffered severe losses. Chinese boycotts had been a more or less regular phenomenon during the twenties, but this one had real bite. After Japanese agents torched a large Chinese textile mill in Shanghai on 19 January 1932, serious fighting started between Chinese army units and Japanese naval soldiers. Under the command of Rear-Admiral Koichi Shiozawa 2000 2000 navy troops were stationed in Shanghai to defend the Japanese concession. The Chinese 19th Route Army under Lieut.-Gen. Chiang Ching Kai performed well in fighting the Japanese, and due to a large Chinese numerical superiority, the marines had to ask for support. Without cabinet authorization the Naval Staff despatched the light cruiser OI and a destroyer squadron to Shanghai. When that did not improve the

---

266 For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 151.

267 See Katsumi Usui: "The role of the Foreign Ministry" in D. Borg, op. cit. 132 - 134.


273 For a short biography see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 288.
situation, the Navy Minister Mineo Osumi\textsuperscript{300} had to ask the Army for support.\textsuperscript{302}

After agreement with Premier Inukai, the army despatched the 9th Infantry Division from Kanazawa to Shanghai. The Navy refused however the transport of a whole division to Shanghai - it considered a Brigade to be sufficient. But the Army persisted, and on 15 and 16 February 1932 the division commanded by Lieut.-Gen. Kenkichi Ueda\textsuperscript{303} set foot at Shanghai. However, Ueda too was unable to secure a quick victory, prompting the local naval commander, Vice-Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura,\textsuperscript{304} to ask for fresh reinforcements on 23 February.\textsuperscript{305} The cabinet decided thereupon to send a whole Expeditonary Corps, consisting of the 11th and the 14th Division under command of Lieut.-Gen. Yoshinori Shiakawa. He succeeded at last in pushing back the Chinese 19th Route Army, which resulted in an armistice on 3 March 1932.

Under pressure from the western powers, which maintained concessions in Shanghai, and which were angered by the fact that Japan had attacked the Chinese without prior consultation, the Japanese agreed to talks. The British had sent their China Squadron to Shanghai, and on board of HMS KENT the combatants met.\textsuperscript{306} The Japanese side was represented by Vice-Admiral Nomura, and the diplomat Yosuke Matsuoka as the personal representative of Foreign Minister Kenkichi Yoshizawa. China was represented by Wellington Koo, representing the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and General Huang Chiang, Chief of Staff of the 19th Route Army. The talks resulted in the truce of March 3. Urged on by a resolution of the League of Nations, representatives of Japan, China, and the 4 Western Powers met in Shanghai on March 19.

After much pressure from the League of Nations the Japanese signed an agreement with the Chinese on 5 May 1932, according to which all Japanese troops had to be withdrawn before the end of May.\textsuperscript{307} Chiang Kai Shek was not as yet ready for an all-out war against the Japanese, and neither were the Japanese. The agreement was a clear diplomatic victory for the Chinese, and shocked the Japanese Army, which had been victorious in the field. But the rumblings of potential Japanese aggression were heard now in all the capitals of the major powers. The Japanese action in Shanghai caused the British government to abandon its assumption that no major war would start in the next ten years (page 144).

6.6.5. Government by Assassination.

The Shanghai-incident had far-reaching domestic implications, because it had been agreed that all Japanese forces should be withdrawn from Shanghai. In the opinion of the ultra-

\textsuperscript{300} For a short biography see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 281.

\textsuperscript{302} Shimada/Morley, Japan Erupts, Ibid., 310.

\textsuperscript{303} For an incomplete biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 224.

\textsuperscript{304} For a biography of this naval officer, diplomat and statesman see R. Fuller, Shokan. Ibid. 276.

\textsuperscript{305} Shimada/Morley, Japan Erupts, Ibidem, 313.

\textsuperscript{306} Ibidem, 315.

\textsuperscript{307} Ibidem, 318.
nationalists, this was an insult to the Emperor and the army, for which the cabinet was held accountable. This resulted in the so-called "5-15 incident" on 15 May 1932, in which the extreme-right "Union of Blood" carried out a number of political murders. Murdered within their houses were Premier Inukai, his Minister of Finance Korekiyo Takahashi and his predecessor Yunisuke Inoue, General Jotaro Watanabe, and Baron Takuma Dan, President of Mitsui. Those who escaped were the last Genro, Saionji himself, and Count Makino, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. The Union of Blood consisted of 20 Army Cadets, 16 Navy midshipmen, and 20 civilians under the leadership of the fanatic Nissho Inoue. All were young, and all declared after their arrest that they were prepared to die happily, as they had purified the Government of its weakest elements. Notwithstanding the fact that five of them together had slaughtered an old man like Inukai, their earnest patriotism and their youth captivated the imagination and emotion of public opinion, and consequently they received very light sentences. As a consequence, murder now became an accepted political weapon, as long as it happened in the name of the Emperor. A Japanese diplomat with some justification called his Government "the Government of assassination, by assassination and for assassination!".

Inukai's murder had as a consequence the end of government by political parties. From this time on a new premier would no longer be the leader of a political party, but a civilian who was acceptable to the military.\(^{308}\) The further reduction of the erstwhile power of the political parties in the Diet in the period 1933 - 1940 can be explained by the lack of powerful personalities in the political parties and the internal divisions between and within the two main political parties. This resulted in a kind of self-censure in 1937, and in 1940 to the abolishment of the political parties, resulting in a Diet which to all intent and purpose strongly resembled the rubberstamp Parliaments of the later Eastern European People's Democracies. The army never bothered to penetrate the political parties, or to force them into submission, which happened in Germany and Italy in the interbellum.\(^{308}\) Iriye insists that there never was a complete capitulation of civilian authority to the military,\(^{309}\) but that is a rather formalistic approach which is not borne out by subsequent events.

One of the few opportunities which was left open to the Emperor in order to demonstrate his political sympathies in a subtle way, was influencing the appointment of new Premiers. Marquess Kido, his adviser, was on the hand of the Liberals, as was Prince Saonji, the last of the Genro. They had proposed Inukai for the job, when a Minseito-government was no longer acceptable to the Army. Because of the murder of the conservative Inukai, they concluded that they, and may be even the Emperor, might be the next victims of murderous extremist youths. Nevertheless this trio appointed in the next four years a number of Premiers, which were not civilians, but competent, strong-willed and courageous admirals, who thereby checked the army. These were the Vice-Admirals Makoto Saito\(^{310}\) (May 1932 to July 1934), and Keisuke Okada\(^{312}\) (July 1934 to March 1936).

A civilian Minister of great prestige was Finance Minister Korekiyo Takahashi, who held

\(^{308}\) Maxon, op. cit., 92.


\(^{310}\) Akira Iriye, in J.W. Morley, Japan Erupts,op. cit., 238.

\(^{311}\) For a short biography see R. Fuller, Shokan., op. cit., 284.

\(^{312}\) R. Fuller, Ibid., 278.
this position between December 1931 and February 1936, when he was murdered, as was Saito. This notwithstanding the attack on his life during the 5-15 incident! Takahashi was an outspoken critic of the military, and specially of Army Minister Araki. But they too could not avoid the fact that from 1935 onwards Japanese Foreign policy became more and more dependent on the whims of the Kwantung Army and the army in Northern China. The IGS in Tokyo pointed out many times, that local commanders were better informed about the local military situation than the Staff in far-away Tokyo. The same position was taken by MacArthur when he argued with President Truman in 1950 that the local situation in Korea had to determine Truman's foreign policy. 203 But the Admiral-Premiers were not happy with this excuse, and later years saw a growing animosity between the officers of the IGS and those in the field-armies.

More worrisome was the fact that even the Navy began to lose its reputation of "Silent Service", i.e. the only service which was loyal to the Government. Under Navy Minister Mineo Osumi a number of naval officers loyal to Admiral Tomosaburo Kato had been removed or pensioned. Kato was the man of the Washington Treaties, and the officers who profited from this Osumi-purification were adherents of Admiral Kanji Kato and were very nationalistic, strongly against the United States and new Naval Treaties, and seemingly unaware of the inherent weakness of Japan in the face of the United States. It was the Naval Staff which therefore advised the Emperor to strive for parity with the United States at the forthcoming Naval Conference in London in January 1935, thereby dooming the conference from the start. 204

Pelz205 has presented a convincing case as to why the Japanese admirals in power, all members of the Fleet faction, rejected any longer a restriction on naval expansion. Japan had built up its fleet to treaty limits, while the Americans had not, giving the Japanese an 8 to 10 ratio. In order to comply to Treaty limits, Japanese shipbuilders had crammed too much armament on too small ships, leading to instability of some ships. (See below on the capsizing of the TOMOZURU). It would be better if ship designers had a free hand to design the best ships afloat. Japan's naval engineers had developed new weapons and improved existing ones, which gave the naval staff confidence that they could defeat the larger American fleet by attrition (See paragraph 6.9.3.).

Therefore, the Naval Conference in London failed completely. This however to the relief of the U.S. Navy, which did not see any plausible motive for reduction of its own fleet strength, but needed a scapegoat for the failure. 206

The Army simply marched on, as it had done before in Manchuria. But now its purpose was to establish Japanese domination in Northern China, a region rich in iron deposits, which the Japanese blast furnaces needed. We will give a short summary of unauthorized military actions in chronological sequence:

a. Between October 1932 and January 1933 a number of incidents took place at Shanhaikuan

---

203 Maxon, op. cit. 100 - 103.


206 D. Borg, Crisis, op. cit., 110 - 111.
in Northern China, caused by the commander of the small Japanese garrison, stationed there according to the Boxer-protocol of 1901.\textsuperscript{3017}

b. On 27 January 1933 the new commander of the Kwantung-Army, Lieut.-Gen. Nobuyoshi Muto,\textsuperscript{3018} ordered the 6th and 8th Infantry Division to occupy the province of Jehol, without authorisation to act in such a way from the IGS.\textsuperscript{3019}

c. On 1 April 1933 the Japanese military extended their mopping-up operations into China proper, south of the Great Wall. Also this military operation in the Chinese province of Hopei (Hebei) was in direct contradiction to an explicit order of the IGS not to penetrate into China proper\textsuperscript{3020} During an audience granted to the Vice-Chief of Staff on 18 April 1933 the Emperor asked, whether the Army had been withdrawn from China, as he had never authorised its penetration into China. Shocked, General Mazaki ordered the Kwantung-Army to withdraw from North-China, which order was carried out.\textsuperscript{3021}

d. In a quick offensive movement between 6 and 19 May, 1933 the 6th and 8th Divisions of the Kwantung Army occupied the whole area South of the Great Wall and East of the Luan River, allegedly to act against bandits\textsuperscript{3022} In the Tangku-Truce of 5 June 1933 the Japanese obtained the right to station security troops South of the Great Wall, in China proper. This military agreement became part of a political understanding with the Chinese government, signed after the Peking Conference of 7 - 9 November 1933. In this Conference, agreement was reached with the Chinese on the re-establishment of transportation services between China proper and Manchuria.\textsuperscript{3023}

e. In the autumn of 1934 the Kwantung-Army supported a Chinese movement to split off Northern China from the growing influence of the Chinese government in Nanking. Its Chief of Intelligence, Maj.-Gen. Kenji Doihara, succeeded in bribing a number of Chinese officials. By manipulating feelings of hatred between the Chinese and the Mongolians, Doihara also acquired dominance in Inner Mongolia and the Province of Chahar.\textsuperscript{3024} This flamboyant character thereafter was nicknamed the "Lawrence of Manchuria" by western journalists.\textsuperscript{3025}

\begin{flushright}

\textsuperscript{3018} For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 161.

\textsuperscript{3019} Ibidem, 19 - 26.

\textsuperscript{3020} J.W. Morley The China Quagmire, New-York , 20.

\textsuperscript{3021} Ibid., 33 - 34.

\textsuperscript{3022} Ibidem, 43 - 46.

\textsuperscript{3023} Ibid., 60.

\textsuperscript{3024} Ibidem, 102 - 127.

\textsuperscript{3025} For a concise biography of this remarkable officer, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 89. Also B. Winston Kahn: Doihara Kenji and the North China Autonomy Movement, 1935 - 1936, in Alvin Cox & Hilary Conroy, Eds: China and Japan, Sta Barbara, 1978, 177 - 207.
\end{flushright}
In December 1934, a memorandum drafted for the cabinet by officials of the Army, Navy and Foreign Ministry defined the goal of bringing Northern China under Japanese control. Once again it was the Kwantung Army, which took the lead in this affair. Because Chiang Kai-Shek did not feel himself strong enough, the Chinese government acquiesced on 6 December 1935 to the formation of a Hopei-Chahar Political Council with a measure of financial autonomy. The agreement also encompassed Sino-Japanese cooperation in the struggle against the Chinese Communists, and closer economic ties between Northern China and Manchuria.

In May 1936 the Japanese military garrison in Tientsin (Tianjin) was increased from around 2000 to around 5700 soldiers under Lieut.-Gen. Kanichiro Tashiro. Tashiro was to report directly to IGS, and not to the Kwantung Army. This reinforcement however was in contradiction to the Boxer-protocol. It was the logical consequence of a secret cabinet decision on 13 January 1936 to try to separate 5 Chinese provinces from the central Chinese government. These Chinese provinces were Hopei (Hebei), Chahar, Shansi (Shaanxi), Shenshi (Shanxi), Suyuan and Shantung (Shandong).

The result of these incidents and actions, most of which were initiated by the Kwantung Army, was a growing consciousness of the Chinese people of its own identity and destiny, leading to widespread and successful boycotts of Japanese goods. Moreover these incidents engendered an intense nationalism among the youth of the better-situated Chinese middle class, which resulted in demonstrations, rows and attacks on individual Japanese by Chinese students. This caused punitive actions by the Japanese armed forces, like those at Cheng-tu on 23 August 1935, Pakhoi 3 July 1936, Kalgan 13 August 1936. Japanese policy therefore became self-defeating, swinging between the opposite goals of winning the Chinese Nationalists for the common struggle against the Chinese Communists, and subjugating the Chinese for Japanese purposes. It has to be remarked, that the Chinese Communists had established themselves in North China rather close to Peking after the heroic "Long March" of 3000 kilometers from Central- and South China. Their effective guerilla campaigns started to hurt the Japanese in North China.

One of the reasons for the lack of a consistent China-policy was the growing rift within the IGS between the Kodo-Ha and Tosei-Ha factions. The Kodo-Ha were the romantic nationalists with Pan-Asiatic sympathies, who however had a deep respect for the Soviet Army and the American Navy, and therefore tended to be on the safe side in foreign policy. The

---

651

---


3008 For a short biography see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 214. Tashiro died in July 1937 directly after the Incident at the Marco Polo Bridge.

3009 Ibidem, 174.

3010 Ibid., 195.


3012 Ian Nish, Foreign Policy, op. cit., 212.
Tosei-Ha was pro-German, anti-British and anti-American, and very expansionist with respect to China. With the new Cabinet of Keisuke Okada after the fall of the Saito-Cabinet the Tosei-Ha faction claimed the most important positions. Sadao Araki disappeared as Minister of War, to be succeeded by General Senjurō Hayashi of the Tosei-Ha, whom we have met as the insubordinating commanding general of the Korea Army (See page 642). The deputy chief of staff Mazaki was replaced by General Tetsuan Nagata of the same faction. Dissensions between the two factions increased to the point that Nagata was murdered by Lieut.-Col. Saburo Aizawa, a Kodo-Ha supporter at the Tokyo Military Academy. A court-martial under Lieut.-Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, the future conqueror of Singapore and illustrious member of the Kodo-Ha, could not avoid the death penalty for Aizawa.

The internal crisis came to a boiling point after the general elections of 20 February 1936. To the amazement of the military, and notwithstanding the zeal of the police and secret services in suppressing all "dangerous ideas", the liberal Minseito party won the elections. The ultra-rightist Nationalist Party of Kichiro Hirunuma gained only 5 % of the vote. Six days later, on 26 February 1936, took place the most bloody military revolt in Japanese modern history. The ni-ni-roku or "2-26" incident was the insurrection in Tokyo of about 1400 soldiers of the 1st Infantry Division, under the leadership of Army Captains Koda, Nonaka and Ando. All over the country, small detachments of soldiers commanded by young subaltern officers formed murder commando's, which murdered statesmen, politicians and generals of the Tosei-Ha, mostly at their own homes in the presence of their family. Next to many others ex-Premier Admiral Makato Saito, Minister of Finance Takahashi, and lieut.-Gen. Jotaro Watanabe were murdered. Premier Okada escaped, and Vice-Admiral Kantaro Suzuki was wounded. The Japanese public was shocked, and the Emperor declared against the advice of his closest advisers, that he deplored the murders. That meant the end of the troubles. As most of those murdered were Admirals, Admiral Yonai concentrated the First Fleet in Tokyo Bay, landed naval troops at Yokohama on 29 February, and surrounded the compounds and offices which had been occupied by the rebels. The rebels capitulated, and the ringleaders (17 young officers and 4 civilians, including Ikki Kita) were condemned to death and executed on 12 July 1936.

The purpose of the rebellion was of course to get rid of the navy-dominated cabinets with their well-known lack of enthusiasm about continental expansion. Because the rebels were Kodo-Ha supporters, this was a golden opportunity for the Tosei-Ha faction to cleanse the command structure of the Army from Kodo-Ha influence. The new cabinet of Koki Hirota was installed on 19 March 1936, with General Count Hisaichi Terauchi as Minister of War. He sent Generals Mazaki and Araki into retirement, and activated the Imperial Ordinance of 1900, which stated that Ministers of War and Navy had to be actively serving officers. Although well-meaning, the consequence of this decision was to greatly strengthen the influence of the Chiefs of Staff on the foreign policy of their country.

* * *

Note: For a concise biography of this important officer, see R. Fuller, Shohan, op. cit., 215 - 217.
Another effect of the 2-26 Incident was that the anxiety of the personal advisers of the Emperor for his and for their well-being caused even more isolation of the Emperor from army and state matters. It also ended the important position of the Minister of Finance. The new Minister of Finance had no longer any restraining influence on the army, and Minister Eishi Baba could only increase public debt and meet the enlarged military budgets by inflationary financing. In doing so he unwittingly prescribed a Keynesian recipe against depression, and the Japanese economy started to expand again. The military also got an even larger grip on economics by instituting the Ministerial Office of Planning in October 1937. This Planning Office put the Japanese economy on a war footing, although the market economy was only partially replaced by a plan-economy. The Office of Planning was managed by officers of both Services.

The fast conversion to a war economy made Japan even more dependent on increased imports of scarce raw materials from other countries, specifically the United States. Realizing this dependency, the Japanese leaders exhibited a growing interest in the exploitation of the natural resources of the Netherlands East Indies.

6.6.6. The China-Incident.

Under the conditions of the Boxer-protocol of 1901 Japan was allowed to maintain a small military force in Northern China to guard the Embassy in Peking (Beijing) and to protect the communication line between Peking and Tientsin (Tianjin). This "Garrison Army North-China" had its headquarters in Tientsin and was organisationally separated from the Kwantung Army. Its authorized strength was around 2,600 men. In 1937 this "Army" had a strength of about 7,000 men however, and was organized as a Brigade, with two Infantry regiments. With permission of the local Chinese 29th Army, a Japanese battalion had taken up positions in Fengtai, about 12 kilometers Southwest of Peking. From there they could watch over another important railway link, the Peking - Hankow railway which crosses the Yung-ting river near the village of Wanping. The road bridge of this crossing was called the Marco-Polo bridge.

The commanding officers of the Japanese Garrison Army, General Tashiro, and of the Chinese 29th Army, General Sung-Chen-Yuan, saw each other regularly and had developed a good working relationship. Early July 1937 however the first was critically ill, and the second on holiday. In the night of 7 to 8 July 1937 fighting broke out between Japanese and Chinese soldiers near Wanping. During daylight on 8 July the Japanese attacked the Chinese, who repulsed the attack.

The outbreak of hostilities surprised the whole Japanese Cabinet, which was presided over

---


310 A good description of the Incident is given in Jones, op. cit., 30 - 34.
by Prince Funimaro Konoye,\textsuperscript{3041} with Lieut.-Gen. Gen Sugiyama as Minister of War. But in contrast to the Mukden-incident, this one was not premeditated by officers of the field army, who showed commendable restraint in trying to keep the incident localized. Until the Chinese archives are opened, it will not be known who instigated the fateful incident. There are some indications that it was executed by Chinese communists under the aegis of the first secretary of the local branch of the Chinese Communist Party, Liu Shao-Shi\textsuperscript{3042}.

There was reluctance too at the IGS, and the Chief of the Military operations section, General Kanji Ishiwara, who played such a conspicuous role at Mukden, was strongly opposed to further escalation, as he feared a war of attrition with China.\textsuperscript{3043} The War Department however was much more bellicose. Colonel Akira Muto,\textsuperscript{3044} chief of the Operations section of the War Department, was a strong proponent of resolving once and for all the situation in Northern China to the advantage of the Japanese. He was the driving force behind the decision taken on 11 July, to reinforce the garrison army with one division from Korea, one from Manchuria and three divisions from Japan.\textsuperscript{3046} As the Chinese gave in to the Japanese demands at Wanping, the IGS rescinded the order for transportation of the divisions from Japan. On 16 July however the Chinese nationalist government demanded the withdrawal of the Japanese reinforcements from Korea and Manchuria. The new commander of the North China Army, Lieut.-Gen. Kiyoshi Kazuki, thereupon attacked the Chinese on 27 July and occupied the whole area south of Peking in a few days.\textsuperscript{3046}

The following month saw almost no fighting, and there was a general feeling on both sides that the conflict could be localized and thereby contained. Prince Konoye sent a message to the Japanese Ambassador in Nanking instructing him to close a deal with Chiang Kai-Shek before 20 August, the date of the expected arrival of the 3 divisions from Japan in North China. The Japanese proposal was to demilitarize Northern China on both sides, and that was indeed a reasonable proposal. But Chiang was under heavy pressure from his lieutenants to offer serious resistance to the Japanese this time. His German military adviser, General von Falkenhausen, opined that the Chinese had a fair chance of beating the Japanese. Early August Chiang had indeed decided to answer Japanese aggression, but not at the Marco-Polo Bridge.\textsuperscript{3057} Around mid-August Chinese reinforcements poured into Shanghai, where according to the agreement of May 1932, the Japanese had only a force of 2000 Marines. On 12 August the Chinese 87th and 88th Divisions, which had

\textsuperscript{3041} For a comprehensive political biography of Konoye, see Yoshitake Oka: Konoe Funimaro: A political biography. Univ. of Tokyo Press, Tokyo 1983.


\textsuperscript{3043} J.W. Morley: The China Quagmire, op. cit., 236.

\textsuperscript{3044} For a short biography of Muto, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 160 - 161.

\textsuperscript{3046} The total Japanese military strength at that moment consisted of 11 divisions in Japan, 2 in Korea and 4 in Manchuria.

\textsuperscript{3046} Ikuhiko Hata, in J.W. Morley: The China Quagmire, op. cit., 260 - 261.

\textsuperscript{3057} C.L. Chennault: "The Way of a Fighter", New-York 1949, 41 - 42. Chennault was the Air Adviser to Chiang Kai-Shek. See also message of German Ambassador Trautmann to his Government of 21 July 1937, referred to in Jones, op. cit., 41, note 2.
been trained by German advisers, took up positions in front of the Japanese concession. The Chinese enjoyed a seven to one majority, and on 13 August the Chinese attacked the Japanese positions.\footnote{For a detailed account of the start of the fighting, see Jones, 47 - 49.} The fight for Shanghai would rage for some months, with the Chinese ultimately on the losing side, as they could not interdict the sealanes from Japan along which reinforcements were rushed in to Shanghai.

Just as in 1932, the Japanese Navy again proved to be warlike, even before the outbreak of hostilities in Shanghai.\footnote{Ikuzihiko Hata, op. cit., 268.} Navy Minister Mitsumasa Yonai\footnote{For a short biography see R. Fuller, Shokan, ibid., 305 - 306.} proposed on 10 August, before the start of the hostilities, a punitive expedition from Shanghai to Nanking. The IGS was not very keen on the idea, as it was far more interested in Northern China. This was the beginning of a rift between the two services that was to have dire consequences.\footnote{David Lu, in J.W. Morley: The China Quagmire, op. cit., 237. , Ikuzihiko Hata, Ibidem, 266 - 268.} The fighting in Shanghai escalated what had begun as a local conflict into a full-scale war between Japan and China, although the conflict was still euphemistically called the “China Incident”. It was the start of a war which was to last to 1945.

This is not the place to analyse and describe the military campaigns which took place during the “China Incident”. Reference is made to the available literature, which is however rather scarce.\footnote{Dick Wilson: When Tigers Fight - The story of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937 - 1945. London, 1982. A Dutch-language article is by H.Th. Bussemaker: “De rol van China in de Tweede Wereldoorlog” Marineblad, Vol. 75 (1965). 707 - 733.} It was a bloody, total war, waged by the Japanese on the Chinese populace. The culmination point was the Nanking Massacre in December 1937 - January 1938, when rampaging Japanese soldiers in that city maimed and killed around 300.000 Chinese men, women and children, under the eyes of many western embassy staffs. Many of the western diplomats, including members of the German Embassy, provided with brassards with the swastika sign, tried to save Chinese civilians.\footnote{See for example Erwin Wickert: The Good German of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe. Little, Brown & Cy, Boston 1999.} The behaviour of the military was such, that IGS even feared for a total breakdown of discipline in the army, resulting in disciplinary actions in order to restore morale and the offering of apologies to western observers by Japanese commanding officers like Lieut.-Gen. Iwane Matsui\footnote{For a concise biography of Matsui, who was condemned by the IMTFE and hanged in 1948 for his role in the rape of Nanking, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 148 - 149.} for the conduct of his subordinates.\footnote{See D. Wilson, op. cit., 66 - 85, and M & S. Harries, op. cit., 221 - 230.} “Nanking” is a tragic episode in East Asian history, which exerts its influence even today in Japanese - Chinese relations.\footnote{Iris Chang: The Rape of Nanking. Basic Books, New York 1998.}

The military campaigns in China were also well-suited for fanatical young Japanese officers to destroy all vestiges of western influence in China. As such they targeted in
particular American missionaries and their acolytes. These actions were not centrally coordinated, but resulted in a more and more anti-Japanese attitude in American public opinion. The American ambassador in Tokyo, Joseph Grew, drew the attention of Premier Konoye to 187 cases of Japanese bombardments of American property, and 203 cases of molestation of American citizens by Japanese, all in the period between July and December 1937.

The most infamous incident however, involving American and British interests, was the sinking of the USS PANAY. The PANAY was an American gunboat of the Yangtze Patrol. With Japanese approval the gunboat steamed on the Yangtze from Nanking to Shanghai, when it came under the guns of Japanese field artillery belonging to an army unit commanded by Colonel Kingoro Hashimoto, one of the founders of the Sakurakai Society. He ordered an airplane and artillery bombardment on the PANAY, which was carried out on 12 December 1937, resulting in the sinking of the PANAY, with loss of American lives. For a moment, it looked as if the United States would declare war, as the U.S. Government had been informed as early as 20 December, that the action was an act of insubordination by Hashimoto towards his chief, Lieut.-Gen. Iwane Matsui, commander of the Japanese expeditionary force. However, the apologies directly from the Japanese government were so voluminous and sincere, and the indemnity offered so generous, that the American government did not resort to war.

In order to maintain a better grip on their field armies in China, the Japanese High Command in Tokyo had instituted the Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) in November 1937. It came too late to prevent the Nanking massacre, however. When Chiang Kai-Shek evacuated his capital, Nanking, and moved his government to Chungking, the Japanese attitude hardened perceptibly. When the Chinese rejected Japanese conditions for peace talks on 26 December 1937, the Japanese Prime Minister called for an "Imperial Conference": a meeting of the Cabinet, attended by the Emperor and the two service Chiefs of Staff. This Imperial Conference took place on 11 January 1938, and it was decided to rupture the diplomatic relations with China, and to occupy Hankow by military conquest. The Japanese government also ended the German mediation efforts. No official declaration of War was forthcoming, however, because Japan (and China) needed American imports, which would have been forbidden by the strict American Neutrality Law if an official state of war existed between Japan and China.

As Jones has outlined, the Japanese failed to set up a unified command for the separate armies operating in China, the IGHQ in Tokyo being too far away to be effective. The result was the development of strong "localism" within the various local army staffs, and

---


3090 Masatake Okumiya: "How the PANAY was sunk" Proceedings U.S. Naval Institute, Vol. 79 (1953), 6, 587.

3090 See Waldo H. Heinrichs in M. Borg, op. cit., 213.

3091 Jones, op. cit., 70; Nish, Foreign Policy, op. cit., 223.
even less control from Tokyo. This resulted in uncoordinated Japanese military actions, which gave the Chinese troop commanders the opportunity to reorganize their divisions, and even to inflict a telling military defeat on the Japanese North Chinese Army at the battle of Tai-erh-wang in April 1938, after which this army had to be quickly reinforced.

6.6.7. Rumbling on the Soviet border.

One of the reasons for the stiffened resistance of the Chinese were secret talks with the Soviet Union, which promised China to begin a steady flow of military materials across the Gobi desert. Obviously it was Stalin's interest to draw the Japanese in the Chinese quagmire, because that would avoid Japanese adventures into Eastern Siberia from their newly acquired Manchurian base.

To start with, much Russian war material had already been shipped from Vladivostok to China's southern harbour at Canton, but materials were also transported by ship to Haiphong Harbour in French Indochina, and from there to Kunming over the Haiphong-Hanoi-Kunming railway. This to the annoyance of the Japanese, as we have seen in Chapter 5, page 520. But even before Canton was occupied by the Japanese in 1938, the Chinese had started the construction of a road between Kunming and the railway head at Lashio of the railway from Rangoon and Mandalay through Burma. This would later become the famous Burma Road. Moreover, Chinese and Russians also toiled on the construction of two transport roads in Central Asia. One road ran from Alma-Ata to Sinkiang, a second from Ulyan-Ude on the Trans-Siberian railway to Sian straight across the Gobi Desert. The Russians also commenced an air ferry between Alma Ata and Chungking. All this supplied the Chinese with sufficient weapons and munitions to keep Chinese resistance to the Japanese alive.

Upset by the expectation of a long drawn-out and unplanned war with China, Premier Konoye threatened to resign. The army was not yet ready to take over political power completely, and therefore Konoye was pacified by changing Gen Sugiyama for Maj.-Gen. Seishiro Itagaki, who was known as an opponent of a long war against China. Itagaki was a good friend of Kanji Ishihara, and both had played crucial roles during the Mukden-incident. Ishihara was now the vice-Chief of Staff of the Kwantung-Army; his superior was Lieut.-Gen. Hideki Tojo. A personal friend of Konoye, Lieut.-Gen. Kazushige Ugaki, became Minister of Foreign Affairs. Both Itagaki and Ugaki were members of the now discredited Kodo-Ha, and more anti-Russian than anti-Western. The newly constituted cabinet was inaugurated on 26 May 1938, and at least held the promise of halting the drift to a full-scale war in China. Itagaki considered the Soviet-Union to be the real enemy of Japan, but Japan had first to put its industrial house in order before it could successfully confront the Soviet-Union. Large-scale military operations in China were therefore halted, with the Japanese switching from field-campaigns to the chasing of guerrillas and terror-bombings of not yet occupied large Chinese cities, to make the Chinese populace

---

302 Jones, op. cit., 73.
304 Maxon, op. cit. 139. For a concise biography of Tojo, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 218 - 219, and also Courtney Browne: Tojo, the last Banzai. Corgi, London 1967.
305 Jones, op. cit., 83 - 85.
war-weary. Moreover, in order to save on precious raw materials, the Japanese armies in China were ordered to live off the land as much as possible. From the spring of 1938, a relative quiet returned to the Chinese fronts.

However, it were again field officers who dashed the hopes and plans of a government cabinet. Inspired by the anti-Russian feelings within the cabinet, junior officers at the border of Northern Korea with the Siberian Sea-province provoked an incident with Russian border guards near Chang-Ku-Feng on 31 July 1938. During 1937 and the beginning of 1938 the number of border incidents along the Amur, which formed the border between Manchuria and Eastern Siberia, had already increased considerably.306

Unknown to the Japanese, the Soviets had superior intelligence about what was going on in the highest political and military circles in Tokyo, due to Richard Sorge and his spying.307 This human intelligence was the Russian equivalent of American MAGIC, and gave the Soviets invaluable inside information in the critical period 1937 - 1941. The intelligence obtained resulted in a considerable strengthening of Soviet army forces in eastern Siberia. At Chang-Ku-Feng the Russians decided to hit back hard, mauling the Japanese 19th Division in the process. The Russian 32nd and 40th Divisions attacked on 7 August with tanks and heavy artillery barrages, and inflicted a 21 percent casualty rate on the 19th Division.308 The Japanese withdrew to their original positions.

The obvious conclusion that Japanese infantry troops could not beat a foe equipped with tanks and heavy artillery, was not drawn, neither by the Korea Army under Lieut.-Gen. Kuniako Koiso,309 nor by IGHQ. The limited scope of the fighting, the fact that the Russians did not pursue their tactical breakthrough and the relative ease, with which the Japanese ambassador at Moscow, Mamoru Shigemitsu, could arrange a cease-fire, all combined to allow the Japanese to conclude that they had won, and not the Soviets.307

On 12 May 1939 another incident occurred, this time on the Manchurian border with Outer Mongolia, a Russian protectorate. The fighting started near the village of Nomonhan on the borders of the river Khalkin-Gol. This incident escalated quickly into a local battle between elements of the Kwantung Army and the Red Army. After numerous skirmishes and local actions, including fights for air superiority, the Red Army under Major General G.K. Zhukov started a double envelopment of the Japanese positions with tanks on 20 August 1939. In a few days, the Japanese 23th Division under Lieutenant General Michitaro Komatsubara ceased to exist. The 28th Regiment of the 7th Division suffered the highest casualty rate of all Japanese units in action: a staggering 73% ! The battle history of this regiment at


309 For a short biography of this swashbuckling personality, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 139 - 140.

310 Ibid., 156.
Nomonhan has been the object of an American study, leaving readers deeply impressed by the valour of the Japanese soldier and the leadership qualities displayed by junior officers, which both however were wasted by reckless attacks against a technologically superior enemy. Of the Japanese casualties of approximately 18,000 men, more than 50% were caused by the massed Soviet artillery. The Japanese people learned only after the war about the terrible losses suffered at Nomonhan.

The Nomonhan Incident is barely known in the West, because it was kept secret by both parties and coincided with momentous events in Western Europe in August/September 1939. It was however brought to the attention of British authorities. Nevertheless, it is of a momentous importance, because it convinced the Japanese army that an all-out war against the Soviet Union could not be won. Therefore the incident reinforced the position of the navy in its wish to turn south into S.E. Asia. Nomonhan proved that Japan possessed probably the finest infantry army in the world, but also that in armament and equipment it had been outclassed by modern western armies. The Japanese lacked heavy artillery, and medium and heavy tanks, and also lost air superiority above the battlefield to Russian air squadrons. Japanese tactical doctrines had almost not changed since the Russo-Japanese War and still emphasized offensive actions over the defensive, stressing hand-to-hand combat, bayonet charges and especially night attacks by infantry. Completely lacking were doctrines for combined arms attacks. The lessons of Nomonhan were again brought home to the Japanese in the Pacific War, where superior American firepower and combined arms actions overcame the individual valour, fighting spirit and tenacity of the Japanese infantryman. Still, the myth of well-armed Japanese troops can be found in many books about the Pacific War, and even in the semi-official Dutch History of World War II.

The Nomonhan Incident came to a close after the signing of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact on 15 August 1939, which signalled to the Japanese that the Soviet-Union no longer felt her Western frontier threatened by Germany, thus freeing her hands for dealing with the Japanese in Manchuria. The combined results of the Ribbentrop-Molotov-Pact and the defeat at Nomonhan and, as a consequence, the direct threat by the Soviet-Union prompted the resignation of the Hiranuma-Cabinet on 28 August 1939.

6.6.8. The Rush to Tonkin.

After these events, it would have been a logical move for the Japanese government to

---


2072 Ibid., 99.


2075 L. de Jong, op. cit., Volume 11a, 711.

2076 Baron Kichiro Hiranuma had replaced Konoye as Premier, when the latter resigned early 1939 because of the interminable War in China.
switch from pro-fascist to pro-western, and that was also the message given by the Emperor to the new candidate-Prime Minister, Lieutenant General Nobuyuki Abe,\textsuperscript{3077} to his own embarrassment.\textsuperscript{3078} Abe was the army candidate who held moderate views and was not considered as being strong-willed. The army leadership itself had not yet made up its mind about its goals. General Shunroku Hata\textsuperscript{3079} became Minister of War, and was expected to restore discipline in the Army. Admiral Yonai's departure of course weakened the Cabinet, but Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura\textsuperscript{3080} became Foreign Minister under the condition that the Kwantung Army would be brought under control at last.

Abe's Cabinet was installed on 30 August, 1939 and at first pursued a pro-Western course. One of Abe's first acts was the announcement of a cease-fire at Nomonhan. The Army accepted its defeat at Nomonhan, and a logical consequence was a kind of understanding with the Soviet-Union (See section on Diplomacy). The army went to the extraordinary step of relieving the commander of the Kwantung Army and most of his senior staff, but made the same error in not instilling discipline in the junior officers who had used \textit{gekokujo} to foster their own aims. The firebrands of the Kwantung Army most responsible for the incidents were Colonels Takushiro Hattori and Masanobu Tsuji, who were transferred with a promotion to the IGHQ. This wrong signal did not instill real discipline within the officer corps!

The outbreak of war in Europe gave some time for reflection, and a number of new opportunities were discerned. But there was also the potentially dangerous notification by the American government in July 1939 that the bilateral Treaty of Commerce and Navigation would be abrogated as from January 1940. It was obvious that this would enable the United States to take economic sanctions against Japan.

Therefore the Japanese government had to deal with the possibilities of an American embargo. A cabinet meeting was convened on 28 December 1939 with the express purpose of discussing the alternative courses of action. The Japanese Government had two alternatives: good relations with the Western powers combined with a withdrawal from China, or continuation of the war in China with, as the ultimate consequence, the risk of an American embargo. The conclusion of this meeting was that by diplomatic and/or military means the inclusion within the "Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" of French-Indochina, Malaya and the NEI had to be realised in due time.\textsuperscript{3081} Meanwhile, Admiral Nomura as Minister of Foreign Affairs had started talks with American Ambassador Grew to avert the threat of an embargo by the U.S., and military planning was ordered for a southward advance to secure the natural resources of South-East Asia. In effect, the Japanese government had chosen the second option.

When Nomura failed to make headway with the Americans, who refused to even sign a preliminary accord on trade, Abe resigned in January 1940. It was a clear sign to the initiated how serious the situation had become. His successor was Admiral Mitsumasa

\textsuperscript{3077} For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 79.

\textsuperscript{3078} David Lu, op. cit., 59 - 60.

\textsuperscript{3079} Ibid., 96.

\textsuperscript{3080} Ibid., 276.

\textsuperscript{3081} David Lu, op. cit., 67.
Yonai's again, with General Arita as Foreign Minister. Yonai's challenge was to gradually increase the oil imports from the NEI, in order to cover the risks of an eventual American oil embargo, without risking war with the U.S. Because of the American presence in the Philippines, war with Great Britain and the Netherlands could result in an American flank attack executed by the U.S. Navy. The U.S. position however was also delicate. The American army was - with only 250,000 men in 1940 - in a parlous state (pages 58 - 59) and although the American navy was better prepared, it was not yet ready for war with the Japanese. Moreover, 1940 was an election year for a new Presidential term. The striking feature of the political campaign of 1940 was the predominance of antiwar statements among Democrats and Republicans. The U.S. secretary of State, Cordell Hull, therefore had to manoeuvre in such a way that the Japanese were prevented from taking over the NEI diplomatically or militarily during the Presidential campaign.  

Notwithstanding the reasonably pro-western outlook of Yonai, the wheels of fortune again changed everything. The occupation of the Netherlands and France by the Germans in May/June 1940 gave new impetus for a drive to the South, the more so as British and French troops had occupied the Dutch islands of Aruba and Curacao to protect the oil refineries against a German attack from Venezuela. This occupation however caused a strong commotion in Japan, as the ruling elite and public opinion expected a similar pre-emptive occupation of the NEI by either the Americans or the British. Diplomatically, the Japanese tried to avoid such an occupation by stating on 15 April 1940, that Japan would respect the status quo in NEI, even if The Netherlands were occupied by Germany. We will deal with this so-called Arita Declaration in a subsequent paragraph. Officers of the naval staff under Captain Yoshimaz a Nakahara (also known as "the King of the South Sea") had already developed plans for a lightning occupation of the oilfields of Borneo and the nickel mines of the Celebes, in order to beat the Anglo-Saxons in a pre-emptive occupation. Employed for such a strike would be the 4th Fleet, which was established on 15 November 1939 with the Palau-Islands as its intended home base. According to one Dutch historian the Japanese Navy had already partially mobilised in May 1940 in order to execute those plans. In reality the Japanese naval staff only took measures to concentrate the 4th Fleet (which was not a very impressive fleet anyway, see subchapter 6.9.8) at Palau, which was executed between 14 - 17 May 1940. Moreover, the Japanese naval staff carried out some war games in May and June 1940 and reported the results to the Navy Minister, Zengo Yoshida. The sobering conclusion was that Japan would be beaten within a year by U.S. naval power even if Japan had acquired the Dutch oil resources. Nevertheless, Yoshida ordered that naval planning for such an operation had to be continued.

The army approached the naval staff with a new proposal: only Great Britain and the NEI

---

303 For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 305.
304 Beard, op. cit., 7.
305 Cordell Hull, op. cit., 891 - 893.
would be attacked. The U.S. was neutral anyway, and why disturb a hornets’ nest? Notwithstanding the obvious risks of American involvement for the future of Japan, the naval staff decided to pursue war planning on that basis, as it would enhance the Navy’s stature and would mean higher outlays for Naval budget increases. The naval commanders clearly considered the expansion of the navy as being of higher importance than the risks incurred for the nation as a whole. This change of opinion within the naval staff also had consequences for the tenure of Yonai as Premier, who resigned on 16 July 1940 after strong pressure by general Akira Muto.

Again Prince Fumimaro Konoye became Premier, but this time his Minister of Foreign Affairs was Yosuke Matsuoka, a “man of destiny”. Matsuoka, who was a protegé of Konoye and who was a revisionist, would be responsible for Japan’s drift into a general war by his subsequent actions as Foreign Minister. He was brilliant, he had studied in the U.S. and had married an American woman, and moreover he was absolutely not representative of the average Japanese, as he was very extrovert, arrogant, irascible and vain. Cordell Hull, who had met him before, had developed a strong antipathy against Matsuoka, and qualified him “as crooked as a basket full of fish-hooks”. A colleague of Matsuoka, Navy Minister Koshirō Oikawa, once during a Cabinet Meeting with a long monologue by Matsuoka, turned to his colleague-Ministers and remarked in all seriousness: “The Foreign Minister is crazy, isn’t he?” Matsuoka was an absolute contrast to the new Minister of War, Lieut.-Gen. Hideki Tojo. Tojo was a hard worker, carrying the nickname “the razor” because of his sharp wits and his dedication. Tojo had a large following in the Army due to his adherence to strict discipline, and was a prominent member of the Tosei-Ha. As Chief of the Military Police (Kempei-Tai) within the Kwantung Army he had suppressed all efforts to support the Tokyo rebellion during the ni-ni-roku incident. In his views gekokujo was absolutely unacceptable, and therefore conservative army circles had pinned their hopes on him to get the army back in the barracks. Where Tojo was dull and tedious, Matsuoka was lively, flamboyant and overflowing with energy.

Matsuoka would make Japanese diplomacy even more difficult for the Western Powers to understand, but as Japanese Foreign Policy is the subject of a different subchapter, we now will concentrate on the role of the army and of the navy in the drive to the South.

Directly after the French armistice on 18 June 1940, Matsuoka had delivered an ultimatum to the Governor-General of French Indo-China, General Georges Catroux, in order to secure the closure of the Haiphong-Kunming Railway, and to have inspectors in place. Catroux had caved in, and at the end of July a group of inspectors under Lieut.-Gen. Issaku Nishihara was sent to Hanoi. Because of his direct dealings with the Japanese, the new French Vichy-Government relieved Catroux, and appointed Vice-Adm. Jean Decoux in his place.

The reason for this Japanese action against FIC was the large share of total goods shipped to China, which reached its destination via the Haiphong-Kunming railway. In June

---

308 J.W. Morley, Ibid., 251 - 252.

309 Maxon, op. cit., 144 - 146.

309 For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 277.

309 R.C.J. Butow: Tojo and the coming of the War. 139, 208.
1940 the Nationalist Chinese received at the railway head at Kunming in Yun-nan province 15,000 tons of war supplies, representing 48% of the total amount of supplies which reached China that month.\footnote{309}

Nishihara learned that the operational directives given to the naval inspectors under Captain Kuranosuke Yanagisawa were quite different from those given to his military inspectors.\footnote{309} Indeed there was a divergence in opinion between the army and navy staffs within IGHQ on the way in which to handle the French. After a smooth beginning, the French under Catroux stalled the negotiations in Hanoi about troop transfers from the Japanese Southern Army through Tonkin in order to attack Kunming. This proposal was brought into the negotiations by the Southern Army, which had dispatched its Vice-Chief of Staff, Colonel Kenryu Sato, to Hanoi on 10 July. Sato knew very well that this request had not been approved by IGHQ, but presented it as if it had been decided already, leaving Nishihara wondering whether he had missed something.

Meanwhile, in Tokyo a cabinet change had taken place, bringing Matsuoka into the negotiations. Matsuoka presented an ultimatum to the French Ambassador in Tokyo, Charles Arsène-Henri, on 1 August 1940. Japan demanded the immediate military occupation of the northern province of Tonkin in Indochina, in order to control shipments to Nationalist China over the Haiphong-Kunming railway. The driving force behind this diplomatic move was of course the staff of the Southern Army, based on Canton, and in particular the Chief of Staff, Major General Hiroshi Nemoto and his deputy, Colonel Kenryu Sato. The Southern Army had occupied the Chinese province of Kwangsi in early 1940, and around June 1940 units of the Japanese 5th Division and the Guards Division had reached the Franco-Chinese border. That made it possible for the Japanese to exert direct military pressure on the French.

The French however hesitated, and tried to win time in order to secure via diplomatic channels a guarantee from either Great Britain and/or the United States. Meanwhile Nishihara was completely perplexed by the negotiations in Tokyo, which interfered with his negotiations in Hanoi.\footnote{309} He therefore went back to Tokyo, leaving Sato as second in command.

Of course, this was not to the liking of the Japanese Southern Command. Without authorization to do so by IGHQ, Colonel Sato on 2 August 1940 threatened the French Governor-General, Admiral Jean Decoux, with a Japanese invasion of Tonkin if no passage through Tonkin was allowed. It became obvious that Southern Army HQ was ready to order the invasion of Tonkin, even against the wishes of IGHQ. Decoux however was diplomatically more adroit than Sato, by referring Sato’s request to official diplomatic channels. Matsuoka at last signed an agreement with Arsène-Henri on 30 August 1940, in which France agreed to a passage of Japanese soldiers through Tonkin to Kunming in lieu of a Japanese promise to respect its sovereignty over the whole of Indochina.\footnote{309} Southern Command however again insubordinated by giving its own interpretation to the


\footnote{309} Ikuhiko Hata, op. cit., 162.

\footnote{309} Ikuhiko Hata, op. cit., 166.

\footnote{309} Ikuhiko Hata, op. cit., 173, 175.
Matsuoka-Henri agreement, threatening a Japanese attack on Tonkin on 5 September 1940. The Naval representatives within Nishihara's staff, however, protested against this interpretation of the agreement with the French, throwing IGHQ in utter confusion, and causing a serious conflict between the army and navy staffs.

On 4 September 1940 Nishihara and French Army Commander-in-Chief General Maurice Martin had reached an agreement on stationing a limited amount of Japanese troops along the Haiphong-Kunming railway. In the night of 5 to 6 September, however, a battalion of the 5th Division of the Southern Army under Lieut-Col. Takuji Morimoto had crossed the French border near the border outpost of Dong Dang. Sato, who was on his way back to Canton, visited Morimoto on the 6th, who then had already withdrawn his battalion. Both Saito and the 5th Division Commander, Akito Nakamura were completely perplexed by Morimoto's adventurism, and Nakamura ordered him sent for psychiatric tests! Army Minister Tojo ensured that Morimoto was courtmartialed, and both Nakamura and the commander of the Southern Army (Lieut.-Gen. Reikichi Ando) were later to be relieved of their posts.

Morimoto's action provided Decoux with a pretext for suspending the negotiations, sending the Japanese negotiators back to Tokyo, respectively Canton. In Tokyo the army and navy staffs resolved their disagreements at last, and new instructions were given to Major General Kyoji Tominaga, the Chief Operations Section of the army staff. Tominaga first went to Canton to visit Southern Army HQ, and then to Hanoi on 16 September. He informed Nishihara about the IGHQ instructions, but added an instruction of his own which allowed the French only 48 hours to comply with what was in effect a Japanese ultimatum: if no agreement was reached, the Japanese would forcefully occupy Tonkin on 22 September 1940. Moreover, as from 19 September, Japanese residents and the Nishihara unit would be evacuated from Tonkin.

When news of this unauthorized addition arrived in Tokyo, Tojo exploded with anger. He personally instructed the Southern Army that the occupation of Tonkin had to be peaceful, and informed Nishihara that he should stay at Hanoi until the negotiations with the French were finished. The operations division of the Army General Staff disagreed with Tojo, but Navy Minister Koshiro Oikawa supported Tojo, and so did the naval staff. Meanwhile Nishihara received conflicting orders from the Army General Staff, the

---


307 Ikuhiko Hata, op. cit., 178.

308 For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 166.

309 Ikuhiko Hata, op. cit., 183.

310 For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 83.

311 For a short biography of this fighting general, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 220 - 221.

312 Ikuhiko Hata, op. cit., 188 - 189.

313 Hata, op. cit., 189.
Navy General Staff and the Foreign Ministry. His position was indeed not to be envied, as the French stubbornly refused an increase in the strength of Japanese occupation troops from 5,000 to 6,000. In the early hours of 22 September, Nishihara and Martin at least reached an agreement, which was transmitted to both the 5th Division in Kwangsi, the Southern Army in Canton, the Japanese Fleet offshore of Haiphong, with on board of the landing ships the Imperial Guards Division, and the French Army. The agreement stated that the 6,000 Japanese troops for the occupation of airfields and railway stations in Tonkin were to be landed in Haiphong harbour - and thus not to be supplied by border crossings of the 22nd Army305, of which the 5th Division and Imperial Guards Division were part.

The 22nd Army (reporting to the Southern Army) had meanwhile given instructions to the divisions concerned to begin border crossings on 00 hours of September 23, 1940. In the evening of the 22nd the telegrams from Nishihara and IGHQ arrived at 22nd Army HQ. On the urgings of Tominaga, who doubted the veracity of the IGHQ telegram, the generals at 22nd Army HQ decided to ignore those telegrams. Again it was the navy who interfered. Vice-Admiral Shiro Takasu, Commander-in-Chief of the Second China Fleet, visited General Ando ashore, and talked Ando out of an attack on the French Indochina border. Ando issued a halting order on 2100 hours on 22 September, but due to active sabotage at 22nd Army HQ it did not reach the front units in time. Nakamura had already ordered his 5th Division over the border and fighting had started on three locations after the deadline had expired on 00 hours of 23 September. Nakamura received an order to stop fighting at 40 minutes past midnight from 22nd Army, but decided to ignore the order. Fifteen minutes later he received an order from Southern Army HQ in Canton, that he had to take Langson! Here also confusion raged. In fact, as subsequent telegrams proved, both the Operations Section of the Army GHQ, and the commanders of the Southern Army and 22nd Army, not to mention the Commander of the 5th Division (Nakamura), were in favor of military actions against the French, and knowing full well the instructions of the Army and Navy Minister, decided to interpret these telegrams to their liking. Dong Dang was overrun on the 24th and Langson on the 26th, after heavy fighting.

The Commander of the 2nd China Fleet and his staff were very suspicious about the border crossings, and on the express order of Vice-Admiral Takasu the amphibious force, which had anchored near Haiphong Harbour, was to postpone landing operations upon further order. Naval headquarters concurred with the position of the 2nd China Fleet. The result was IGHQ Army Instruction no. 745, ordering a halt of the fighting at Langson, and instructing the landing force under Lieutenant General Takuma Nishimura90, commander of the Imperial Guards Division, on board the navy ships to land at Do Son only

---

304 Hata, op. cit. 190.

305 A Japanese Army is equivalent to a Western Army Corps.

306 For an incomplete biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 292.

307 Hata, op. cit., 196.

308 Hata, op. cit., 199.

309 For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, 171.
after agreement with the responsible navy commanders. Nishimura however argued with the navy commander that unless a specific army order arrived before 0300 hours on 26 September, the troops had to land. And as no countermanding order was received, the troops disembarked at 0410 hours on that day, and started landing at Do Son near Haiphong. Nishimura and his Chief-of-Staff, Colonel Isamu Cho took the precaution to hiding themselves in the ship's store and in a lifeboat, so that a countermanding order could not be given to them when it arrived! That countermanding order, Army Instruction 745, was not passed to Nishimura on explicit instruction of Colonel Sato at South China HQ in Canton.

The occupation of Tonkin was accomplished at last, but had left a trail of confusion and destruction. Internally, it had brought conflicts between the IGHQ Army and Navy Staffs, between the IGHQ and Staffs of Southern Army and 22nd Army, between War Minister and Operations Section Army Staff, between Army, Navy and Foreign Affairs, and between the Nishihara Unit of inspectors and almost everybody else in Japanese army staffs. Externally, it had exposed to foreign eyes the lack of military discipline in the Army. Hata laments: "Many serious problems still remained: the lack of coordination between political and military strategies, the failure of cooperation between the army and the navy, extremism within the Army General Staff, and lax military discipline. In particular, the Army was suffering from the tendency of junior officers to dominate or ignore their seniors... The disease...had infected the army since the time of the Manchurian incident but by now was so widespread that the death of the Japanese empire was inevitable".

It thus became time for sweeping changes. On his return from Canton, Tominaga was fired as Chief Operations. Vice-Chief of Staff General Shigeru Sawada relieved Ando from the Command of Southern Army. Nishihara was replaced by the former military attaché at the Japanese Embassy in France, Major General Raishiro Sumita. Tojo personally instructed Sumita that he should avoid any troubles with the French, which may explain the relative restraint of the Japanese troops in Tonkin during the period up to March 1945. Under new leadership, the 5th Division was evacuated from Kwangs i via Haiphong to Shanghai, and Kwangs i province was more or less abandoned to the Chinese. The French even got back their forts at the border.

Later in the year, both Prince Kanin and General Sawada resigned as Chief of Staff and Vice-Chief of Staff of the army. Tominaga was sent to Manchuria. It was Tojo himself who ensured that discipline was restored. The bitterness which the French border incident had caused between the army and naval General Staffs would be a heritage which would influence the course of the subsequent war of the Pacific.

One issue which had been highlighted by the whole incident was the lack of politico-strategic management of the operations section of the Army Headquarters. Therefore a new office was created, the Office of War Planning under Colonel Arisue Yadoru, which

---

310 For the text of this Instruction, see Hata, op. cit., 201.

311 For a short biography see R. Fuller, Shokan, 83.

312 Hata, op. cit., 203.

313 Hata, op. cit. 206

314 Hata, op. cit. 205
was charged with the political coordination of military operations. The naval staff already possessed such an office.

The political consequences of the stationing of Japanese troops in Northern Indochina were monumental indeed, and had not been foreseen by either Matsuoka, or Tojo, or the Army Staff. It was the first definite step in the direction of Singapore, and that did not go unnoticed in the West. The United States announced an embargo on the export to Japan of high-octane aviation fuel, scrap iron, and certain kinds of steel. This too was a signal. Moreover, all American citizens were recalled from China, Japan, Manchuria and Indochina. These signals were ignored by the Japanese government, however.

6.6.9. The occupation of Southern Indochina.

In order to be able to threaten Singapore, it was necessary for the Japanese to occupy Thailand and Southern Indochina, because only from those territories could landplanes eventually bomb Malaya and Singapore. The obvious desire of the Thai government with respect to the territory they lost in Indochina to France at the beginning of the 20th century made them a natural partner to Japan. Therefore the Japanese Army appointed as their military attaché in Bangkok Colonel Hiroshi Tamura, who began secret discussions with Prime Minister Pibul Songgram on a military alliance against the French.311 These discussions at first did not make much headway, as the Japanese did not want to antagonize the French too much. After the settlement of the Tonkin question however, the Thais became more attractive, and the Japanese assistant military attaché Captain Shinichi Torigoshi reported in late October that Thailand was interested in a military agreement.312 The problem was only that Pibul had refused to confirm this in writing. However, diplomatic feelers went out to the Thai government. On 15 November, Japan’s chargé d’affaires in Bangkok (Shunsuke Asada) reported to his ministry that Thailand had secretly agreed to an alliance with Great Britain and the U.S. That information however was rejected by all three Governments concerned. Nevertheless, Japan now started to increase pressure on the French to accede to Thai demands about their lost territories (page 544). Moreover, shipment of weapons and munitions to Thailand were increased.317

On 10 January 1941 Thai forces crossed the Thai-Indochinese border on several points, and heavy fighting ensued. The French were able to stop the Thai offensive toward Phnom Penh, but failed to dislodge the Thai troops. However, on 17 January 1941 French naval forces wiped out a large part of the Thai fleet in a surprise attack near the Island of Koh Chang. That same day Pibul Songgram asked the new Japanese Ambassador Yasusato Futami for assistance against the French, which request was passed on to Matsuoka.318 Thereupon, Matsuoka informed the French ambassador in Tokyo, Arsène Henry, that Japan would take a very strong attitude if France did not accept the Japanese offer for mediation.


312 Shinjirō Nagaoka, op.cit., 218.

313 Shinjirō Nagaoka, op. cit., 223.

314 Shinjirō Nagaoka, op. cit., 227.
The rejection of this mediation offer by the French would have as a consequence increasing Japanese support for Thailand, therefore Pibul was emboldened to ask for more than he had done before. The French Vichy-government therefore accepted the Japanese mediation offer on 24 January 1941. However, the French emissaries proved to be good negotiators, rejecting a number of successive proposals, which caused a deadlock. Japanese military headquarters thereupon increased military pressure upon the French, and the navy made arrangements for a full-scale invasion of Southern Indochina on 8 March 1941. However, on March 6, the French gave in.

It was this time primarily the navy which put pressure on Matsuoka to induce the French to comply with a full military occupation of Southern Indochina. The navy needed the Camranh-Bay and the airfields around Saigon before it could give any serious consideration to an invasion of Malaya. Prior to their attack on the Soviet-Union, the German government had strongly urged such a Japanese attack on Singapore. The liaison conference between the Chiefs of Staff of the army and navy, the Service Ministers, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs on 25 June 1941 decided on a course of action, which was approved in an imperial conference in the presence of the Emperor on 2 July 1941. It was this conference which made the fateful choice for a penetration to the South, even if this would eventually result in war with the U.S. and Great Britain. It has to be pointed out that this imperial conference took place almost a fortnight after the attack by Germany on the Soviet Union, which had come as a great surprise to the Japanese.

On 12 July the Japanese Ambassador in Vichy, Sotomatsu Kato, handed the French Foreign Minister, Admiral Jean Darlan, a note in which the Japanese government demanded:
1) military cooperation with Japan for the common defense of French Indochina;
2) use of eight air bases, and the use of Saigon and Cam-Ranh Bay as naval bases;
3) French logistical support for Japanese defence personnel dispatched to Southern Indochina;
4) freedom of residence, and freedom of maneuvers for troops stationed in Indochina.

In an accompanying note French sovereignty over FIC remained guaranteed again.

On 12 July the Japanese Ambassador in Vichy, Sotomatsu Kato, handed the French Foreign Minister, Admiral Jean Darlan, a note in which the Japanese government demanded:
1) military cooperation with Japan for the common defense of French Indochina;
2) use of eight air bases, and the use of Saigon and Cam-Ranh Bay as naval bases;
3) French logistical support for Japanese defence personnel dispatched to Southern Indochina;
4) freedom of residence, and freedom of maneuvers for troops stationed in Indochina.

In an accompanying note French sovereignty over FIC remained guaranteed again.

On 12 July the Japanese Ambassador in Vichy, Sotomatsu Kato, handed the French Foreign Minister, Admiral Jean Darlan, a note in which the Japanese government demanded:
1) military cooperation with Japan for the common defense of French Indochina;
2) use of eight air bases, and the use of Saigon and Cam-Ranh Bay as naval bases;
3) French logistical support for Japanese defence personnel dispatched to Southern Indochina;
4) freedom of residence, and freedom of maneuvers for troops stationed in Indochina.

In an accompanying note French sovereignty over FIC remained guaranteed again.

The Japanese had not posed an ultimatum to the French, but a French answer was expected on 19 July. Darlan informed U.S. Ambassador Leahy in Vichy, and told Kato on the 19th that, under the terms of the armistice, France had to consult the German and Italian governments. Kato considered this a rejection of the Japanese demands, and on instructions from Tokyo, insisted that the Japanese demands were met on 2200 hours French time on 22 July, under threat of direct military action. This indeed was now an ultimatum! At noon on 21 July Darlan informed Kato, that France accepted the Japanese terms, on condition that French defence forces would not be involved in "offensive strategies" and that Japan would withdraw its forces as soon as the situation made it unnecessary to station Japanese troops any longer. On the basis of this agreement,

---

918 Shinjiro Nagaoka, op. cit., 233.
919 Shinjiro Nagaoka, op. cit., 235.
920 Shinjiro Nagaoka, op. cit., 237.
921 Shinjiro Nagaoka, op. cit., 238.
Sumita and Decoux worked out detailed agreements about the stationing of Japanese troops in Southern Indochina on 23 July. The peaceful occupation of Southern Indochina by the Japanese resulted in the executive order by President Roosevelt on 25 July, freezing all Japanese assets in the United States, and thereby resulting by all practical purposes in an oil embargo. The British followed the next day, the Dutch on the 27th. The time bomb started ticking towards the attack on Pearl Harbor.


6.7.1. Introduction.

Japan, due to its geographical position and unique history, faced two possible courses of action after it had safeguarded its own existence as an independent nation at the end of the nineteenth century. It could have chosen to stand up for justice and equal treatment towards all Asian peoples, stressing pan-asiatic solidarity and thereby confronting an international community dominated at that time by Anglo-Saxon interests and power. Such a course of action would implicitly require Japan to sacrifice its own special interests and sphere of influence in China, and to strive for better relations with the emerging Chinese nationalists of the Kuo-Min-Tang.

Conversely, Japan could try to outmatch the Anglo-Saxon powers and the Soviet commu-
nist state by subjugating China and S.E. Asia, which would enable Japan to confront those powers, but would negate any pan-asiatic solidarity. In this sub-chapter we will discuss why Japan chose the second alternative, confronting the western democracies and losing in the end all which it had acquired over time.

In this subchapter we will also deal with Japanese diplomacy in the interwar period. Japanese diplomats had to explain to the outside world why Japan acted the way it did - and sometimes such explanations were not easy. It will be shown however that also the civil bureaucracy within the Gaimusho (the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs) counted a lot of hawks who were sympathetic to the striving of Army and Navy, and supported the service ministries. They were called the reformists.

Although the Gaimusho was run by civilians, a number of them shared the more extremist views of the military. These were the reformists, as they opposed the existing conservative old-boys network in the ministry. One of them was Mamoru Shigemitsu, Foreign Secretary between May 1933 and April 1936 in the Hirota-cabinet. Shigemitsu formulated a kind of Monroe-doctrine for the Far East, which would give Japan a dominant position in China. His press secretary, Eiji Amau, gave this view in a press release in April 1934, which caused a storm of protest from the western capitals. Shigemitsu was no lackey of the military, but his ideas were not unlike theirs. Hirota himself wavered between a strong stand towards China, or a more conciliatory attitude.

In effect, the Foreign Ministry was as factionalised as the army and the navy. Katsumi Usui, in a very thoughtful analysis demolishes the myth that the civilians running this ministry were all for peace. He identifies at least three factions at the ministry. The so-called America-Europa faction was rational, pro-western and market-oriented based on open borders. Its best-known members were Foreign Ministers Kijuro Shidehara (1926 -

---

\( ^{312} \) D. Borg, Crisis, op. cit., 136 - 137; I. Nish, Foreign Policy, op. cit., 210.

\( ^{314} \) Katsumi Usui: The role of the Foreign Ministry, in Borg/Okamoto, op. cit., 127 - 148.
1931) and Kichisaburo Nomura, and Prime Minister Kazushige Ugaki. Their opponents were pro-German and oriented towards Kodo-Ha, Japanese mysticism, and economic autarky. The most radical faction was constituted around Toshio Shiratori, ambassador to fascist Italy. Yosuke Matsuoka was a member of this faction. Also critical of the Europe-America faction but less radical than the Shiratori-faction was the Arita-faction, named after Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita. Outstanding members of this faction were Premier Koki Hirota and Vice-Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu. It happened that, in the period 1931 - 1941, the more radical Shiratori- and Arita-factions dominated the Foreign Ministry.

6.7.2. Covering Military Adventures.

The diplomatic problems of Japan started with the Mukden-incident, after which government spokesmen became apologists for a large-scale act of military insubordination. As a consequence, Japan faced important international repercussions. However, international protests were answered with denials that Japan had any territorial ambitions. According to the Gaimusho, the Japanese in Manchuria were merely engaged in restoring law and order. The League of Nations, under pressure due to Chinese protests, decided to install a commission of enquiry, the Lytton Commission, named after its chairman. Moreover, the U.S. Government let it be known that no change in the international situation brought about by violence would be recognized. (The so-called Stimson doctrine, see page 30). But as the U.S. was not represented in the League of Nations, and did not follow its stated displeasure with more severe measures, the Japanese were not too impressed by U.S. diplomacy. In March 1932 the "independent" state of Manchuko was announced under Pu-Yi, last Emperor of the Manchu-dynasty. World opinion however was further disturbed by press reports about the Japanese intervention in Shanghai in May 1932.

The conclusions of the Lytton Report as issued in October 1932 were not to the liking of the Japanese Government, although the report avoided a direct condemnation of Japan. The General Assembly of the League of Nations accepted the contents of the report on 24 February 1933, with Japan alone in voting against its adoption. The Japanese delegation under Yosuke Matsuoka demonstratively left the assembly, and the Japanese Government under Premier Makato Saito decided to withdraw from the League of Nations. The Emperor failed to recognize the severity of what was happening, as he was shielded by advisers who were afraid of their lives, if not the Emperor's.

The Amau Statement of 17 April 1934 confirmed Japan's wishes to increase its market share on the China market (see previous page). Amau declared that Japan had sole responsibility for keeping the peace in the Far East, and that Japan would oppose any efforts on the part of China to seek foreign assistance in order to resist Japan. Also any technical, financial and military assistance by third countries towards China were firmly rejected. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hirota, distanced himself from Amau's declaration under pressure from the West, but Amau remained at his post.

---

Another important international event was the London Naval Conference of January 1935. The fleet faction of the navy however was not allowing a continuation of the Washington and London agreements of 1922 and 1930 respectively. The non-adherence of Japan to the results of this conference would cause its failure, and with that, result in a new arms race.

In the economic sphere the Japanese export economy was more and more reduced due to tariff walls and increased import duties erected by the colonial powers for their S.E. Asian colonies. In Chapter 3, page 301, we have seen how even the Dutch gradually reduced Japanese imports into the NEI, notwithstanding a Japanese economic mission sent to Batavia in 1934. But also FIC, the Philippines and Malaya and India became lost to Japanese export products. This closing-out of Japan resulted in a growing conviction among the Japanese that a continuation of the colonial status-quo in S.E. Asia was to the detriment of Japan, and therefore unacceptable in the longer term.312

Continuing Japanese penetration in North China by the Kwantung army made it clear that there were sharp differences between the army and navy staffs. Both agreed that the mineral resources of North China and Manchukuo were needed to strengthen Japanese defence capabilities, but both regions lacked oil. In order to lessen the dependence on American oil, the navy general staff stressed the need for further diplomatic and eventually military initiatives in the direction of Southeast Asia, while the army was transfixed on Northern China and Manchukuo, and the Russian regions beyond. The Foreign Office stressed the importance of coming to terms with the Chinese government. The Hirota Cabinet thereupon agreed on 7 August 1936 to a secret statement of principles, which became later known as the Fundamentals of National Policy.313 It is an important document, because for the first time the terms "peaceful co-existence" and "co-prosperity" were used in a geographical context with included Manchuria, China, and the whole of South-East Asia. Japanese interests in those areas however should be extended in "gradual and peaceful ways", resulting in perhaps a non-aggression pact with the Dutch to allay their fears.314 The Japanese were clearly not so much interested in a military conquest of the NEI, with the risks of oil production facilities being blown up, but in free access to the mineral and agricultural resources of the NEI. It was recognized however, that the navy needed a fleet capable of confronting the United States in the western Pacific, and that the army should have sufficient strength to withstand the Soviet Union in Manchuria.

Due to the activities of Major-General Hiroshi Oshima315, military attaché at the Japanese Embassy in Berlin, the Gaimusho started formal negotiations with Germany and Italy, resulting in the so-called Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany on 25 November 1936, and with Italy a year later.316 It was intended as a signal towards the Soviet-Union317.

---


313 Beasley, Imperialism, op. cit., 201.; in I. Nish: Foreign Policy, 301 - 302 can be found the integral text of the parts I and II of these Fundamentals.

314 Beasley, Imperialism, op. cit. 202.; I. Nish, Foreign Policy, 228 - 229.


316 Beasley, Imperialism, op. cit., 221, Nish, Foreign Policy, ibid, 229.
which was busily increasing its troop strength at the Manchurian borders, but inadvertently it also deepened the chasm with the Western democracies because of Japan's political choice in favor of the two totalitarian Axis states. However, the Anti-Comintern Pact was no military alliance. The Soviet-Union promptly broke off negotiations for a new Fisheries treaty with Japan, and this resulted indirectly into the fall of the Hirota-Cabinet.

The start of the China incident was the watershed for Japan's diplomacy. International disapproval was widespread, as illustrated by Roosevelt's "Quarantine Speech" on 5 October 1937. But notwithstanding an approach by the British government, the U.S. government refused to be drawn into anything which resembled an anti-Japanese alliance.

On 12 September 1937 the Chinese government formally appealed to the League of Nations. On 6 October the League recommended a conference of all nine signatories of the Nine-Power Treaty of 1922. This would draw the United States into a league-sponsored conference, although the U.S. was not a member state of the League of Nations. The U.S. government however indicated her approval of the intended conference, resulting in an international conference in Brussels between 3 - 15 November 1937, at which almost all of the signatory powers were present. The only exception was Japan. U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull made it abundantly clear however, that the United States was not prepared for any kind of pressure on Japan. The results of the conference therefore were a disaster, as it completely discredited the concepts of collective action, and left China totally empty-handed. The rape of Nanking, followed by the PANAY Incident, further damaged Japan's international image. Only Germany seemed willing to abrogate its longtime support of the Chinese nationalists in lieu for a closer cooperation with Japan. In so doing, Hitler hoped to reduce the freedom of action of both the Soviet Union and Britain with respect to his European plans. Oshima was also intent on a full military alliance with Germany in order to weaken British influence in China and S.E. Asia, but found the navy against such an alliance for the time being.

When the Chinese did not capitulate in 1938, as expected, an Imperial Conference was convened. i.e. a formal meeting of the senior cabinet members and the service chiefs in the presence of the Emperor. At this conference on 30 November 1938 a number of

---

312 There are clues, that at least the Washington government was accurately informed by communist sources about the secret appendix to the Pact, specifying the Soviet-Union as common enemy. See M & S. Harries, op. cit. 272 - 273.


3135 Jones, op. cit., 51.

3136 Jones, op. cit., 40.

3137 Jones, op. cit., 50. I. Nish, Foreign Policy, 231.

3138 Hull, Memoirs, 1, 551.

3139 Jones, op. cit. 55.

3140 Giffard, op. cit., 106. Jones, op. cit. 57 - 64.

3141 I. Nish, Foreign Policy, 231.
proposals were adopted with respect to China. The idea that an understanding could be reached with Chiang Kai-Shek was dropped. Instead the Japanese would concentrate on forming a number of separate Japanese-controlled regimes in China itself along the lines of the state of Manchukuo. Divide et Impera in Japanese style therefore. The Chinese puppet states were to be taken into the "New Order" together with Manchukuo. The decisions of this Imperial Conference were to determine the foreign policy of Japan towards China for the coming years, but those decisions also reduced the importance of the Foreign Ministry, and also exposed Prime Minister Konoye as a weak leader, responsible for years of terrible suffering by both the Chinese and Japanese.

After the conquest of both Hankow and Canton in October 1938, coinciding with the Munich crisis in Western Europe, Konoye proclaimed in a radio speech on 3 November 1938 a "New Order" in East Asia, encompassing China, Manchukuo and Japan. He stressed however not the conquest of China, but co-operation with her. On 22 December, Konoye publicly announced the terms for a peace treaty with China. These would have made China a Japanese vassal state. Chiang therefore declined the peace offer, accepting a long and gruesome guerrilla war against the Japanese invader.

6.7.3. Alliance with the Axis.

The Changkufeng-incident impelled the Japanese General Staff to seek a military accommodation with the Axis powers which had to go beyond the Anti-Comintern Pact and would therefore contain the Soviet-Union. The military attaché in Berlin, General Hiroshi Oshima, carried out exploratory talks with German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop. The Japanese Ambassador in Berlin, Shigenori Togo, was left completely out of these talks, illustrating the degree of power the army already possessed in running the affairs of State. The Navy Minister, Yonai, objected to a treaty which would be blatantly anti-Western, and therefore a new round of exploratory talks began. Togo learned of the proposals and protested too. His appointment in 1938 as Ambassador to the Soviet-Union cleared the way for an appointment of Oshima as Ambassador in Berlin, which was announced on 15 October 1938. At the Munich Conference, Von Ribbentrop and Ciano were able to talk with each other about the Japanese proposals, and to amend these proposals.

These amendments caused a severe rift between the army and navy, as the navy was unwilling to face a showdown against the two strongest navies in the world as a result of an alliance with two far-away European continental powers. This unbridgeable rift was one of the reasons for the fall of the Konoye-Cabinet on 4 January 1939.

---

244 Jones, op. cit., 78.
245 Jones, op. cit., 102.
247 Jones, op. cit., 105.
248 Jones, op. cit., 108.
Under pressure of the military, Japanese diplomacy tried to reach an accord with the Axis powers, which would involve Japan militarily only against the Soviet-Union, not against the Western democracies. This proposal was unacceptable to Ribbentrop and Ciano, however. Privately Ribbentrop warned that Germany might seek an accord with the Soviet-Union, which would free her hands for actions against France and Britain.\textsuperscript{3146} Oshima did not believe him, however. Deliberations dragged on due to resistance of the Japanese navy, and on 22 May 1939 the "Pact of Steel", signed by Germany and Italy was not underwritten by Japan. Hitler decided thereupon not to wait for the Japanese, and he signed a non-aggression pact with Stalin on 23 August 1939.

This came as a rude shock to both Oshima and the Japanese Government. Japan was deeply involved in the Nomonhan Incident (See page 658), and Foreign Minister Arita cabled Oshima that this was the end of Japanese-Axis talks.\textsuperscript{3146} But this also meant the end of the Hiranuma-Cabinet. Oshima was recalled and replaced by a civilian career diplomat, Saburo Kurusu\textsuperscript{3150}.

The Abe-cabinet, which succeeded Hiranuma, worked hard to establish a better relationship with the Soviets, and was enthusiastically supported in this endeavour by the Germans as they wanted to open a trade route to Japan via the Soviet-Union which could not be blocked by the British.\textsuperscript{3151} On 9 June 1940 an agreement was reached between Molotov and ambassador Togo, in which the Japanese formally accepted the boundary in the Nomonhan area according to the Soviet claims.\textsuperscript{3152} After that, the way for a political agreement seemed to be paved. The German victory in Western Europe made it a priority for Japan to join the Pact of Steel, in order to pluck the ripe fruits, in the form of the western colonies in Southeast Asia. The pro-Allied Yonai Cabinet which had succeeded the Abe-cabinet was therefore replaced by a new cabinet under Konoye, with the strongly-pro Axis Yosuke Matsuoka as Foreign Minister. After a month of negotiations the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy was signed - in English text! - in Berlin on 27 September 1940.\textsuperscript{3153}

In this pact the German and Italian governments respected the leadership of Japan in the establishment of a new order in Greater East Asia (Article 2). In Article 3 all three parties agreed to assist each other "with all political, economic and military means" if one of the three contracting powers was attacked by a power "at present not involved in the European War or in the Chinese-Japanese conflict". These powers were the United States and the Soviet Union, but in Article 5, it was declared that the pact was not directed against the Soviet-Union. Matsuoka counted on the fact that the pact would deter the United States from intervening in either Europe or the Pacific.\textsuperscript{3154} But he now speedily had to conclude

\textsuperscript{3146} Jones, op. cit., 113, 115.; I. Nish, \textit{Foreign Policy}, 230 - 231.

\textsuperscript{3148} Jones, op. cit. 117.; I. Nish, \textit{Foreign Policy}, op. cit., 231 - 232.

\textsuperscript{3150} C. Boyd, \textit{Ibid}., 335.

\textsuperscript{3151} Jones, op. cit., 187.

\textsuperscript{3152} Jones, op. cit., 189.

\textsuperscript{3153} For the text of the Pact, see Jones, op. cit., Appendix 1, 469 - 470.

\textsuperscript{3154} Jones, op. cit., 201.
a non-aggression pact with the Soviet-Union, because when the Russians decided to attack in Manchuria, Article 5 would give the Germans an excuse not to come to the rescue of the Japanese. The Russians, however, stalled. They wanted an end to the Japanese oil and coal concessions in northern Sakhalin, and the Japanese were not willing to accept this. Matsuoka was pressed for such an accord, due to the opportunities waiting in French Indochina.\[315\] He therefore decided to see Hitler himself in Berlin.

Matsuoka arrived in Berlin on 26 March 1941, and held long talks with Ribbentrop and Hitler. The Germans pressed on him to have Singapore attacked without waiting for a Russian guarantee. Hitler told him that if Russia attacked Japan in the East, he would invade Russia immediately\[316\]. Ribbentrop informed Matsuoka on 29 March that a conflict between Germany and the Soviet Union was "always within the realm of possibility", warning him that there was going to be a German-Russian war\[317\]. But Matsuoka was left out of any knowledge of Plan-Barbarossa. Matsuoka arrived on 7 April in Moscow, and talked with Molotov, but without success. When Matsuoka saw Stalin on 12 April, it was Stalin who dropped the withdrawal of the Japanese concessions, and on 13 April a Pact of Neutrality was signed with the Soviet-Union. Japan urgently needed such a pact because of the intended march south, and Stalin was only too happy to provide the Japanese with a document which would set them loose against the British and Americans, and not towards Siberia. It was therefore a pure win-win situation.

That was not the case with the Tripartite Alliance. The Japanese military and Matsuoka and Konoye completely misunderstood the psychological impact that the signing of the Tripartite Pact had on the United States and other western democracies. For those, it was clear that Japan now belonged to the totalitarian states bent upon destroying the existing order, replacing it by fascism. The immediate effect of this was that Japan's freedom of action was severely curtailed in the upcoming negotiations with those powers, like the Netherlands and the United States. Most historians therefore agree that the Tripartite Alliance was a kind of watershed, after which a war with the western powers was a foregone conclusion.\[318\]

The German attack on the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 caught Matsuoka by total surprise. Bypassing Konoye he went straight to the Emperor and pleaded, notwithstanding the Neutrality Pact, for an attack of the Soviet Union.\[319\] The Emperor was upset, and Konoye distanced himself from this viewpoint. In a number of liaison conferences, army and navy also distanced themselves from such an attack, and an Imperial conference on 2 July 1941 confirmed the southward advance. On 16 July 1941 the Konoye cabinet resigned for the express purpose of throwing Matsuoka out, as it was reconstituted on 18

\[315\] Jones, op. cit., 209.

\[316\] Jones, op. cit., 211.; I. Nish, Foreign Policy, 240 - 242.

\[317\] Jones, op. cit. 212 - 213. For an affirmation that this warning had been given to Matsuoka see the Soviet source of L.L. Kutakov: Japanese Foreign Policy on the Eve of the Pacific War. Diplomatic Press, Tallahassee 1972, 193.


\[319\] Jones, op. cit., 217.
July with a new Foreign Minister, Admiral Teiji Toyoda.\(^{316}\) It was clear that the army had not forgotten Nomonhan, and the new Japanese ambassador in Moscow, General Yoshitsugu Tatekawa,\(^{316}\) openly expressed doubt that the Germans could beat the Russians.\(^{316}\)

### 6.7.4. Bargaining without Military back-up: the Netherlands East Indies.

In subchapter 6.6.7 we followed the army machinations in order to occupy northern French Indochina. Matsuoka as foreign minister supported the army and navy in this respect. But further South, another challenge was waiting: the incorporation of the Netherlands East Indies with all its resources into the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, if possible without military intervention like in Indochina. Anyway military intervention was more difficult because there were no shared borders with territory under Japanese occupation. Japanese diplomacy succeeded in subduing Indochina and later also Thailand, but it failed spectacularly with respect to the East Indies, however.

The Japanese government had to take into account that they could not invade the NEI without almost certain war with Great Britain, and possibly war with the United States. Moreover, the Dutch had considerable forces in the NEI which could fight a delaying action long enough to allow the complete destruction of the oil wells,\(^{316}\) which was a nightmare for the Japanese navy. In his talks with von Ribbentrop, Matsuoka himself had stated that if the Japanese attacked the NEI, the oil wells would go up in smoke and it would take one to two years to make them productive again.\(^{316}\) Therefore, according to a Japanese Foreign Ministry document of 4 October 1940, entitled "Tentative Plan for Policy towards the Southern Regions",\(^{316}\) Japan should first secure Malaya and Singapore, after which the NEI should be coerced in declaring their independence with a gradual replacement of the Dutch element by Indonesians, with Japanese "advisers", and the lease of military and naval bases to Japan. In the meantime, economic cooperation should be "enforced" upon the Dutch.

It should be noted, that in contrast to the French in Indochina, there was no place for a guarantee of Dutch sovereignty in this plan. The Japanese intended to give the Indonesians a measure of political autonomy, but had reserved the exploitation of the resources of the archipelago for their own purposes.

The economic diplomatic offensive started on 2 February 1940, when the Japanese Minister in the Hague Itaro Ishii presented a note to the Dutch government, asking for repeal or modification of restrictions on Japanese trade with the NEI.\(^{316}\) On 8 March,

---

\(^{316}\) For a short biography of this pro-British admiral, see R. Fuller, *Shokan*, 297.


\(^{316}\) Jones, *op. cit.*, 219.

\(^{316}\) Jones, *op. cit.*, 239.

\(^{316}\) Jones, *op. cit.*, 246, note 6.

\(^{316}\) IMTFE Records, 11724 - 11727. See also Jones, *op. cit.* 239, note 1.

Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Masayuki Tani handed an almost identical note to the Dutch minister in Tokyo, General J.C. Pabst. The Dutch Government had not yet replied when the Germans invaded Holland on 10 May 1940.

Informed by Ambassador Oshima about the upcoming German invasion, the Japanese government undertook an unprecedented public démarche by declaring, on 15 April 1940, that Japan was worried about a change of the status quo in the NEI due to the Netherlands becoming involved in an European war. This démarche became known as the Arita Declaration. The Americans then turned the table on the Japanese by declaring on 17 April that any change of that status quo would in fact be unacceptable to the U.S. government, implying that the Japanese should not disturb that status quo. That statement was reinforced by the decision of President Roosevelt on 4 May 1940 to concentrate the Pacific fleet in Pearl Harbor, instead of normal dispersal over bases on the U.S. West-coast. This move was intended as a signal towards the Japanese.

Therefore, the American government was annoyed when English and French troops occupied the Dutch islands of Aruba and Curaçao in the West Indies to avoid them falling into German hands, because that might give Japan a pretext for doing the same in the NEI. The Dutch government told the Japanese that they did not need that kind of protection in the NEI, that they would maintain their neutrality, and that exports to Japan should not be affected. In fact, however, the Japanese navy was not yet ready for such an invasion of the NEI, and needed at least a couple of months to prepare.

On the urgings of the Japanese Foreign Minister, Arita, the Dutch gave in on the subjects of economic talks, which would take place in Batavia. The intended leader of the mission was Lieutenant General Kuniako Koiso, who wanted to travel with the mission to Batavia on board a warship, and wanted to have, at the ready, a force of Japanese naval troops, which he could employ without reference to IGHQ in Tokyo when the need would arise. We have met the swashbuckling Koiso as Commander of the Korea Army during the Mukden-incident. The navy minister, Vice-Admiral Zengo Yoshida, refused to provide such an entourage however. After the Dutch had declared General Koiso persona non grata because of unfriendly remarks to the Japanese press about the way the Dutch treated the Indonesians, agreement was reached that the mission was to be headed by a civilian: Ichirō Kobayashi, Minister of Commerce and Industry in the Konoye-Cabinet. Kobayashi arrived with his delegation in Batavia on 12 September 1940 on board a regular Japanese liner, the NISSAN MARU.

On 27 August 1940 the Cabinet agreed to the political purpose of the mission. According

---


3168 Hull, Memoirs, I, 893.

3169 Shinjirō Nagaoka, ibid, The Fateful Choice, 132 - 133.

3170 IMTFE, Records, 11718.

3171 Shinjirō Nagaoka, ibid, The Fateful Choice, 140.

3172 For a short biography, see R. Fuller, Shokan, op. cit., 307.
to the "Principles for Negotiations with the Dutch East Indies", Japan was to:

1) make the Dutch East Indies part of the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere;
2) support absolute self-determination for the Indonesian people; and
3) conclude with the Dutch East Indies concrete pacts for the defense of that territory.

However, because the fear existed that revelation of these political aims would bring both Great Britain and the United States into the fray, Kobayashi and the mission members were forbidden to discuss these political goals with the Dutch. This explains the embarrassment of the Dutch when they discovered that the Japanese mission had no real objectives or trading positions to put on the table. At the request of the Dutch government, Pabst asked the Gaimusho on 25 October 1940 if the Japanese government could draw up a formal agenda for the discussions between the trade mission and the government of the NEI.

The negotiations in Batavia have been covered in the chapter on The Netherlands (pages 316 - 321), and therefore we will only cover the Japanese internal reaction to the disappointing results of the talks, which prompted Kobayashi to return to Japan on 12 October 1940. On 15 November the Dutch proposed ending the talks, as no headway was being made. The Japanese government thereupon appointed a new envoy: former Foreign Minister Kenkichi Yoshizawa. He arrived in Batavia on 28 December 1940.

Yoshizawa was a far better diplomat than Kobayashi, but he was undermined by diplomatic mistakes made by his superiors. Matsuoka declared on 21 January 1941 in the Diet that the NEI were part of the Japanese Co-Prosperity Sphere, which caused the Dutch minister in Tokyo to protest. Thereafter a spokesman of the Gaimusho maintained that the Dutch government in London had no legal status, and was a puppet of the British government. This caused a suspension of the talks until the end of February, when the Japanese retracted. After the talks had started again, the Dutch expressed their anxiety that Japan would re-export rubber and tin from the NEI to Germany via Manchukuo and Russia. In a discussion with British Ambassador Sir Robert Craigie on 22 May, Matsuoka complained about Dutch stubbornness while the NEI were "only a minor power", who should be more accommodating. According to Jones, Dutch fears about re-exporting were unfounded. (Page 319) However, German files show otherwise. The German Director of the Economic Policy Department stated in a position paper intended for the upcoming meeting between Von Ribbentrop and Matsuoka, that Japan had promised to re-export 25,000 tons of rubber from the 1941 harvest in FIC, and to buy rubber and tin from

---

3173 Shinjiro Nagaoka, ibid., The Fateful Choice, 143 - 144.
3174 Shinjiro Nagaoka, ibid., The Fateful Choice, 146.
3175 Shinjiro Nagaoka, ibid., The Fateful Choice, 146.
3176 Van Mook, op. cit., 71 - 75.
3177 Shinjiro Nagaoka, ibid., The Fateful Choice, 150 - 151.
3178 Jones, op. cit. 245, note 5.
The NEI for re-export to Germany.\textsuperscript{3179}

As the Dutch did not give in to the Japanese request for what amounted to a dominating position in NEI commerce, the talks were ended with a common communiqué on 17 June 1941. The Japanese departed Batavia almost empty-handed. The piecemeal infiltration backed up by military pressure which the Japanese had used with so much success in Indochina did not work in the NEI.\textsuperscript{3180} Japanese diplomacy suffered an obvious defeat with the abrogation of the economics talks in Batavia.

The Dutch firmness in handling the Japanese demands without giving in made a deep impression on the Americans. TIME Magazine of 16 June 1941 publicly thanked Van Mook, and stated that the NEI government "had slapped Japan's face". The issue of TIME Magazine of 18 August 1941 even devoted a cover story to Van Mook.

The rupture of the economics talks with the NEI government had severe repercussions in Tokyo. Japan was no longer certain that it could obtain its required quantities of raw materials by peaceful means. Therefore, Japan would remain vulnerable to American embargoes. This gave the military staffs enough arguments to start serious planning for a war with the western powers. On 14 July 1941 the South China Army sent a telegram to GHQ strongly recommending the occupation of southern Indochina. This would bring the NEI within bombing range, and an ultimatum could then be posed to those stubborn Dutch. It was estimated that two army divisions would suffice for the occupation of the NEI. This telegram was intercepted and decoded by the Americans\textsuperscript{3181}, but not passed on to the NEI government. This in contrast to the British government, which had kept the Dutch informed of the communications between the Yoshizawa Mission and Tokyo.\textsuperscript{Page 153, 321} Nevertheless, there is a direct link of cause and effect between the failure of Yoshizawa and the subsequent occupation of southern Indochina.

Another step was to undertake direct diplomatic contact with the United States Government to discuss what could be saved from the strategic exports to Japan after the abrogation by the American government of the Commerce Treaty of 1911.\textsuperscript{Page 37} This was the reason why a new Japanese Ambassador was appointed to the United States: Vice-Admiral Kichisaburo Nomura. Nomura previously had been Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Abe-cabinet, and had been purged by his successor Matsuoka.\textsuperscript{3182} As he knew President Roosevelt personally, he was considered a good candidate for this sensitive position. His first talk with Cordell Hull on 14 February 1941 was positive.

6.7.4. The supreme test: negotiations with the United States.

Next to the official channels of diplomacy, the Japanese military tried another unofficial channel of communications, which resulted into the Walsh-Drought mission. Two well-intentioned Roman Catholic missionaries of the Maryknoll Society, Bishop James E. Walsh and Father James M. Drought contacted Tadao Ikawa, a nephew of Premier Konoye, in

\textsuperscript{3179} Memorandum by the Director of the Economic Policy Department, Wiehl, Berlin, March 21, 1941. Documents on German Foreign Policy, series D, Vol. XII, 1941, doc. 190, 328.

\textsuperscript{3180} Jones, op. cit., 246.

\textsuperscript{3181} IMTFE, Exhibit 641, Record p. 7043 - 7044.

\textsuperscript{3182} I. Nish, Foreign Policy, 243.
the autumn of 1940. They did so on their own initiative, without any official U.S. involvement, because of their belief in a common cause of both Japan and the U.S.A. in the struggle against atheist Communism. Ikawa informed Konoye, who brought the two men of God into contact with Lieut.-Gen. Akira Muto, Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau of the War Ministry. Believing that it was possible to talk about peace with the top officials of the Japanese government, the two priests informed Postmaster General Frank C. Walker, a devout Catholic and a friend of Roosevelt. This promising unofficial channel of communication was destroyed by Matsuoka, when he discovered its existence, because he had not been involved.318

Matsuoka himself was thinking of exploring the possibility of a non-aggression treaty with the U.S., because that would give Japan the opportunity to attack Great Britain and the NEI without American interference. When he informed the Emperor about this plan on 8 May 1941, the Emperor was shocked.314 Moreover the U.S. Government refused any serious discussion of this subject. It was clear that the ambitions of Matsuoka were standing between a better relationship of the two nations, and this materially added to his downfall, which took place after the German attack on Russia.

As mentioned on page 668, in the Imperial Conference of 2 July 1941 the Emperor was confronted with an unanimous advice to advance to the South, which involved the risk of a war with the United States. The Imperial Conference was attended by the Emperor, Prime Minister Konoye, Matsuoka, Minister of War Tojo, Navy Minister Oikawa, Army Chief of Staff Sugiyama, Naval Chief of Staff Nagano, Council President Hara and Minister of the Interior Hiranuma. The following decisions were approved318:

1. No intervention in the German-Russian War;
2. Secret negotiations with the U.S., while the army would place the Kwantung-Army in Manchukuo on a war footing, and the navy would prepare itself for a war against the United States.
3. A military occupation of the whole of French Indochina.
4. When the Germans overpowered the Soviets, a quick intervention in and occupation of Eastern Siberia would take place.

The American Intelligence community meanwhile had cracked the Japanese diplomatic code, so the American government already knew on 8 July what had been decided.316 The translation of the Japanese text, and specifically its interpretation, were however not faultless. The Soviets too were informed, but more accurately, by the splendid work of Dr. Richard Sorge’s spy ring in Tokyo. The imperial conference resulted in a secret ultimatum to the Vichy-government. Thanks to the activities of the codebreakers, whose results

---


318 Roberta Wohlstetter: op. cit., 346.
became known as MAGIC, as opposed to the British ULTRA, the American government again knew the contents of the Japanese proposals.\(^{3167}\) Cordell Hull warned Nomura that Japanese entry into Southern Indochina would have severe consequences.

The move to the south was now supported by both the Japanese army and navy. It has long been held that the Japanese navy was braking the expansionist urges of the Japanese generals at least up to the oil embargo which resulted from the Japanese occupation of southern Indochina. Sadao Asada\(^ {3168}\) however has clearly shown that the navy already endorsed expansion to the South before the embargo, around the time of the appointment of Vice-Admiral Osami Nagano\(^ {3169}\) as Chief of Naval Staff in April 1941. Nagano rode a tiger, and he knew it. For years the navy had asked for extra funds for building more and more warships in order to wage a successful war against the U.S. Navy. Nagano could not now go back to his government, informing it that such a war could not be won by the IJN. The ships of the U.S. navy's "Two-Ocean Navy" were already in the process of being built, and within a few years the American Navy would numerically surpass the Japanese navy by a factor of four! In the middle of 1941 the IJN was still about 70% the size of the U.S. Navy, to diminish quickly from that point in time on. Time was therefore not on the Japanese side, and the IJN as a consequence was already preparing for war far in advance of the oil embargo.

Because the Americans had been informed by MAGIC about the Japanese plans in French Indochina, they had ample time to decide on countermeasures, which were announced immediately after publication of the Japanese move into southern Indochina. We have dealt with this in Chapter 1. The U.S. countermeasures hit the nerves of the commanders of the Japanese navy hard, and on 31 July Nagano had an audience with the Emperor. Nagano told the Emperor that there were only enough oil stocks to wage an intensive war for no longer than 18 months. If Japan was not willing to abrogate the Tripartite Pact, he advised starting the war with the U.S. as quickly as possible. Nagano was not known as an intellectual heavyweight, and the Emperor asked therefore whether he expected to be able to win a major sea-battle against the U.S. Pacific Fleet. When Nagano answered that question negatively, the Emperor closed the audience by remarking that in that case the war would be suicidal for Japan.\(^ {3190}\)

Konoye tried to forestall war by proposing a summit conference on the high seas between President Roosevelt and himself. The liner NITTA MARU was made ready for the occasion. Nomura proposed such a summit to Roosevelt on 6 August, 1941, who liked the idea. However Roosevelt proposed the capital of Alaska, Juneau, as the meeting point.\(^ {3191}\) Cordell Hull however disagreed with the summit plan, because he was afraid that the mere announcement of such a summit meeting would collapse the morale of the Chinese Nationalists. Therefore he demanded the withdrawal of the Japanese troops out of Southern Indochina as a sign, that the Japanese government was serious, and in control.

---

\(^{3167}\) H. Feis, 229. By MAGIC the U.S. Government was also well-informed about the orders which Nomura received from Tokyo. See also John Costello: *Days of Infamy*, Simon & Schuster, New York 1994, 55 - 56.

\(^{3168}\) D. Borg, op. cit., 252 - 256.

\(^{3169}\) For a short biography, see R. Fuller, *Shokan*, 273 - 274.

\(^{3169}\) David Lu, op. cit., 189; Tsunoda/Morley, op. cit., 162, 173.

\(^{3190}\) Tsunoda/Morley, Ibid., 194.
of its military. He informed Nomura accordingly on 3 September 1941.\(^{3102}\)

This proposal was discussed thoroughly at the second Imperial Conference on 6 September 1941. The Lord of the Privy Seal, Marquis Kido, had arranged with the Privy Council President, Hara, that he would grill the military on their plans for war. Yoshimicho Hara indeed remarked, that the military commanders were heading for war, not for diplomatic solutions of some sort. A deep silence ensued, which was broken by the Emperor, asking why no answer was forthcoming. This was without precedent. The Emperor never spoke at Imperial Conferences, because such Conferences only took place when consensus had been reached between all those concerned in the Cabinet, and the unanimous proposal therefore only needed the seal of approval from the Emperor. The breaking of the protocol by the Emperor again caused a long silence, as everybody was deeply shocked. Again it was the Emperor, who read aloud a poem of his grandfather, Emperor Mutsuhito: "If we all are brothers in this world, why is there always such a strife?"\(^{3103}\)

The wish of the Emperor had been made abundantly clear: the military should give Konoye the opportunity to reach a diplomatic understanding with the United States.

The decisions of the Imperial Conference were:

1. Prince Konoye and Nomura obtained a deadline extended to 15 October to close an agreement with the U.S. When the U.S. and Britain would in principle be willing to help end the conflict in China on terms favourable for Japan, the Japanese would withdraw from the whole of French Indochina.

2. The military would be ready to start war in the South around 1 November 1941. The staffwork needed for the conquest of the Philippines, Malaya and the NEI would then have to be completed, and the plans for the attack on Pearl Harbor perfected. Part of the Kwantung Army would be employed in the conquest of the Nanyo.\(^{3104}\)

Konoye knew that time was not on his side, and he understood that extremists were after his life. Indeed an assassination attempt on 18 September just failed. On the same day as the Imperial Conference Konoye had arranged a secret meeting with American Ambassador Joseph Grew and his Japanese-speaking assistant Eugene Doonan. This meeting also was without precedent - Japanese Prime Ministers never had private meetings with Ambassadors beforehand. The only other Japanese attendee was Konoye's private secretary Tomohiko Ushiba. Konoye again pleaded for a summit meeting with Roosevelt.\(^{3105}\) As soon as an understanding with Roosevelt had been reached and reported to the Emperor, the Emperor would immediately issue a rescript ordering the suspension of all hostile actions. This was a statement made four years before the Emperor indeed had to use this stratagem in order to obtain peace!

Konoye also informed Prince Higashikuni about the proposal for the summit, and asked

\(^{3102}\) Tsunoda/Morley, Ibid., 189.

\(^{3103}\) H. Feis, op. cit., 267; Tsunoda/Morley, 175 - 176.

\(^{3104}\) Tsunoda/Morley, Ibid., 199.

him to intervene with General Tojo, who was not keen on the idea. Higashikuni met Tojo on 7 September, telling him that the U.S. was intrinsically far stronger than Japan, and that it therefore was not in Japan’s interest to engage in a war with the U.S. Tojo however disagreed.315

In the U.S., Hull was suspicious about the proposed summit meeting, and Stanley Hombeck was rigidly opposed to it. Grew’s reports from Tokyo did not carry much weight at that time, because the State Department considered him too pro-Japanese.317 Hombeck was of the opinion that the rapid build-up of the American strategic bomberforce in Luzon would act as a deterrent against Japan.318 But at the final Imperial Conference of 1 December 1941, both the Army and Naval Chiefs of Staffs declared not to be cowed by the then still small number of B-17s at Luzon.319 The U.S. policymakers did not realize that the war party had clamored for a deadline of 15 October 1941, in order to start war at 15 November at the latest. Neither the naval code nor the army code had been cracked by the American MAGIC-team at that time. On 25 September, during a liaison conference, army and navy again pressed for a quick governmental decision. Konoye did not accept the necessity for hostilities at that date, because in his view there was only one outstanding issue left: the presence of Japanese troops in China. On 7 October he talked this over with Tojo. But Tojo did not want to make any concession on troop reduction in China,320 emotionally pointing out to Konoye the more than 200,000 Japanese war dead who had fallen in China.

In the literature covering those fateful months of Japanese-American talks it has not been noticed by many scholars that although the U.S. position had hardened, resulting in demands for Japanese withdrawals from French Indochina and even China itself, the U.S. had grudgingly agreed, by omission, on Japanese annexation of Manchuria, which by itself was an impressive U.S. concession.321

On Sunday afternoon 12 October Konoye set up a liaison conference at his house in Ogikubo. Tojo spoke out for war; navy minister Oikawa pushed for extending the negotiations. Foreign Minister Toyoda asked whether the military would envisage a limited withdrawal of troops from China. Tojo replied in the negative. Konoye warned that if the army stuck to its arguments, he would resign. After four hours, the conference was adjourned without reaching consensus. On 14 October Konoye again had a discussion with Tojo, arguing that Japan should temporarily yield to America in the case of China. Tojo however argued that withdrawal would destroy army morale. When Tojo afterwards rejected, in a very emotional way, any thought of withdrawing from China, and the navy by word of Vice-Adm. Oikawa did not come out in favour of continued negotiations, Konoye

315 Toland, op. cit., 103; Oka, Fumimaro Konoe, op. cit., 150; Tsunoda/Morley, 195 - 196.
317 Tsunoda/Morley, ibid., 194.
321 Titus/Morley, op. cit., xxix/xxx.
At the subsequent Imperial Conference of 17 October it was decided on Konoye's recommendation that Tojo would become the new Prime Minister. It was a signal to the outside world that the army would be responsible for the war which was almost certain to begin. Tojo doubled also as Minister of War, in order to be sure that the army would at last stay in line. Vice-Admiral Shimada became the new navy minister, replacing Oikawa, who had been incoherent in committing the navy to the coming war, and therefore was replaced by the more pliable Shimada. The two chiefs of staff, Gen Sugiyama and Osami Nagano, remained at their posts, as they supported Tojo in preparing for war. Vice-Admiral Shigenori Togo remained Minister of Foreign Affairs. Together with Finance Minister Okinori Kaya they were the only two Cabinet Ministers opposed to the coming war.

The two combined functions of Tojo as Premier and Minister of War were a clear storm signal to the outside world. Tojo however received a message from the Emperor, that he should not feel himself bound to the conclusions of earlier imperial conferences. At least he was authorised by the Emperor to start with a "clean slate". It was a last, desperate move by the Emperor to forestall a war. The fate of Japan was now in the hands of the Generals.

Tojo did not ask for dictatorial power. He was no Hitler, and in essence more a conservative, who stayed within the borders drawn by the Meiji-constitution. Although he was willing to wage war against both Britain and the U.S., there are indications that he would have relined in the radicals in the army when an agreement with the U.S. was reached. His reputation was that of a strict disciplinarian, reinforced by the measures taken after the insubordination in Northern Indochina. At the hearings of the IMTFE he would declare that he also retained the position as Minister of the Interior in 1941, in order to suppress mutinies, which surely would start whenever it would have been decided to reach an agreement over China with the United States.

Between 23 October and 3 November 1941 there were almost daily conferences between the members of the cabinet and the C-in-C's and their staffs at IGHQ. These conferences were also known as liaison conferences. At these conferences it became clear that even the most fervent nationalist general did not believe that it would be possible to achieve victory over the U.S. The best that could be hoped for was to fight and win a limited war, and start negotiations with the U.S. when the objectives of the limited war had been reached. The Russo-Japanese War was the perfect example of such a war. In no way did it dawn upon the Japanese leaders that the stealth attack at Pearl Harbor would

---

320 Oka, op. cit., 155; Tsunoda/Morley 234; Titus/Morley, xxviii/xxix.


320 Oka, op. cit., 159.; also H. Feis, op. cit., 287; Tsunoda/Morley, op. cit., 245.

320 F.C. Jones, op. cit., 293.

320 Tsunoda/Morley, op. cit., 251
proclude any such limited war from the American perspective.\footnote{According to Agawa, at least Admiral Takijiro Onishi realized the psychological damage of the Pearl Harbor attack, and therefore warned against it. See Hiroyuki Agawa, The Reluctant Admiral: Yamamoto and the Imperial Navy, Tokyo 1979, 229. \footnoteref{326} \footnoteref{327} \footnoteref{328}} Neither was there any thought on what would happen if the United States refused to make peace even after its battlefleets had been decisively beaten. It had sufficient industrial capacity to build a new battlefleets even during a war. Again the legacy of the Russo-Japanese war resulted in Japanese tunnel vision.

The Imperial Conference of 5 November 1941 reached agreement on postponement on the time limit within which the diplomatic negotiations would have to be successfully completed. That limit was now set at 25 November, 1941. Japan would come with a new proposal in Washington, and keep another back-up proposal at the ready. The first proposal was that Japan would evacuate all its troops from Indochina and China itself, whenever a peace treaty had been concluded with Chiang Kai-Shek. Furthermore Japan would declare that it did not consider itself bound to the Tripartite Pact. On the other hand, trade with the U.S., Great Britain and The Netherlands would be resumed forthwith. This was the so-called Plan "A". The second proposal was an immediate retreat from all of Indochina, and a further withdrawal of all Japanese troops from China after a peace treaty had been signed. This proposal in fact would re-establish the status-quo prior to 25 July, 1941, and was called Plan "B". Because Togo was not happy about the way in which Nomura executed the negotiations, he also decided to send a career diplomat to Washington to assist Nomura. This diplomat was Saburo Kurusu, former Ambassador in Berlin. Kurusu had an American wife, and spoke English fluently.

The first proposal did not impress Cordell Hull very much, when he learned of it on 7 November. American and British patrol planes meanwhile had detected large Japanese convoys en route to the South. Something was brewing. Both the U.S. navy and army wanted a postponement of war, almost at all costs, because the defence of the Philippines was not yet ready and more heavy bombers were on their way to Luzon. Moreover, the two British capital ships had not yet arrived at Singapore. Cordell Hull therefore rejected the first proposal on 15 November 1941, but did so very carefully.\footnote{C. Hull, Memoirs, Vol. II, 1069; Tsunoda/Morley, op. cit., 302. \footnoteref{326} \footnoteref{327} \footnoteref{328}} Togo tried to involve the British in order to influence the American position, in the light of the enormous British interests in the Far East.\footnote{Basil Collier: The War in the Far East, London 1981, 81 - 82. \footnoteref{329} \footnoteref{330}} He had not counted on the fact, that Churchill desperately wanted the involvement of the United States in a Far Eastern War. The Japanese approach of the Foreign Office therefore had no success.

Saburo Kurusu arrived in Washington on 15 November 1941. Hull did not like him, due to his role in the signing of the Tripartite Pact, when Kurusu was Ambassador in Berlin. After meeting Nomura, both diplomats proposed to the Gaimusho that Japan should start a one-sided withdrawal from Southern Indochina into Tonkin as a good-will gesture.\footnote{Tsunoda/Morley, Ibid., 304 - 305. \footnoteref{326} \footnoteref{327} \footnoteref{328}} Togo however was furious about this proposal. Therefore, the second proposal (Plan "B") was put forward to Hull. Hull however was informed beforehand because of MAGIC. Pressured by the naval staff, which urgently called for an additional 6 months of "peace", the American diplomats studied the Japanese proposal in depth. President Roosevelt himself
modified it to 6 points, which he called a "modus vivendi", which had to be accepted by the Japanese. Those 6 points were discussed with the representatives of the British, Dutch and Chinese governments. Only the Dutch Minister agreed positively on 24 November. Hull was rather disappointed by this lack of support from the two other governments and therefore decided not to discuss the 6 points with Nomura.

Later on 24 November, after a meeting with Nomura, Roosevelt dispatched a message to Churchill, explaining his 6 points. The British had now become bellicose, however, as Foreign Minister Anthony Eden responded with the proposal that the Japanese should withdraw immediately from all of French Indochina and announce an armistice in China. Obviously the British Cabinet had lost her understanding of Far Eastern reality, perhaps influenced by Churchill's well-known opinions about the Japanese, whom he underestimated and belittled. But Chiang too was very worried by the American "modus vivendi" as proposed by Roosevelt. This lack of enthusiasm by the two most important impending Allies made Hull refrain from discussing Roosevelt's 'modus vivendi' with the Japanese.

Because it were the future Allies, who needed more time to strengthen their defense in the Far East, a kind of "München" was now in order. The original Munich fulfilled this purpose with respect to the British defence preparations. Here a second Munich would have far less consequences for the side which would suffer most of it (China). Instead, the counterproposal of Hull, packed in a ten-point proposal, would have reduced the status of Japan to that before the Mukden-incident, as a complete withdrawal from China and Manchuria was the condition for resumption of American trade. The U.S. position therefore had hardened considerably, and Dutch influence on the evolving situation was almost negligible.

Therefore war was unavoidable. After a liaison conference had studied Hull's 10 points on 27 November, Kurusu had added a message suggesting that he would ask Roosevelt to send a personal message directly to the Emperor to ensure bilateral cooperation. The Emperor should then send a personal message to the President, suggesting the establishment of three neutral countries (i.e. the NEI, FIC and Thailand). In Kurusu's opinion, the possibility of a "preventive occupation" of the NEI by U.S. forces was large anyway, and if Japan would offer a withdrawal from FIC to clear the air, serious peace negotiations at least could be resumed. According to Tsunoda's narrative, however, Marquis Kido refused to show the Kurusu-telegram to the Emperor, because Kido feared that further...

---

321 Apparently, Tsunoda in his history had been unaware of this. See Tsunoda/Morley, Ibid., 315.
323 Eden's comment was: "... our demands should be pitched high and our price low" H. Feis, op. cit., 315.
324 David Lu, op. cit., 228.
325 Beard, op. cit., 516.
326 Beard, op. cit., 511.
327 Tsunoda/Morley, op. cit., 326.
negotiations on that basis would entail serious risks of domestic strife.\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{a} If true, this would be a striking illustration of how the court advisors manipulated Hirohito.

The negotiations however had to be drawn out long enough for the Pearl Harbor attack force to be able to attack the U.S. battle fleet around 8 December Tokyo time. On 20 November the proposal for war was discussed with the Ju-Shin, the council of elder Statesmen, in the presence of the Emperor. Each senior statesman spoke individually. The Admirals Yonai and Okada together with the civilians Konoye and Wakatsuki strongly argued against war. But all the other senior statesmen backed the chiefs of staff, and argued for war.\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{b} The Emperor spoke next day with Prince Nobuhito Takamatsu, who informed him that the navy leadership was loath to go to war. Therefore the same day the Emperor called in Shimada and Nagano, and asked them for their opinion. Both stated in unison, that the navy was ready, that Yamamoto possessed sufficient confidence, and was eagerly awaiting the Emperor's orders.\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{c} Faced with this unanimous opinion by the navy leadership, the Emperor backed down.

It is clear from the above, that the decision for war was not lightly taken, as most participants in the policy conferences of those last hectic months of peace realized only too well, that Japan could never win a war of attrition against the U.S. Why then did the deterrent of overwhelming U.S. power not work? Sagan\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{d} has answered that question by pointing out, that for the Japanese the prospect of not going to war was even more horrific. The Japanese, therefore acted out of desperation, as any other alternative than war was worse in their eyes. The U.S. Army and Navy increased its strength by the day, and for Japan it was clearly a case of now, or never, hoping for a limited war and a negotiated peace with the U.S. Japan had mobilised all its resources and was at the peak of its strength, the Allies however were still weak in S.E. Asia, and industrial mobilization in the U.S. still needed some months to turn out a stream of weaponry and ships and planes. Time was running out for the Japanese!

The Imperial Conference of 1 December 1941 sealed the decision for war to begin on 8 December, as the Emperor did not say a word. As Stephen Large has noted, "other than in a ceremonial sense as legitimizer, he [the Emperor] had been peripheral to the Japanese decision for war,"\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{e} but the military took care to let him share the collective responsibility for it. In Large's view, the Emperor was "the unwilling symbol, not the maker, of chaos and catastrophe".\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{f} But he concedes, that "a dramatic refusal to sanction the war might have caused those who favored the war to think twice".\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{g} The silence of the Emperor doomed millions of his countrymen, and even more millions from other countries,

\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{a} Tsunoda/Morley, ibid., 327.
\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{b} Tsunoda/Morley, op. cit., 324 - 326; David Lu, op. cit., 233.
\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{c} Tsunoda/Morley, ibid., 324.
\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{e} S. Large, op. cit., 114.
\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{f} S. Large, op. cit., 216.
\textsuperscript{22}\textsuperscript{g} S. Large, op. cit., 216.
and has made Hirohito a controversial personality in the history of Japan and the world.

Roosevelt’s personal message to Hirohito on 6 December asking for withdrawal of Japanese troops from Indochina, did not have any influence on the decision taken. The liaison conference on that day made the decision to ask Nomura and Kurusu to give to Hull Japan’s notice on the abrogation of the negotiations on 7 December at 1300 hours Washington time, which would be half an hour before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Minister of Foreign Affairs Togo did not like a formal declaration of war, but a notification that negotiations were severed (Article 14 of the note) after a long exposé about the history of the negotiations (articles 1 to 13 of the note). These 13 articles would be transmitted to Washington beforehand. The long Japanese declaration, in fourteen articles, was decoded more slowly at the Japanese Embassy where a number of decoding machines had already been destroyed, than by the American codebreakers. Because of that unforeseen time delay, the Japanese emissaries had to ask for a postponement of their meeting with Hull.

The American codebreakers however had decoded part 14 of the message in the early hours of 7 December, Washington time. Because of the strong emphasis on offering the message to Hull on 1300 hours, the Deputy Director of the Naval Intelligence Division, Cdr A.H. McCollum, concluded that the only Pacific naval base where it had dawned at that time was Pearl Harbor, and therefore he undertook to send a warning to the base. Because of bureaucratic bungling and reduced transmission personnel because it was a Sunday, the alarm message reached Pearl Harbor too late.

At 1420 hours Washington time on that fateful day, Cordell Hull received the two Japanese emissaries, knowing the text of their message, and already being informed about the Pearl Harbor attack. Without offering his guests a chair, he informed them about the on-going attack of which both had no knowledge. When Ambassador Nomura, under emotional stress, tried to say something, Hull pointed to the door, and the two envoys left the room with heads bowed. For those two diplomats of good will it was an enormous personal tragedy.

In Tokyo the radio had already broadcast the Japanese war declaration to Great Britain and the United States. The Netherlands were not mentioned. Prime Minister Hideki Tojo himself read the Imperial Rescript before the radio. That was followed by the War March "Umi Yukaba" and Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. Fate was indeed knocking on the door of Japan!

The last stanza of the Umi Yukaba gave an eerie prophecy of things to come.

"Over the Sea, fallen bodies in the water
Over the mountains, fallen bodies on the fields
I will die only for my Emperor
I will never yield!"

---

322 Tsunoda/Morley, Ibid., 328. For an interesting timetable of messages transmitted, decoded by the Japanese and by the Americans - who were faster! - with their timestamps, see page 336.

323 Roberta Wohlstetter, op. cit., Gordon W. Prange: At dawn we slept.


328 Quoted in A. Marder, op. cit., 272.
6.8. The Japanese Army.

6.8.1. Introduction.

As has been discussed in the subchapter on Japanese history, the army had always been predominant in Japanese history, due to factors such as an extended period of feudalism, (almost 900 years), the weak position of tradesmen and trade in general in Japanese society, and the lack of a navy (see page 588). The two serious threats against the continuity of Japanese society and the state in the 13th century, the Mongolian invasions, were resolved not by the navy, but by natural factors (the Kamikaze) aided by the exemplary resistance of army units (the heroic defence of Tsushima). Therefore, of the two services the army became by birthright the Senior Service in Meiji Japan, and the naval victory at Tsushima against the Russians did not cause a change in that position. Therefore, as we have seen in previous subchapters, it was the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) which set the political agenda for Japan in the twentieth century up to the defeat in 1945.

This subchapter will explore the influence of the army as an institution on Japanese society, its weapons and doctrines, its strength and weaknesses, and its leaders, concluding with a brief subchapter on the role of the Emperor in reigning in the IJA.

6.8.2. Army and Society.

Due to its recent feudal past, the army had a high standing within pre-war Japanese society. Since the Meiji-restoration, service in the armed forces had always been very popular. Manpower requirements could therefore be easily met, even during the period of extended growth of the army in the interwar years, when the army grew from 17 divisions in 1924 to 51 divisions in 1941. After the Russo-Japanese war, the army had developed very effective long-term promotional programs, which ensured a broad support of the army within Japanese society.

One of these programs was the introduction of military training for all pupils at secondary and higher schools in 1918. At the start this was a fledgling effort, as there were not enough military instructors. In 1924 however the reduction of the number of divisions from 21 to 17 (See page 37) resulted in the separation of a large number of officers from active duty, who were assigned to the schools. Afterwards military training became part of the regular curriculum for both sexes. For young males who did not continue their education, local military training units were established. They were obliged to participate in a four-year program of 400 hours of military instruction. This ongoing program of military indoctrination of Japanese youth contributed significantly to the growing jingoism of Japanese public opinion in the late thirties.

There were other programs set up by the military to ensure that the army had a broad-based social acceptance. The most important program in this respect was the founding of a veteran's organisation, which counted more than three million former active-duty soldiers in

---

\(^{229}\) C. Boyd, in Millett, op. cit., 138.
the early thirties. These Imperial Military Reserve Organisations or *Teikoku Zaigo Gunjikai* had been active since 1910. In 1918 there were more than 13,000 local branches established, covering the whole of rural Japan. In addition, there was (since 1915) the Greater Japan Youth Organisation (*Dainihon seinendan*) which actively and effectively militarised the farmer’s youth with activities resembling those of the later Hitler Jugend. In 1932 militarisation was extended to the female sex with the founding by the army of the Greater Japan National Defense Women’s Association (*Dainippon kokubo fuyinkai*).

Although the military used education as an instrument of indoctrination and coercion, it should not be forgotten that the military already occupied a respected place within Japanese society. It was patriotic duty to serve, and draft dodging was, in Japan, an almost unknown phenomenon. In the area of indoctrination of the Japanese people, Japanese military effectiveness was extremely high indeed.

The army however also needed to distinguish itself from the Japanese civilians. After the disappearance of the samurai, a new code of ethics was needed for the emerging conscript army. The government designed for these purposes a code of ethics containing elements of the old samurai tradition of *Bushido* (the "Way of the Warrior"). The *Tohuko*, the soldier's code promulgated in 1872, spelled out the seven soldierly duties of loyalty, unquestioning obedience, courage, the controlled usage of physical force, frugality, honor, and respect for superiors. But the *Tohuko* lacked the spiritual sources of Bushido, with its elements of sensitivity and compassion.

The Imperial rescript to soldiers and sailors of 1882 re-emphasized the *Tohuko* ethos, but the rescript warns explicitly against the use of blind violence, by admonishing: "To be incited by mere impetuosity to violent action cannot be called true valour. If you affect valour and act with violence, the world will in the end detest you and look upon you as wild beasts. Of this you should take heed". These were to be prophetic words.

The Imperial rescript of 1882 also emphasized the concept of absolute loyalty to the Emperor. The position of the Emperor as Commander of the Imperial Forces was further underlined by the Shinto state religion, and found its expression in the yearly memorial services for the fallen dead at the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which was dedicated by Emperor Mutsuhito in 1883.

Does this explain the cruelty displayed by the IJA during the war in China, and thereafter in the Pacific War? A cruelty far exceeding that found in other armies from West and East, because it was endemic within Japanese military education and culture? The answer is a conditional yes, because there were more interplaying factors than those mentioned above.

Just like any other army, the IJA had its share of psychopaths and sadists. As, within the Japanese army, the guarding of prisoners of war was considered almost as dishonourable

---


as being a captive, it is likely that many of these misfits ended up as military guards. Insanity was not unknown even within Japanese officer circles, as was proven by the case of the infamous camp commander of the Tjinden concentration camp for Dutch civilians in Batavia, Captain Kenichi Sonei.

But madness alone cannot explain such a exceedingly large number of atrocities. A convincing case can be made that the underlying problem was the lack of any individual morality. Neither Shinto nor Confucianism nor Buddhism recognise a transcendental moral authority, comparable to God in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious system. Within Shinto there were no such absolute moral values, although the seven duties of Tohuko approached these absolute moral values in Japanese eyes. Of course the Japanese know the difference between "right" and "wrong", but "right" tended to be what was deemed right by the group in a particular situation, and therefore "right" tended to be situation-dependent, and not absolute. Of course, it did not help that the Japanese Government had refused to ratify the Geneva protocols of 1927 on the treatment of POWs.

An army, and in particular a conscript army, is a mirror-image of the society which has created it. A society which is fiercely masculine and hierarchical such as Japanese society tends to have a demeaning attitude towards women. This resulted in rape as an instrument of suppression of women from recently subdued populations. The Japanese army, specifically in China, became notorious for raping women and girls. Again, rape was and is common in armies, as the Bosnian and Kosovo Wars have recently illustrated. In the Japanese Army however rape was institutionalised in conquest, and replaced by "Comfort women" in Army-run brothels during the phase of occupation of conquered countries. The same demeaning attitude towards females made life in the concentration camps for white women and children in S.E. Asia very miserable indeed.

Japanese culture is very refined indeed, with the famous tea ceremony as an example of cultural perfection. There is a vast distance between the cultured Japanese civilian, and his countrymen from rural Japan under arms. However, under the surface lies hidden a more violent side of the same culture, where physical violence of juniors by seniors and of servants by superiors is the norm rather than the exception. Slapping the face of anybody of lower rank was very common in the prewar IJA, as it was in schools and homes throughout Japan. Even in pre-war Japan, however, life within the Army was considered far more brutal than civilian life.

In summing up, the IJA left a track of brutality and atrocities in each country which it had occupied. Alas the subsequent postwar Japanese governments have steadfastly refused to apologize to the victims for all what the IJA had done in the name of the Emperor. Therefore the postwar newly independent Asian states still resent the Japanese and regard

---

324 Reference is made to the conduct of common Japanese soldiers and officers when taking prisoners of war on the battlefield, (most were murdered), the treatment of civilians in China and the conquered colonies, the treatment of P.O.W's during the Death March in Bataan, the Burma and Pakanbaru railroads, the sea transports, and using POW's to work in Japanese mines. See Gavan Daws: Prisoners of the Japanese - POW's of World War II in the Pacific. William Morrow & Cy, New York 1994, and Rohan D. Rivett: Behind Bamboo- An Inside Story of the Japanese Prison Camps, Angus & Robertson, Sydney 1946.


326 M. & S. Harries, op. cit., 482.
them with fear and suspicion, and popular outbursts against Japanese, like the anti-Japanese riots in Jakarta in 1974, still occur. Without coming to peace with its erstwhile conquered peoples, Japan will remain an outsider in the international community: respected on one hand, but feared on the other hand.

6.8.3. Doctrines and Tactics.

Contrary to popular belief, Japanese army doctrines did not stress jungle fighting. As we have seen in the previous pages, the drive to the Nanyo was a relatively late phenomenon in the pre-war history of the army. After the Russo-Japanese War, and in particular after the establishment of the Soviet state in former Russia, the Japanese army envisaged its main future enemy to be the Soviet Union, and trained for this confrontation for decades.

The rugged but open nature of the future battlefields in Manchuria and Siberia, combined with experiences from the Russo-Japanese war gave birth to a tactical doctrine which stressed offensive action, surprise, and rapidity of movement, based on the innate fighting qualities of the Japanese soldier. Therefore, hand-to-hand combat combined with bayonet charges were stressed, together with a heavy emphasis on night fighting. Commanding officers and staff officers were expected to be operating well forward in order to be informed about the actual military situation. On a somewhat higher level, envelopments of the enemy were emphasized to the detriment of frontal attacks, which were preferred only on platoon and company level. But even on these levels, stealthy infiltration was preferred over massive "banzai"-attacks.

The offensive was stressed at all levels, as mystic qualities were attached to aggressiveness, going back to the ancestral Yamato race. Defensive operations were looked upon rather negatively, to be adopted only when confronted with a truly superior enemy. Even in defence, the order was to change to the offensive whenever possible. Japanese staffs tended therefore to fling their units into battle as quickly as possible, neglecting concentration of effort and cooperation of all arms. Moreover, attack decisions will be made even when, according to western doctrines, the strength of the enemy would instead call for a defensive posture.

The meeting engagement was the foundation of Japanese combat training. When two military entities collided, the Japanese doctrine called for the seizure and retention of the initiative, bold and independent action by subordinate commanders, and prompt occupation of important terrain features. Officers were trained in exhibiting energetic "hands-on" leadership during combat. The Japanese army was not trained for a war of attrition, but for lightning campaigns and a short war leading to a quick and decisive conclusion. The meeting engagement fitted into this overall picture, and was therefore to be sought whenever possible. Attacks were pressed, disregarding casualties, in attaining an objective, and were executed in terrain which western armies would consider impassable, and in adverse weather conditions which would keep western armies in the barracks.


Night attack was a "specialty" of the Japanese army. This form of combat favored the bayonet fighting stressed in infantry training, and compensated for the weakness in artillery which was a hallmark of the IJA, and for the lack of combined arms cooperation, which was also characteristic of the Japanese army. Even Japanese tank troops were highly trained in night fighting.

Taking all this into consideration, it is still difficult to understand why the Japanese failed to implement changes in their tactical doctrines when these were proven incorrect as illustrated by the disastrous defeat against the Russians at Nomonhan in the summer of 1939 (See page 658 - 659). The postmortem reports were frank and intellectually imposing. No dire facts were hidden. But those facts went directly against the beliefs of the spiritual invincibility of the Japanese army as compared to the material superiority of the western and soviet armies. In short, the IJA of 1940 was not a "learning organization", but an organization imbued with a belief in its own godsent invincibility, and therefore it was not open to change. The Pacific War would illustrate the futility of spirit over overwhelming firepower, and therefore seal the doom of the Imperial Japanese Army, at a tremendous cost in lives.


The Japanese Constitution provided explicitly that the Emperor was Commander-in-Chief of Army and Navy. In executing this responsibility he was advised by two state councils: the Board of Marshalls and Admirals, and the Supreme Military Council. As from 1937 (the "China Incident"), he was operationally assisted by Imperial General Headquarters IGHQ, consisting of the Chiefs of the Army and Navy General Staffs, the Ministers of War, and of the Navy, and a staff of specially selected officers.

The Army General Staff consisted of five Bureaus: General Affairs, Operations, Intelligence, Transport and Historical. The General Affairs Bureau was looking after Personnel, Organization and Mobilization and Training. The 1st Bureau - Operations - was charged with War Plans & Operations, Fortresses and Manoeuvres, and was considered the most prestigious outfit. The Deuxième Bureau was charged with Intelligence. One section was dedicated to American and European armies, in addition to an Asiatic Section, and a Secret Service Section. The 3rd Bureau was responsible for Communications and Transport. In comparison to European General Staffs, the Japanese invested much in a Bureau of Military History, which studied wars in which Japan was or had been involved, but it also had a separate section for wars in which Japan was not involved. Next to the bureaus, but within the GS were the General Staff College, and the Topographical Service.

The Ministry of War was charged with the administrative, budgetary, political and public relations functions of the Army. For those purposes it possessed a bureau for Economic Mobilisation, Ordnance, Intendance, Medical questions, and Judicial questions. Very

---

328 Handbook, op. cit., 95.
330 E.J. Drea, op. cit., 5.
331 For an Organigram of the Japanese General Staff see Handbook, op. cit., 11.
important was the Military Affairs Bureau, because this was responsible for military policy, ideology, public relations, foreign affairs and other public relations activities, and budgets. The Inspector General of Military Training and the Inspector General of Army Aviation did not report to the War Minister, but directly to the Emperor. They were included in IGHQ.

The Japanese army in the field was organized in Army Groups, Area Armies, Armies, and forces with special missions, which were not attached to any Army. In 1941 the Chief of General Staff had under his command four Army Groups: Home Forces, Kwantung Army Group, China Expeditionary Army Group, and Southern Army Group. Army Groups were equivalent to a British or American "Theatre of Operation", like the Southwest Pacific Area SWPA in 1942. An Area Army is equivalent to a British or American Army, a Japanese Army is equivalent to a British or American Army Corps. This last unit designation was unknown in the Japanese army. Like in its western counterparts, the mainstay of the Japanese army consisted of its Infantry Divisions.

The "triangular" (i.e. three-regiment) Japanese infantry division consisted of a Division headquarters, a Division signal unit, Infantry group headquarters with three infantry regiments, an artillery regiment, a cavalry regiment, an engineer regiment, a medical unit with field hospital, a water-purification unit, a transport regiment, an ordnance unit and a veterinary unit. The Japanese were in the habit of strengthening or deleting units from divisions according to operational requirements. The 5th Infantry Division in Kiangsi for example, which gave the French in Indochina such a rude awakening in September 1940, had a strength of over 25,000 troops, and was a "strengthened" division, and one of only three motorized Divisions in the whole Japanese Army.\textsuperscript{324} Standard divisions however tended to be the rule, with around 16,000 troops as the norm, roughly equivalent to a western infantry division.\textsuperscript{325}

The Japanese Infantry Division was reasonably well-equipped, certainly on the lower operational levels. However, it lacked firepower on the higher operational levels, such as regiments. A standard regiment of 3,843 troops was equipped with 2,130 rifles, 112 light machine guns, 108 grenade dischargers, 36 heavy machine guns, 6 antitank-guns (after 1939) and six 70 mm guns on battalion level and a battery of 4 guns of 75 mm on regimental level.\textsuperscript{326} A clear deviation of western armament were the grenade dischargers and the battalion-level guns, which added firepower on those lower operational levels.

The model 89 (1929) 50 mm grenade discharger substituted for the light mortar, and has been referred to as "knee-mortar" in western literature. It weighed about 5 kilograms, and had a range of 120 to 670 meters, firing a grenade of about 1 kilogram.\textsuperscript{327} Because of its lightness and simplicity it was an admirable weapon to support infantry attacks on reinforced enemy positions, like trenches. It had no western equivalent, and was a purely Japanese invention. The Japanese also had a few 81 mm and 90 mm mortars in use in higher echelons.

\textsuperscript{324} E.J. Drea, op. cit., 10.
\textsuperscript{325} Handbook, op. cit., 22.
\textsuperscript{326} Handbook, op. cit., 28.
\textsuperscript{327} Handbook, op. cit. 200.
The battalion gun was a very effective infantry support howitzer. The Model 92 (1932) 70 mm gun had a range of 3000 meters, weighing only 220 kilograms, and firing a 4 kilogram shell. As it could elevate to 75 degrees, it was used extensively as a kind of mortar to drop shells in otherwise inaccessible places. Again it was a Japanese invention, having no western counterpart, providing for additional firepower at battalion level. The regimental infantry gun was the Model 41 (1908) 75 mm gun, which was the standard weapon of the Mountain Artillery before being phased out by the Model 94 of 1934. It was readily disassembled into loads of maximum 100 kilogram each. The range was between 3000 and 7800 meters. However, specifically at regimental level and higher, the Japanese formations lacked firepower, as each regiment had only one battery of these obsolescent guns.

The Japanese Infantry soldier was equipped with the Arisaka Model 38 (1905) 6.5 mm rifle, the design of which was inspired on the Mauser, using bolt action and a clip of 5 rounds as magazine. During the period under consideration this weapon was being replaced by the heavier Model 99 (1939) 7.7 mm rifle, weighing about 4 kilograms, also clip-fed with 5 rounds in each clip. Both rifles were sturdy weapons, but in fact too big in size for the average Japanese soldier. The difference in bullet size made the weapons non-interchangeable, and caused logistic nightmares.

Close infantry fire support was delivered by the light machine gun, of which each regiment had 336, backed up by 108 heavy machine guns. The basic machinegun was the Nambu Model 11 (1922), a 6.5 mm light machine gun which was developed from the French Hotchkiss machine gun. Its design was faulty, causing numerous problems with the extraction of the case from the chamber, resulting in many problems in operating the gun in the field. The newer Model 96 (1936) 6.5 mm machine gun on the other hand resembled the British Bren gun with its 30-rounds magazine. This was also the case with its successor, the Model 99 (1939) 7.7 mm light machine gun, which had a rate of fire of 800 rounds per minute over 550 rpm for the older model. This excellent model however was severely production-constrained and was not widely available in 1942. All light machineguns used different types of ammunition, which were not interchangeable with each other and with rifle ammunition. This also applied to the heavy machine guns, of which there were also two different models in use. The standard model was the Model 92 (1932) 7.7 mm heavy machine gun. The second model was the Model 93 (1933) 13 mm heavy machine gun, which was primarily in use as an anti-aircraft gun, but also doubled as a heavy machine gun.

In addition to the infantry guns, each Infantry Division had an Artillery regiment attached, equipped with 36 field-mounted guns of 75 mm caliber. Standard was the Model 95 (1935) 75 mm field gun which had a maximum range of 11,000 meters and a maximum rate of fire of 10 to 12 rounds per minute. On Army level (comparable to Corps level in British and American Army) 105 mm guns and howitzers, and 150 mm guns and howitzers were

---

331 M. & S. Harries, op. cit., 351.
333 Mayer, op. cit. 52.
334 Handbook, op. cit. 194.
available. All pieces of artillery were rather anachronistic to the western eye, and
downright obsolete by western standards, but the reason for this was that Japanese
artillery doctrine did away with massed artillery fire, and instead used a battery to sprinkle
the enemy with shells ahead of an infantry attack, in direct support of the infantry. Both in
China and in the Southern theatre of war, including Burma, this was more than enough to
gain the upper hand. Therefore, no sophisticated artillery was needed, and as a
consequence the Japanese army lacked firepower when confronted with modern armies,
like the Red Army and the U.S. Army. For example, counterbattery fire was almost
unknown in the IJA.

Nomono Han taught a brutal lesson in this respect. The Japanese postmortem reports
outlined four basic problems: there were not enough guns, there was a shortage of shells,
sufficient mobility, and a lack of organic antitank and anti-aircraft weapons to defend the
artillery batteries. However, with the exception of self-propelled artillery, things did
not change with respect to artillery in the years to come. In 1942 the standard division still
had only nine artillery batteries of in total 36 guns of 75 mm. This also points out a more
basic problem in the Japanese army: lack of adequate transport facilities. More trucks,
motorized transport for artillery, and even small four-wheel drive vehicles were needed, but
even in 1945 the Japanese army did not possess them, which allowed the Russians to
repeat Nomonhan on an even grander scale, overrunning the whole of Manchuria in a few
weeks in August 1945. The Japanese had, in 1941, only three motorized Divisions, but
even in these divisions the number of trucks only reached about one quarter to one-third of
that of European forces then fighting in North Africa. Happily for the Japanese, the
island campaigns in the Pacific War did not require highly-mobile formations, but those on
the Manchurian plains really did!

Up to 1941, the standard Infantry division did not possess any anti-tank artillery. It was one
of the glaring deficiencies which emerged from the postmortem reviews after the Nomonhan
debacle, resulting in the design and introduction of the 47 mm anti-tank gun. From 1937 onwards, troops had been equipped with the Model 97 (1937) 20 mm anti-tank
rifle, weighing 70 kilograms and serviced by a crew of two. This rifle was only useful
against tankettes at a close range. A better anti-tank design was the Model 94 (1934) 37
mm anti-tank gun, which was adapted from the German Rheinmetall-Borsig design. It had
a maximum range of 5.000 meter, but lacked sufficient penetrating power to knock out
Russian or allied tanks. The 47 mm anti-tank gun which could penetrate allied armor did
not reach the fronts until the middle of 1942, and still was not widely available in
1945.

The Japanese compensated for the lack of anti-tankguns by issuing to each soldier one
armor piercing limpet mine, weighing around 1.5 kilogrammes and equipped with 4

\[^{325}\text{Mayer, op. cit., 55.}\]
\[^{326}\text{M. & S. Harries, op. cit., 349.}\]
\[^{327}\text{E.J.Drea, op. cit., 8.}\]
\[^{328}\text{E.J. Drea, op. cit., 11, note 25.}\]
\[^{329}\text{E.J. Drea: op. cit., 5.}\]
\[^{330}\text{See Drea, op. cit., 7.}\]
magnets to stick it against the metal surface of a tank or iron pillbox. Also the "Molotov cocktail" was used against tanks, equipped with a special fuse which exploded the bottle regardless of in what position the bottle landed after being thrown.

Until 1929 Japan did not produce any tanks (Sensha) of her own. The first models were derived from early Renault, Vickers and Carden-Lloyd designs. In the thirties Japan turned to Russian designs. Up to 1941, the Japanese had designed three types of tanks, the tankettes of around 5 tons weight, the light tank between 5 and 10 tons, and the medium tank up to 20 tons. The power plant in all cases was a diesel engine. The standard tankette was the Model 92 (1932) with a weight of 3 tons, a crew of 2 and one 77 mm machine gun. The tankette model 97 (1937) had a 37 mm gun and weighed 4.5 tons. Both models were extensively used in China.

The standard light tank was the Model 95 (1935), a 10-tons tank with a crew of 3, one 37 mm gun and two 77 mm Machine guns. A number of medium tank models were used. The medium tank model 97 (1937) weighed 15 tons, had a crew of 4 men, an armament of one 57 mm gun and two 77 mm machine guns, and a maximum speed of 35 km/hr. The Japanese used these tanks in Manchuria, where two tank regiments fared poorly against the Russians at Nomonhan. The postmortem evaluation acknowledged their inferiority compared to the Russian tanks. The improvements recommended however had not yet been realized when the Pacific War started.

An area in which the Japanese army had an absolute lead on other forces was that of bacteriological and chemical warfare. In particular in bacteriological warfare the Japanese were far ahead of other countries, but the experiments they did on (mostly Chinese) Prisoners of War in their research facility in Mukden defy description, and must be counted as one of the most ghoulis h episodes of the whole Second World War.

In chemical warfare the Japanese possessed a number of chemical compounds which were actually used in a number of cases against Chinese troops, and in one case in 1945 against British tanks at the battle of Melkilla, Burma. There were however strict instructions never to use chemical weapons in the Pacific Theatre against the Americans, for fear of American retaliation against the Japanese population.

After this rather perfunctory discussion of Japanese weaponry, we will turn our attention to the training of Japan's soldiers. Japan had a system of conscription, under which every Japanese male between 17 and 40 years of age was subject to military service. The 20-year olds were examined yearly and classified according to fitness for service. Not all who were classified in the highest category A - those who were taller than 1.55 meters and in top physical condition - were called up. Even in 1937 only around 80% of Category A conscripts were called up, as an influx of only about 120,000 recruits a year was nee-

---

**Handbook**, op. cit., 241 - 249.


The peacetime Japanese army in 1936 counted in total about 240,000 men based on 17 active divisions. The fittest recruits were inducted into the army for a 2-year period. Upon completion of those 2 years of active service, the reservists were assigned to the First Reserve for 15 years. Students who had not yet finished their education were allowed to postpone their service until they were 26 years of age.

The Japanese divisions had an almost entirely territorial basis, meaning that each division consisted of soldiers conscripted from one or a few adjoining prefectures, giving all divisions a regionalized base. Also the infantry regiments were strongly regionalized, the purpose of which was to increase unit cohesion and therefore to reinforce social control over the conscripts. This gave the pre-war Japanese army, which then was not yet so large, a certain intimacy. Each infantry regiment had ties with a specific locality, and each unit had a hometown unit for replenishment.

The regular officers consisted of graduates from the Military Academy or from specialized Universities or institutions. Some officers had been promoted Warrant-Officers, but these normally did not progress beyond the grade of Captain. In the early years of the Meiji-period, all officers tended to be Samurai, but in the twenties the percentage of regular officers of Samurai-birth had declined to about 50%. Reserve-Officers were recruited from academic institutions and given a Reserve Officers' course of about one year. Due to the enormous expansion of the Japanese armed forces in the late thirties, about 80% of the junior officers were Reserve-Officers at the start of the war in the Pacific.

Military cadets were rigidly selected from graduates of 3-year courses at one of the 6 military preparatory schools located at Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Hiroshima, Sendai and Kumamoto. As an example, General Yamashita, the conqueror of Singapore, was educated at Hiroshima Preparatory School. The career of one of these selected cadets with a samurai background, graduating from Tokyo military preparatory school, has been described by Drea, as an example of the education and career of a regular Japanese officer. It concerns Lieutenant General Hatazo Adachi, Commander of the 18th Army in New Guinea in 1942, which during the war lost more than 100,000 men, illustrating the correctness of the saying circulating at the staff of 18th Army, that "Heaven is Java, Hell is Burma, but no one returns alive from New Guinea." Other useful biographies of Japanese Army Officers are those of Swinson and in particular Fuller.

---

326 E.J. Drea, Service, op. cit., 78.
328 Drea, op. cit., 108.
329 A. Swinson, op. cit. covers the biographies of the generals Homma, Yamashita, Mutaguchi and Honda.
The Cadets selected from the preparatory schools followed a 2-year course at the Junior Military Academy at Ichigaya (Tokyo). Then followed an 8-month training stage with troops in the field, which was capped by a 2-year course at the Military Academy at Zama in Kanagawa prefecture. Training and education at Ichigaya was rigorous. The Harrieses' have given a description of the conditions at the academy, and have made comparisons with the British Military Academy.\textsuperscript{327}

After his commissioning the new officer was expected to regularly follow courses in specialized army branch schools, of which the Infantry School in Chiba was the best known. Regular officers of the IJA were therefore highly-trained, but due to their lack of a broad secondary education or academic education they were mostly very narrow-minded, which became obvious in external contacts with foreign officers.\textsuperscript{327} Most Japanese regular officers were not trained to speak another language than Japanese, nor were they trained in social skills (with the exception of those from the Preparatory Schools), making them rather boring in personal contacts with foreign officers. At Ichigaya for example optional language courses were given in English and Russian. Most candidates applied for the Russian language course, as the Soviet-Union was the most obvious future enemy\textsuperscript{327}. A few officers however were selected to serve as military attaché's or as an observer with a foreign Army. A case in point is General Masaharu Homma, the conqueror of the Philippines, who was an observer with the British army at the Western Front during the First World War, earned the British Military Cross in 1918, and who spoke fluent English\textsuperscript{327}.

The training of men assigned to active service was long and arduous, taking 10 months (from January to November). The hierarchical family values, which most recruits took with them were reinforced by an army, which was "father and mother" for the raw recruit\textsuperscript{327}. Throughout this whole training period, special attention was given to the inculcation of "morale" and spiritual instruction (Seishin Kyoiku). The soldiers were imbued with the spirit to fight literally to the death. During the Pacific War, this attitude resulted in grim statistics of those killed and those taken prisoners-of-war. At Tarawa, 5000 soldiers were killed and 146 prisoners taken, at Iwo Jima 19,900 killed, 1033 prisoners taken.\textsuperscript{327} The revised 1941 Field Service Code instructed soldiers "Do not be taken prisoner alive".\textsuperscript{327} The "Imperial Rescript to Soldiers" issued by the Emperor Meiji on 4 January 1882 was frequently read to the men, stressing the five principles of military ethics: loyalty, courtesy, courage, truthfulness and frugality.\textsuperscript{327} The recruits had to memorize these principles.

\textsuperscript{327} M. & S. Harries, op. cit., 170 - 175.
\textsuperscript{327} Akira Fujiwara: The role of the Japanese Army, in Borg/Okamoto, 192.
\textsuperscript{327} M. & S. Harries, op. cit., 377.
\textsuperscript{327} Richard Fuller, op. cit., 103.
\textsuperscript{327} Edward Drea, Service, op. cit., 80 - 82.
\textsuperscript{327} Drea, Service, op. cit., 76, note 5.
\textsuperscript{327} Saburo Ienaga: The Pacific War, Pantheon New York, 1978, 49.
\textsuperscript{327} Handbook, op. cit., 6.
and to recite on command. Discipline was strictly maintained. To reinforce care and maintenance of uniforms and equipment, senior soldiers or NCO’s would physically beat their subordinates for even the slightest infractions, all in the name of the Emperor. For the raw recruit this meant constant abuse and beatings, as he stood on the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder. It was rather common to be ordered to stand at attention - all day! When he collapsed, the poor recruit would promptly receive a beating. As we have discussed, much of the perceived brutality of Japanese soldiers towards their captives can be retraced to the kind of ordeals they had to endure during their training.

During training much attention was given to hand-to-hand combat, bayonet fighting, and night fighting. Progressively training shifted to functioning within larger units. After ten months, and after the closing Autumn manoeuvers sometimes attended by the Emperor himself, the recruits had become hardened soldiers who could stand up to the best of other nation’s soldiers. The combination of superior fighting qualities and willingness to fight to the death made the Japanese infantryman a very dangerous foe indeed.

Because of his training and background the Japanese soldier was generally well-disciplined. With firm leadership, the discipline to which he had been accustomed in Japan was easily maintained in the field. However, elated with success in war, and imbued with the idea of Japanese racial superiority, the Japanese soldier was apt to adopt a superior attitude towards conquered people. As evidenced in China and later in S.E. Asia, crimes of rape, plundering, drunkenness and robbery were committed by Japanese soldiers, who in those circumstances tended to act very violently. Alas, as long as these acts were conducted towards non-Japanese, most officers tended to look the other way, inspired by the same feelings of racial superiority as their subordinates.

In summary, the Japanese army was, in 1941, a fearfully efficient killing machine, with a strong emphasis on hand-to-hand combat, bayonet charges, night fighting, and an aggressive drive to accomplish what it was ordered to do. This army raised havoc under the Dutch and English colonial troops, since they did not possess the same fighting qualities and dedication to achieve goals at all costs, as did the Japanese. The evident lack of firepower on the Japanese side was not a factor of importance, because the colonial troops did not possess excess firepower themselves. However, faced with an army with superior firepower, like the Red Army or the U.S. Marines, the Japanese units were annihilated. They were superior against Asian troops or colonial armies, but inferior against Western troops.

6.8.5. The Army Airforce.

Unlike the French and English, and in line with the U.S. and the Netherlands, the army and the navy both had their separate air force. The Japanese Army Air Service was controlled by three agencies: the Chief of General Staff for operations, the Inspector General of Aviation for personnel, training and administration, and Aviation HQ at the War Ministry, which was responsible for procurement and supply. Operationally, the airforce was attached very closely to the ground armies, as the Japanese airforce did not have a strategic bomber component. Each Field Army had its own Air Army (Kokugun), roughly equivalent to an Allied Theatre Airforce. The 1st Air Army was attached to the Japanese Home Defense Army, which included Formosa and Korea. The 2nd Air Army was attached to the Kwantung Army, the 3rd Air Army to the Southern Army, and the 5th Air Army to the

---

327 Senaga, The Pacific War, op. cit. 51-54. See also Drea, Service, op. cit., 82-84.
China Expeditionary Force. The 3rd Air Army was employed against the Allies in S.E. Asia.

Organisationally, the Air Armies were subdivided into Air divisions, Air brigades comparable to an Allied Wing, and Air regiments (Hiko Sentai). The smallest unit was the squadron or Chutai. A Sentai consisted of 3 - 4 Chutai. The normal strength of a chutai was 9 planes, subdivided in 3 sections of 3 planes each. To each air regiment was attached an Airfield Battalion, which took care of aircraft maintenance, fuel supplies, ground stores, munitions and administration. A guards section took care of airfield protection.

Japanese air doctrine emphasized two types of air operations: direct air support to ground troops and air superiority (counter-airforce operations). There was no strategic bombing doctrine. In air support the Japanese tended to use their planes as flying artillery, softening up the front and clearing the way for attacking ground troops. Liaison with ground troops has always been very close, with a ground commander able to call for direct air support on very short notice. Planes were accustomed to operate very near to the front from hastily constructed airstrips. The campaigns in China between 1937 and 1940 were an excellent training ground to attain almost near perfection in direct air support. Planes used in direct air support were fighters equipped with small bombs, dive-bombers and two-engine bombers. Dive-bombing against land objectives was executed by a powered glide at an 45-degree angle. This kind of bombing approach was executed by both the one-engine dive bombers as well as the two-engine bombers.

Part of air superiority operations consisted of the bombing of enemy airfields, which as an objective had the highest target priority. During the war in China the Japanese also developed terror bombing of undefended cities, in the hope of breaking Chinese morale. Bombing runs were always done in daylight, at high levels, with a considerable fighter escort in order to draw enemy fighters in dogfights, which were preferred by Japanese fighter pilots due to the extreme manoeuverability of their planes.

The growth of Japanese airpower, literally under the nose of its future adversaries, was spectacular and not recognized as such in the West.\textsuperscript{328} After the First World War the Japanese started buying surplus allied planes, using them operationally during their Siberian adventure in 1920. They quickly obtained licenses to produce both the French Nieuport fighter and the Hispano-Suiza in-line engine. Nakajima thereafter acquired a license from the British to build the British Gloster Gambet and the Bristol Jupiter radial engine. Mitsubishi invited a British airplane designer (Herbert Smith of the Sopwith Company) to try his hand at designing the first carrier-based fighter in the world. Another firm, Kawasaki, hired the German engineer Dr Richard Vogt from BMW. Technological self-sufficiency in both plane and airplane engine design was reached before 1930. The first all-Japanese warplane was the Nakajima Type 91 Army fighter of 1931.

Japanese designation codes for aircraft are not very meaningful, especially for army planes. Moreover, the Japanese Navy followed a completely different system for its airplane designations.\textsuperscript{329} Given the profusion of Japanese nomenclature, the bewildered Allies decided to design a designation system of their own. In June 1942 the American Technical Air Intelligence Unit headed by Colonel Frank McCoy decided that all known Japanese military aircraft should in future be referred to by a Christian name, with fighters

\textsuperscript{328} See S.L. Mayer, op. cit., 126 - 127.
\textsuperscript{329} S.L. Mayer, op. cit., 122.
getting boy's names, and bombers girl's names. The Ki-43 'Type 1 Army fighter "Hayabusha" became the "Oscar". The only obvious exception was Japan's most famous plane of the Second World War, the A6M2 Type 00 (from the year of introduction: 1940) Zero Navy fighter, which maintained next to its American name "Zeke" the more famous name Zero.

The China Incident was an ample proving ground for Japanese technology, as Japanese airplanes fought against firstline American and Russian fighters. The Japanese fighters at that time were the Nakajima Ki-27 Type 97 army fighter "Nate" and the navy's Mitsubishi A5M carrier fighter plane "Claude". Both were low-wing monoplanes, with open cockpits, blunt radial-engine noses and non-retractable landing gear, making them look rather outmoded. Both were highly manoeuvrable however, and dominated the skies over China, besting the redoubtable Russian I-16 Polikarpov fighter (the "Chato" of Spanish Civil War lore).

In the summer of 1940, the first Zeros appeared in the Chinese skies - and nobody in the West took notice, even when the Chinese sent urgent reports about a superior Japanese fighter. The Zero was designed by Dr. Jiro Horikoshi, Mitsubishi's chief airplane designer. Horikoshi created a supremely manoeuvrable fighter which was far better than any fighters the Allies could produce, with the exception of the newest Spitfires and Hurricanes of that time. As Chennault's Flying Tigers would find out in 1941, fighting a Zero with a P-40 Tomahawk in a dogfight was suicidal. The Zero however had some design faults, which would make it vulnerable after 1943: no self-sealing tanks, lack of adequate pilot armor protection, and being a superb climber, it was an indifferent diver.

Even more unexplainable is why Western observers failed to notice the appearance, in 1936, of the two-engine all-metal monoplane Mitsubishi G3M Type 96 Navy Medium Bomber, the "Nell". It was fast, with 395 km/hr, and could carry a bombload of almost one ton, or a torpedo, over a distance of more than 2,000 km. It was fully comparable, if not better than the Bristol Blenheim, or the Russian SB-2 or the German Heinkels of that time. From airfields in Japan and Formosa it attacked Hankow and Nanking, and directly after Pearl Harbor it was reducing American airfields on Luzon to rubble. Nell's armed with torpedoes sank the PRINCE OF WALES and the REPULSE in the Gulf of Siam.

The Army Airforce entered World War II with as mainstay of its fighter forces the Nate and the Oscars, and as bombers the Nell, the Ki-21 Mitsubishi Type 97 bomber "Sally" and the Ki-48 Kawasaki Type 99 light bomber "Lily". The more modern Ki-49 Nakajima Type 0 Donryu bomber (code "Helen") was becoming available in large numbers. For reconnaissance flights the one-engine Ki-51 Mitsubishi Type 99 "Sonia" were used and the fast two-engined Ki-46 Nakajima Type 0 "Dinah". On the eve of the Second World War the Japanese Army Air Force was composed of about 50 Sentai's with about 1600 planes in all. It was a formidable force, not only in numbers, but also specifically in the quality of its planes and pilots.

---

Before the 2nd World War the Japanese intelligence community had a long, internal tradition from the time of the Shogunate. In the 17th century the Shoguns had designed a system of information gathering and spying which was very effective. It was the so-called Hoko-system of communal spy-hostages. Under it Tonari Gumi, or Neighbourhood Associations, were established in which a designated member of a household was held responsible for the conduct of all other members of the (extended) household. Every ten households elected a "warden" to be responsible for the whole group of households. This enabled the Shogunate to have a "thought police" in place, which enforced conformity and obedience to the state. As Japan extended her conquests, similar networks were introduced in the conquered territories.

At the end of the 19th century the Japanese had three Intelligence organisations in place, covering Asia, Europe and the Americas. One organisation was run by the Army, the other by the Navy, and the third one by the Foreign Office. Information exchange between the three networks was very uncommon. At operational level, however, spies could use the army radio network as in China or Manchuria, or the Foreign Office radio network. The Japanese used embassies, legations and consulates not only to gather military or naval information by way of the military and naval attachés, but also to amass information of a non-military nature, in the areas of administration, the press, welfare and economy, communications, educational systems, etc. At the embassies and legations, the First Secretary was normally charged with coordinating the intelligence operations of the embassy personnel and of the consulates. In a number of sensitive cases, this contact person was the military attaché. Colonel Oshima, military attaché in Berlin from 1934, for example coordinated around 150 agents active in Germany. The consulates were also used for the collecting of information of a military nature, and in fomenting anti-colonial actions by nationalist parties in the colonies. Consul-General Ototsugu Saito in Batavia became infamous in that respect. He even owned Malay newspapers. Consulate members were trained at the East Asia Economic Investigation Bureau headed by Dr. Shumel Okawa. This bureau was part of the Foreign Ministry. The army Intelligence staff had also a separate service working closely with Japanese commercial firms.

Moreover, consulates were used in a direct way to gather sensitive information. A case in point was the consulate at Honolulu under Nagao Kita. Kita himself accurately reported the movements of the Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor up to 6 December 1941 to his superiors at the Gaimusho. He gained an assistant in March 1941, Sub-Lieutenant Takeo Yoshizawa, who was attached to the 8th section of the naval general staff and who was despatched by his chief to Honolulu as Vice-Consul. Yoshizawa reported through the diplomatic channels directly to naval headquarters. The Americans had cracked the diplomatic code

---


at that time, but had no time to decipher Yoshizawa's messages.\textsuperscript{3299}

A comparable move had been the sending of Major Osone of the Army GHQ to the newly opened consulate at Songhida (Singora), from where he sent reports about beach conditions and weather reports up to the landing of the 5th Division at Singora on 8 December 1941.\textsuperscript{3300}

The Second Bureau of the Army General Staff was charged with Intelligence. This Bureau was subdivided in the Western Section, the Russian Section and the China Section. Human Intelligence was provided by the Special Service Organisation or Boryaku-Ka, which was not organised by country, but by region.\textsuperscript{3301} The regional organisation was called a Kikan. The Hikari Kikan was the Special Service Organisation which operated in the NEI, Malaya, Burma and British India.\textsuperscript{3302} Officers responsible for running the organisation were selected from the Military Academies, and had to go through a three-year "espionage school" at Nakano near Tokyo.

Counter-espionage was a function of the Japanese Military Police, the infamous Kempei Tai,\textsuperscript{3303} which also maintained a close watch on the activities of foreign embassies and consulates in Japan and occupied China. The duties of the Kempei-Tai were, next to counter-espionage, censorship of correspondence, enforcement of army discipline, surveillance of foreign travelers including the hotels they stayed in, surveillance of civilians, post offices, etc. In addition, in Japan itself, the Kempei Tai was used to enforce political conformity and to repress dissident elements.\textsuperscript{3304}

Japanese espionage started during World War I, when the British granted naval facilities to their Japanese Allies in Singapore and at Penang - an important coaling station for the Japanese navy. By the twenties the Japanese had established an espionage network over the whole of Malaya including Singapore. In the thirties there were almost 6,000 Japanese living in Singapore and Malaya, most of them in service of commercial firms. Sensitive information was handed over to the Japanese Embassy in Bangkok or the Japanese Consulate-General in Singapore, and then forwarded by diplomatic mail to Tokyo. Japanese firms were reputed to buy rubber plantations, especially in strategic positions in Johore near Singapore. A Japanese firm exploited iron mines on the coasts of Trengganu and Johore. One of its Directors, Koichiro Ishihara, would later become infamous in Japan as one of the fiercest public advocates of a Japanese advance into the Nanyo. Employees of these firms concentrated on obtaining secret information on the Singapore Naval Base

\textsuperscript{3299} Louis Allen, Ibid, 551.

\textsuperscript{3300} Louis Allen, Ibid., 550.


\textsuperscript{3302} Elphick. op. cit. , 40.

\textsuperscript{3303} See Richard Deacon: Kempeitai. Tuttle, Tokyo 1990.

\textsuperscript{3304} Louis Allen, op. cit., 554.
The so-called Shinozaki-case\textsuperscript{296} illustrated the growing role in espionage of the Japanese Consulate-General under C.G. Kaoru Toyoda in Singapore. On 21 September 1940 his press attaché, Mamoru Shinozaki, was arrested by British police. Shinozaki had obtained secret plans about the Singapore fortress from two British soldiers, but more important were his services in guiding two officers of the Japanese Army General Staff on a tour of the Naval Base and other military installations both in Malaya and Singapore. The two officers, Lieut. Col. Kazuo Tanikawa and Captain Teruhiyo Kunetake, worked for Colonel Masanobu Tsuji, who was preparing the attack plans for Malaya.\textsuperscript{297} Both officers had decided after their reconnaissance that Singapore as the "Gibraltar of the East" was pure British bluff. Tsuji and Kunetake later became members of the staff of General Yamashita during the Malaya invasion. According to the same source, a Japanese Colonel Tsugunori Katomatsu worked as the Chief Steward of the Officers Club at the Naval Base, and from loose talk he was able to report the arrival date of HMS PRINCE OF WALES in Singapore.\textsuperscript{298} Best documented however have been the activities of Japanese Major Iwachiro Fujiwara, who fomented anti-British feelings among the Indians within the battalions of the Indian Army in Malaya. He set up the \textit{F-Kikan} (for Fujiwara Organisation) with the express purpose of destabilising those Indian battalions, and arranged for radio broadcasts from Formosa in Urdu to these troops.\textsuperscript{299} The \textit{F-Kikan} contributed to seriously undermining the fighting prowess of these Indian battalions.

Popular literature, but also official despatches, from both the governments of the NEI and the Straits Settlements before the outbreak of war pointed out the omnipresence of Japanese shopkeepers, photographers, barbers and dentists, who therefore were all classified as spies. Undoubtedly a number of them were spies, but their number has been exagerated to mythical proportions. As Post's dissertation\textsuperscript{300} has shown, most of these Japanese came to Malaya and the Indies as small businessmen, aided by the liberal immigration policies of the two colonies under consideration, and by the fact that there was almost no competition from the Chinese or indigenous people in the services they offered. Undoubtedly, when approached by the military, they would have given all the intelligence they possessed unhesitatingly, being good Japanese grown up in \textit{Kokutai}, but surely they were not all spies.

Nevertheless, ultimately army intelligence failed to avert a catastrophic defeat of the Japanese nation. The reasons for this and the naval intelligence's failure were threefold. First, Japan's Intelligence focussed narrowly on operational information\textsuperscript{301} as operati-

\textsuperscript{296} Elphick, op. cit., 132.

\textsuperscript{297} Elphick, op. cit., 188. Masanobu Tsuji, op. cit., 7.

\textsuperscript{298} Elphick, op. cit. 191.

\textsuperscript{299} Elphick, Ibid, 196.


\textsuperscript{301} Barnhart/May, op. cit. 440.
ons planning was considered the most important Staff function. Secondly, this culture resulted in a very low status for intelligence officers. And the third and most important cause was that famous dictum that decisionmakers need to have an open mind, otherwise even excellent Intelligence is of no help. Japanese decisionmakers had a frame of mind which made them filter out unpleasant or unwanted facts.

It should also be remembered, that the Imperial army before 1940 paid virtually no attention to either Britain or the United States. Its main potential enemy was the Soviet-Union. The best and brightest intelligence officers therefore went to Russia, and staffed the Russian section. There are more than indications that the stream of operational intelligence from Malaya and the NEI, which went to the Army General Staff's Second Bureau, could not be adequately processed by the much smaller Western Section. When the Operations Section prepared the attack on Malaya, they were forced to rely on commercially published maps, and several hastily arranged reconnaissance flights over that area. The army in fact began sending professional intelligence agents to South-East Asia only around June 1940, at the time when a unified decision was at last taken by the Japanese government to conquer the Nanyo.

Although the Japanese stressed the use of Human Intelligence (Humint), the use of Signals Intelligence (Sigint) was also significant. The Japanese Army worked closely with the Polish Army in the twenties and thirties, and obtained Enigma machines and Polish techniques for encryption and decipherment of codes. There were some early successes in decrypting American and Russian codes, and in the thirties the Japanese cracked the Chinese diplomatic code, but as far as we know, they failed to break into the encryption systems of the Western Allies. On the other hand, Western decryptors failed to crack the Japanese Army code until late in the 2nd World War.

Of the three Army Intelligence Sections, the Russian Section delivered the best performance. The Japanese army possessed a second-opinion on Soviet matters in the form of the Intelligence Office of the Kwantung Army. Mostly, both bureaus had similar predictions. The only time that the Section failed was before and during the Nomonhan crisis, when it consistently underrated enemy strength. But in 1940 it accurately reported the heavy buildup of Soviet troops in Siberia, and on 11 July 1941 its chief, Colonel Takesuke Isomura, reported that only five Russian divisions had been sent westwards to confront the German invasion, meaning that the Russians still had too many divisions in Siberia to gamble on a Japanese attack. At least the Russian Section saved Japan from a disastrous war in the North.


3303 Barnhart/May, op. cit. 429.


3305 Brian Bridges, op. cit., 30.

3306 J.W.M. Chapman, ibid., 149 - 150.

3307 Barnhart/May, op. cit. 439.
The Chinese Section however under Colonel Saishige Nagatsu made incorrect estimates of Chinese strength and determination in the summer of 1937 after the Marco Polo Bridge fighting. It predicted massive Chinese troop movements towards Northern China, whereas those troops turned up at Shanghai. Even worse however was the capability of the Western Section to accurately predict long-term risks in going South. Neither the army nor the navy Intelligence could predict with any accuracy how closely coordinated any Anglo-Dutch-American joint defense plans were, which left the Japanese with a large measure of uncertainty.

The strict security measures, in which the five Singapore Staff conferences (pages 244 - 254) had been shrouded, really paid off very well!

In effect, the Western Section failed in three respects. It did not predict the sharp reaction of the U.S. on the occupation of Southern Indochina in July 1941. It did not understand the awkward position of President Roosevelt, whose administration could not come to military assistance of Britain and the NEI, so long as no territory of the U.S. was attacked. Thirdly, there was not enough understanding on the Japanese side that the U.S.A. was indeed militarily weak at that time, but that it possessed an awesome potential which would enable it to crush Japan in the long term. There was an excessive belief in the spiritual and moral weakness of the Americans. As Colonel Tsuji, operational planner of the Malay invasion, remarked later: "Our candid ideas at the time were that Americans, being merchants, would not continue for long with an unprofitable war." Therefore, opinions to the contrary were ignored. During late 1940 and 1941, a section of the Operations Bureau of Army HQ undertook comparative studies of Japanese and American power. The predictably alarming conclusions were shelved however by Army Chief of Staff General Gen Sugiyama. During the Japanese-American talks in the summer of 1941 the army's representative in the talks, Colonel Hideo Iwakuro, brought Colonel Kenkichi Shinjo to the U.S. to study America's potential power. Shinjo collected a mass of data from Japanese commercial firms working in the U.S., and concluded that the U.S. could quickly outproduce Japan by a factor of ten. When Iwakuro delivered this disturbing news to Tokyo, he was promptly removed from his position and assigned to command an infantry regiment. As one of his superiors told him: "A Japan-America war is necessary; it is no longer a question of victory or defeat." Japan's leaders had reached a stage in which they were no longer able to analyse the consequences of a war with the U.S. with a duration for longer than a year, as belief in seishin (spirituality) and in the mythic qualities of the Japanese race overtook rational decision-making.

6.8.7. Army Planning for the Pacific War.

For the Japanese army, the War in the Pacific was the wrong war at the wrong place at the wrong time, and with the wrong enemy. Ever since the bloody Russian-Japanese conflict of 1904/1905 the Japanese army expected Russian revenge, and consequently planned for such a contingency. It foresaw enormous battles on the Manchurian plains, and prepared for them. As an illustration of the dedication of the Army to this image of the

---

306 Barnhart/May, op. cit. 434.
307 Barnhart/May, op. cit., 442.
308 Barnhart/May, op. cit., 443.
309 Masanobu Tsuji, op. cit., 21.
310 Barnhart/May, op. cit. 452.
enemy, it has been documented that English was not even taught in the preparatory military schools. German, Russian and French were considered far more valuable. Moreover, there were no handbooks, procedures or data on fighting in the tropics at all.

The revised "Imperial Defence Policy" (IDP) of 1918 listed Japan's hypothetical enemies in a future war in descending order as Russia, America and China. The post-war naval arms race between Japan and America, and the imposition of Russia due to the Russian revolution of 1917 made a war with America more probable. In the revised IDP of 1923 the United States was therefore the most probable enemy. This was reflected in the annual Operations Plans, codenamed KO or "A" for the United States, OTSU or "B" for the Soviet-Union and HEI or "C" for China. Britain was considered in Plan TEI or "D". Actual operational planning against the British was not instituted until 1939; against the Dutch not until 1940. However, a Committee for the Research of Military Preparations against the United States was established within the General Staff in 1924, and in 1925 it had produced an outline for the occupation of the Philippines by an amphibious force of around 2 divisions, before the American battlefleet could arrive. The 5th and 11th Divisions were appointed for these amphibious operations.

Nevertheless, although the 1936 revision of the IDP re-iterated the most probable enemies in decreasing order as the United States, the Soviet Union, China and Great Britain, the Japanese Army HQ only halfheartedly endorsed this IDP, as both divisions mentioned above were placed in strategic reserve in 1937 for operations against the Soviet-Union. The reason was the diversion caused by the seizure of Manchuria by unauthorized operations of the Kwantung Army, and the unexpected military escalation in 1937 after the Incident at the Marco Polo-bridge. The resulting China war from 1937 to 1945 was unforeseen, unplanned, and an extremely costly war of attrition. At the end of 1937 the Japanese army had expanded four times over its pre-war strength of 240,000 men. Even before the attack on Pearl-Harbor, the Japanese army had suffered 600,000 casualties in China, and that unplanned war was therefore quite a drain on national resources. And although the army leadership agreed that the Soviet Union was the primary enemy, as the revised Field Service Regulations of 1938 made clear, the Army could barely replace lost equipment, let alone modernize itself to fight a war with a modern first-class power: the Soviet-Union. And that power did not rest on its laurels, but reinforced its

213 Barnhart/May, op. cit., 446.
217 E.J. Drea, op. cit., 29
218 E.J. Drea, op. cit., 29.
219 These consisted of 180,000 dead and 425,000 wounded. See E.J. Drea, op. cit., 43.
220 E.J. Drea, op. cit., 25.
East Siberian forces from eight divisions in 1932 to thirty (1) divisions in 1939.\textsuperscript{221} Japanese Army HQ therefore neglected plans or preparations for a war with the Western Powers.

A golden opportunity however arrived with the German Invasion of France and the Netherlands. In the summer of 1940, expecting a German Invasion of England, the Army had drafted an operational plan for a lightning attack into Sumatra, Java and East Borneo from bases to be acquired in Indochina.\textsuperscript{222} Because of uncertainties about the Soviet posture in Siberia, the army plans foresaw minimal forces for this Southward advance, and a short duration after which the troops should be rushed back to the North. An attack on Singapore however should be avoided in this planning, not to speak of an attack on the Philippines. This plan was however contested by the navy as being unrealistic. Neither the army nor the navy was adequately informed by intelligence about the results of the Singapore Staff Conferences, and the possibility that the NEI would have received guarantees from either Great Britain or the United States or even both, could not be ruled out. The navy specifically considered U.S. military involvement after a Japanese attack on NEI as almost certain. Therefore, no interservice agreement was possible, and the Army dropped its plans.

As the Army's support for a southern operation waned, the German invasion of the Soviet Union opened new possibilities of starting a war in the North against the "traditional" enemy. It was now the navy, however, who eagerly sought an offensive into the Nanyo (See subchapter on Japanese Naval Planning). At the Imperial Conference of 2 July 1941 the decision was made that Japan would not attack the Soviet-Union, except in the case of an imminent collapse. In that case Siberia would be invaded, and Army HQ allocated 16 divisions to Manchuria in case of such a collapse. Japanese plans envisaged a short German-Soviet war between 1 September and the end of October, but the Soviets did not conform to their plans, as they did not collapse. Stalin withdrew five divisions from Siberia in order to defend Moscow, but during the whole war the Soviets had more than twenty divisions stationed in Siberia, which was an adequate deterrent to the Japanese. Early-August 1941 Army HQ gave up plans for an invasion of Siberia in 1941.\textsuperscript{223}

The newly resurrected plans of the navy to grab the NEI after their rather negative attitude against it in 1940 caused much suspicion and confusion at Army HQ,\textsuperscript{224} which had never contemplated a long drawn-out war with the U.S. As the army was offensively-minded, it could produce plans for operations in the Philippines, Malaya and the NEI, but after attainment of these goals, war objectives became hazy. Moreover, planning of Pacific campaigns, i.e. in New Guinea and the Solomons, was completely left to the Navy. As the army could not come up with any plans for the total defeat of either the United States or Great-Britain, the maximum it arrived at was a war of attrition against the U.S.A. waged from a conquered S.E. Asia, with hopefully China knocked out of the war because of the cut-off of its supply lines and with India in full revolt against its British masters. It was a shortsighted and rather optimistic strategy, but the only viable strategy which Army HQ

\textsuperscript{221} Ikuhiko Hata, in J.W. Morley, op. cit. (1976), 129 - 133.

\textsuperscript{222} Barnhart/May, op. cit. 442.

\textsuperscript{223} E.J. Drea, op. cit., 32.

\textsuperscript{224} See Barnhart/May, op. cit., 444.
could formulate. In terms of the Southern Areas, the Army obviously thought of a strategic defensive from an invincible perimeter formed by the Malay Barrier.

It sounds unbelievable after all those years of spying, but the IJA was critically deficient of intelligence about South-east Asia, from topography to tropical medicine. The planning for the invasion of Malaya was done on the basis of British Ordnance Survey maps of Malaya, supplemented by commercially available plans of Singapore City.\textsuperscript{325} Therefore a research Division was set up in Taiwan in October 1940 in order to determine the effect of a tropical environment on troops and their equipment. The research bureau produced a Handbook on fighting in the Tropics in October 1941, which became the standard reference on that matter for the duration of the Pacific War.\textsuperscript{326} Moreover, in October 1940 the 5th Division, recently evacuated from FIC, was ordered to train for amphibious operations. In March 1941 the division executed a large-scale amphibious operation against the navy base at Sasebo in Kyushu as a stand-in for Singapore.

In addition, on Hainan troops were ordered to march around the island complete with their equipment in order to simulate the 1000-km march from Singora to Singapore on the Malayan peninsula.\textsuperscript{327} Meanwhile, two staff officers in disguise as civilians, reconnoitred approach routes in Thailand.\textsuperscript{328} On 22 October 1941 Lieut.-Col. Masanobu Tsuji of the Staff of the 25th Army, charged with the Malayan operation, flew personally over Northern Malaya and Southern Thailand in an unarmed Dinh reconnaissance plane. He discovered that the Thai air strips at Singora were almost useless, but that the British possessed magnificent airfields on the west coast of Malaya near Alor Star. Therefore, he proposed to the staff to immediately go after the Alor Star airfields after landing on the east coast near Singora and Patani.\textsuperscript{329} This suggestion was adopted and the plan was accordingly executed. It proved to be a brilliant masterstroke.

At the Imperial Conference of 6 September 1941, the fateful decision was made that Japan should prepare for war as per 1 November 1941, and that hostilities would be opened against the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands. It was the start of serious operational planning.

The first thing was the re-examination of existing operational plans. Plan KO (against the U.S.) had existed since 1919, and in it were foreseen landings in The Philippines in a first phase in the Lingayen Gulf, Batangas and Lamon Bay, where beaches had been inspected and selected. The purpose of the landings was the conquest of Luzon, after which the other islands of the Philippine archipelago could be occupied. Plan KO envisaged the use of 3 divisions, and this was left as it was.\textsuperscript{330}

Operational plans against Great Britain had been drawn up in 1939, and had as objective

\begin{footnotes}
\item[327] Tsuji, op. cit., 11.
\item[328] Tsuji, op. cit., 31.
\item[329] Tsuji, op. cit., 48 - 52.
\item[330] Hayashi, op. cit., 29.
\end{footnotes}
the conquest of the English footholds Hongkong and Singapore. These plans were now expanded to include an occupation of the NEI, and these plans were integrated with the KO-Plans. The NEI had been left out of an operational plan in 1940 because it was hoped that the Dutch would be " lulled into a sense of security by continuing the economic negotiations at Batavia, while secretly instigating an independence movement among the natives and securing military data for the invasion of the Netherlands East Indies." Moreover, during the assault on Singapore, the Indonesian natives of the NEI would be exhorted by radio propaganda to rise against their Dutch masters, to secure the oil wells and other natural resources, and to deliver them intact to the Japanese forces, which would move from Singapore to occupy the NEI. The oil wells were a major worry, because they could be destroyed by retreating Dutch. Therefore, in September 1941 the Japanese started high-powered radio broadcasts in Malay and other languages spoken in the NEI archipelago. This propaganda was beamed to the NEI by very powerful radio transmitters based on Formosa, and was not hindered by the Dutch.

As early as January 1941, the Japanese War Ministry in conjunction with the Finance Ministry, had been preparing military currency to be used in occupied areas. The printed currencies were deposited with the Bank of Japan, and consisted of dollars for Malaya, British Borneo and Thailand, guilders for the NEI and pesos for the Philippines.

In essence, the Japanese IGHQ foresaw the use of four Armies with 9 divisions and 2 air groups for conquering the whole Southern Area.

1. Fourteenth Army under Lieut.-Gen. Masaharu Homma, with the Philippines as strategic goal. The Army would consist of the 16th and 48th Divisions, and the 65th Independent Mixed Brigade.

2. Fifteenth Army under Lieut.-Gen. Shojiro Iida, with the 33rd and 55th Divisions would occupy Thailand and Burma.

3. Sixteenth Army under Lieut.-Gen. Hitoshi Imamura, with the 2nd Division and the 56th Independent Mixed Brigade would be used to conquer Borneo and Java.

4. Twenty Fifth Army under Lieut.-Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita, with the Imperial Guard Division, the 5th and 18th Infantry Division. This army was the most powerful of the four armies, and was lavishly equipped with lorries and bicycles. It had to conquer the Malayan peninsula and Singapore.

The four Armies would together form the Southern Army under General Hisaichi Terauchi, with as strategic reserve the 21st Division under Lieut.-Gen. Hisaichi Tanaka, and the 4th and 21st Independent Mixed Brigades. Air support would be given by the 3rd Air group under Lieut.-Gen. Michio Sugawara, and the 5th Air group under Lieut.-Gen. Eiyo Obata. The 3rd Air Group counted 4 fighter regiments, 3 light bomber regiments, 3 heavy bomber

---

331 Hayashi, op. cit., 29, note 1.
332 IMTFE Transcripts, November 10, 1948, pp. 49.461 - 63.
333 IMTFE Transcripts, November 10, 1948, pp. 49.441 - 42.
334 See Table 3 in Hayashi, op. cit., 30.
regiments, and one reconnaissance regiment. The 5th Air Group consisted of 2 fighter regiments, 3 light bomber regiments, 2 heavy bomber regiments, and 1 reconnaissance regiment.

Hongkong would be attacked by one division from the 23rd Army, stationed in Southern China, and would be the responsibility of the China Expeditionary Army under General Shunrokku Hata. The South Seas Detachment under Lieut.-Gen. Tomitaro Hori, built around 3 Infantry battalions, would occupy Guam and the Bismarck Islands from its base in Saipan.

The Army Airforce’s first priority would be the destruction of enemy airpower by surprise attacks against enemy airbases. The 3rd Air Group would operate from airfields in Southern Indochina and be directed against Malaya and Thailand, the 5th Air Group from airbases in Formosa, and be directed against Luzon. In Army operations the Malaya campaign would have first priority, and within this campaign the speedy conquest of the airfields at Singora (Thailand) and Northern Malaya held first priority. The 25th Army therefore possessed 3 crack divisions of which two had war experience in China, and were well-trained, including amphibious training. The Imperial Guards Division had no war record up to then, but was trained in amphibious warfare.

The Army did not trust the Russians. Therefore, of the total of 51 Divisions and 59 Brigades available, 13 divisions and 23 brigades were kept in Manchuria, in comparison to the 9 divisions and 4 brigades which were sent to the South. China absorbed most of the Japanese Army strength: 22 divisions and 20 brigades. Moreover, Army Air in Manchuria was being reinforced, with strict orders to annihilate the Red Airforce in Siberia if the Russians started hostilities. The air squadrons were assigned as follows: Homeland 9, Manchuria 21, China 16 and for the Southern Operation 70 squadrons. It was planned to transfer most of the Army Airforce units from China and the homeland to Manchuria in the case of a Soviet attack, and the Army would then minimally execute the Malaya and Philippines operations, but defer the operations against Java. The Japanese estimated the strength of their enemies as follows:

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Ground Troops</th>
<th>Aircraft</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malaya</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borneo</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongkong</td>
<td>19,000</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>163,000</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guam</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEI</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>372,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>700</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3336 Masanobu Tsuji, op. cit., 32.

3339 Hayashi, op. cit., 33.

3337 See Table 4 of Hayashi, op. cit., 34.
In effect the Japanese ground strength of 200,000 men was far less than total enemy strength, but due to the extreme dispersion of enemy troops the Japanese counted on local superiority at the points of attack, planning to beat each enemy after the other in succession. In the air, the Japanese had an absolute superiority of over 1200 planes from both Army Air and the Naval Airforce. The timetable for the conquest of the whole Southern Area was set at 100 days. X-Day had to be determined on 1 December 1941. It was set at Monday 8 December 1941 Tokyo time. (December 7 at Pearl Harbor).

The Japanese army proved itself capable of fighting a brilliant campaign in S.E. Asia (Malaya, the Philippines, NEI and Burma) but it lacked the strategic vision to translate those operational successes in a strategic one. When Western firepower illustrated the technological deficiencies of its equipment and doctrines, the Japanese Army ultimately and literally self-destructed with its suicide tactics, reaping a storm which the IJA had itself sowed in the preceding years. This was definitely not a failure of her soldiers, who remained fanatic fighters up to the end, but a failure of IJA leadership, or rather, the lack of it.

6.8.8. The role of the Emperor.

The Emperor, Hirohito, was the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of both the Army and Navy. After his death in 1989, the question of his culpability for the disastrous war which Japan started has been a point of heated discussion, not least in Japan itself. Hirohito had his staunch defenders in the West, who saw him as a pacifist, and/or as a victim of dark machinations by other officials in his entourage. Others have argued that he was a reactionary, a warmonger and a nationalist. A balanced view of the Emperor is very difficult to obtain.

Sheldon has argued that one should not confuse formal responsibility with personal responsibility. As the Emperor was formally Chief of the Armed Forces, he was formally responsible. The question being debated however is about the degree of his personal responsibility. However, personal responsibility in Japanese culture with its consensus and group decisions has not been a well-developed concept in any degree. The question is therefore, whether this question of his personal responsibility is a viable approach.

Therefore, it is important to try to define the exact position of Hirohito in the chain of command. The War and Navy Ministers, and the two Chiefs of Staff, were, with the cabinet Premier the only Japanese outside court circles who could request an audience with the Emperor. Meeting the inquisitive and intelligent Emperor, those dignitaries had to prepare themselves well, using position papers prepared by middle grade officers and civil servants - therefore in itself a classic example of ringisei (See page 619). If the Emperor asked questions, which he did many times, the top men had to go back to their respective

---

**Notes:**


In a few instances, the Emperor acted decisively. The first was the ni-ni-roku incident (See page 643), the second instance was his interference in ending the Pacific War. In both cases the Emperor used his imperial prerogative because there was no agreement between the civil and military authorities. In the case of the ni-ni-roku incident of 26 February 1936, the Army was factionalized, the General Staff and the Navy were opposed to the rebellion, as were the Emperor’s advisers. The second case was at the end of the war, when the service chiefs blocked the agreement to surrender, and the Prime Minister, breaking precedent, asked the Emperor to break the deadlock by speaking.

Thanks to the above-mentioned informal briefings the Emperor had a good grasp of military and naval matters, although he himself was of course not an officer. He was still comparatively young in 1941 - forty-one years old - while the youngest of his military advisers was 16 years older. After he became Emperor in December 1925, he had ripened in his position, and "knew his stuff". It is interesting to note, however that when he assumed the regency in 1921 there were already doubts whether he had the personality to handle the job. The Dutch Minister in Tokyo informed his government that he considered the future Emperor as intelligent, but "weak of character".

By all accounts, Hirohito was very intelligent, and he possessed a remarkable memory. He was very interested in marine biology, in which he would excel as a scientist after the war, but because of his upbringing he was also very interested in military matters. According to a publication which surfaced in 1991 as attached to a diary of one of his counsellors, Hidenari Terasaki, Hirohito spoke his mind in a number of conversations between 18 March and 8 April 1946. These monologues give an interesting view on Hirohito’s thinking and opinions about the war which was waged in his name.

From this document it is clear that Hirohito was an avowed nationalist, and as such a true Japanese. According to him, the root causes of Japan’s war with the West were the failure of western societies to accept the Japanese as equal to Europeans and Americans. He pointed out the refusal of the western powers to insert a racial equality clause in the Versailles Treaty, and mentioned the Australian and Californian anti-Japanese exclusion

---

3341 Marder, op. cit. 90.
3342 Sheldon, op. cit., 12.
3343 Sheldon, Ibid., 18.
3344 Letter De Graeff to Dutch Foreign Minister, 1 December 1921, ARA 2nd Section, access code 2.05.19, box 299.
3345 E.J. Drea, Service, op. cit., 170.
acts. He had a point, because white racism was widespread in western culture before the war, even in sophisticated circles. Hirohito held his Imperial forces in high esteem. As their Supreme Commander, he reviewed troops, bestowed regimental colors and medals, and took care to be highly visible during parades - resplendent in bemedaled uniforms, and riding his white horse.

Hirohito used his courtiers as intermediaries. The most important of them was Marquis Kōichi Kido, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, and a confidant of the Emperor. Kido briefed the Emperor on what went on within the IGHQ and the General Staffs, and saw to it that requests by the Emperor for specific information were fulfilled. Together with the responsible Cabinet Members, he prepared the so-called Imperial Conferences, in which the Chiefs of Staff outlined their positions and recommended certain actions. The Emperor was expected to hear these plans without any comment, therefore blessing the proposed plans with his Godly authority. It was at the audiences before an Imperial Conference that the Emperor was able to do some cross-examination. So the day before the fateful Imperial Conference of 6 September 1941, the Emperor had concluded from the (separate) audiences with his service chiefs of staffs that Japan did not have a viable long-term war strategy. But after Kido had advised him not to speak at the Imperial Conference the next day, the Emperor heeded his advice, therefore approving what the service chiefs proposed to do. It was a kind of ringisei, with the Emperor as the highest responsible person hiding behind the supposed professionalism of the two service chiefs.

In the discussions on the culpability of the Emperor, his advisers have so far escaped close scrutiny. For them, the Imperial institution was far more important than the Emperor, and for their physical security it was far safer to support the institution instead of the Emperor, advising him to say nothing. In the early thirties, moderate advisers and political leaders closely identified with the Emperor had already been assassinated by extremists convinced that these advisors had misled the Emperor into opposing aggressive policies. A firm stand of the Emperor against the military risked the probable assassination of his most trusted remaining advisers, and ensured his own virtual captivity, or at least the loss of what freedom he still had to influence policies.

That Hirohito was no fool is clear from the fact that he refused to allow the Imperial Family close operational contact with the forces. When Konoye suggested appointing Prince Higashikuni as his successor, both the Emperor and Kido vetoed that proposal. Likewise, he had removed the two Imperial Princes from their position as Chief of Staff of Army and Navy, respectively. Thus Hirohito wanted to avoid the Imperial House being blamed for starting the war, forgetting that he, as Head of State could not avoid responsibility for that anyway. It is clear however, that Hirohito had a keen eye on the continuity of the Imperial line in the event that Japan might lose the war. Anyway Hirohito had made it clear to his Army and Navy chiefs, that diplomacy, and therefore eventual peace, should have its chances even when war preparations were already set in motion in those fateful last

---

334 E.J. Drea, ibid., 174.
338 According to the Harrieses', the reverse was not true. See M. & S. Harries, op. cit., 149.
346 Shied, op. cit., 35.
350 E.J. Drea, Service, 182.

---
months before Pearl Harbor. But according to the sources, the Emperor himself was not aware of the Pearl Harbor operation until directly after he had sanctioned the date for the outbreak of war in S.E. Asia at the Imperial Conference on 5 November.\footnote{E.J. Drea, Ibid., 184. Costello claims in his \textit{Days of Infamy}, that the Emperor and the Japanese Cabinet were not well-informed by the Navy about the Hawaiian Operation, making it a "double surprise" for both Japanese and American politicians. See Costello, op. cit. 83.} Hirohito remained suspicious about the success of a war against the United States, and again posed some critical questions on the eve of the Imperial Conference of 1 December. Why then did the Emperor not just say no at that Imperial Conference? The answer must be that as a constitutional monarch, Hirohito felt that he did not constitutionally have the right to veto an unanimous recommendation, which would also run against the famous Japanese consensus culture. He was supported in this by the ever cautious Kido, who, as in the thirties, thought a \textit{coup d'état} by the army was a distinct possibility. In the thirties, Hirohito had witnessed at least five major \textit{coup d'états}, with the \textit{ni-ni-roku} incident as the most serious.\footnote{E.J. Drea, Ibid., 186, note 82.} He therefore might have reasoned that a foreign war was preferable to a divisive peace which would cause turmoil in Japan itself and would run counter to \textit{Kokutai}.

The dilemma of the Emperor was very ably stated, by himself, as follows:\footnote{Charles D. Sheldon: "Japanese aggression and the Emperor, 1931 - 1941, from contemporary diaries" \textit{Modern Asian Studies}, 10, (1976), 39.}

"As you know, we have a firmly established Constitution, and the Emperor must act in accordance with it. According to this institution, there are Ministers of State who are given the power and responsibility over state affairs. The Emperor cannot on his own volition interfere or intervene in the jurisdiction, for which the Ministers of State are responsible ... If those, who are constitutionally responsible, have adopted a policy after careful deliberation, I have no choice but to approve it whether I desire it or not. If I did not do so and approved or disapproved their recommendations arbitrarily, even if they may do their best, they would know they are subject to the Emperor's whims. If this happened, the Emperor would clearly destroy the Constitution. If Japan were a despotic state, that would be different, but as the monarch of a constitutional state it is quite impossible for me to behave in such a way":

Here speaks an Emperor who really understood that he was no God, no man with divine inspiration and wisdom, but who accepted that, in order to remain the symbol of the state, he had to act as a constitutional monarch.

Looking to the pre-war and wartime record of Hirohito as Chief of State, it is clear that he lacked the personality and the forcefulness to lead his nation. He was an intelligent bureaucrat, knowing the rules, but no inspirational leader. When looking at pictures taken of him before and after the war, one sees a fragile, studious man who has no "radiance" of royalty, but who could be a post-office clerk. By his cautious constitutionality, he gave the military more and more freedom to take over the destiny of Japanese society. Numerous witnesses have ascertained that Hirohito surely was no war-monger, but knowing himself and his imperial line to be an integral part of \textit{kokutai}, he did nothing to stop Army and Navy, and always approved decisions taken with his Imperial seal. He was quite aware of the dissensions between Army and Navy, but never seems to have had the political astuteness to manipulate them against each other. Neither had he the acumen to let his advisors do so. He did not wanted to perceive that the army manipulated him to be God
manifest; to make the Emperor a normal person would be troublesome for troop education and Supreme Command.\textsuperscript{384} Therefore the army misused the image of the Emperor for its own purposes.

As the Emperor left things as they were, he gradually eroded the religious power he had over his chieftains, which in the early forties made him a martinet, approving the decisions taken by others with his seal. Rather reluctantly one has to agree with Drea that it was not the fear of invasion, the atomic bombs, fire raids or the Soviet entry, neither anxiety over his people, his country and his armed forces which forced him into action, but the threat to his Imperial ancestors, and to the Imperial Institution, which at last moved him.\textsuperscript{385} It has to be remembered that he took enormous personal risks in doing so, as the events in Tokyo on 14 August 1945 have made clear, but he did not lack courage, and in throwing in his Godlike descent he forced on the unwilling military a capitulation which would save Japan, its people and its Kokutai.

It has to be pointed out that Hirohito took full personal responsibility during his first visit to MacArthur on 27 September 1945, when he declared "I come to you .... to offer myself to the judgment of the Power you represent as the one to bear sole responsibility for every political and military decision and action taken by my people on the conduct of the war.\textsuperscript{386} This was a brave gesture, but MacArthur had already come to the conclusion that the Emperor's involvement in affairs of state "was largely ministerial and automatically responsive to the advice of his counsellors\textsuperscript{387}, a verdict which seems to be appropriate in the light of the arguments discussed above.

\textbf{6.6.9. Conclusions.}

As has been argued in the previous pages, it was the UA that decided Japanese foreign policy in the thirties, and with that also Japan's destiny. In a number of situations the Navy took over that role, but with the exception of the drive into the Nanyo, the Army called the shots. Every important foreign policy decision made in those pre-war years was reached by the same procedure. Plans were initiated and drafted in the middle echelons of the Army - even if they had momentous foreign policy consequences, such as the occupation of Manchuria, and the China Incident. The initiators and drafters were field grade staff officers, i.e. Major, Lieutenant-colonel or Colonel, who happened to occupy key positions in the Army Staff organisation and in the Military Affairs section of the Army Ministry. Their plans were sometimes coordinated with the Naval General Staff, when needed. Thereafter their plans were presented to the IGHQ-Cabinet Liaison conferences to be sanctioned as supreme national policy.

These lower-echelon officers dominated their superiors in the liaison-conference by the phenomenon known as gekokujo or ringisei. Japanese commanders rarely issued orders

\textsuperscript{384} Titus: \textit{Palace and Politics}, op. cit., 183.
\textsuperscript{385} E.J. Drea, \textit{Service}, op. cit., 215.
\textsuperscript{387} M. & S. Harries, ibid, 131.
on the basis of their own independent judgment, as in western military organisations.

Even the Emperor did not veto proposals offered for his consent, so long as there was unanimity on those proposals. Staff officers of strong character therefore tended to dominate their superiors. At the outbreak of the Mukden-incident, the Kwantung Army staff officers Seishiro Itagaki and Kanji Ishiwara wielded more power than Kwantung Army Commander Shigeru Honjo. During the Nomonhan-incident in 1939 the Lieutenant-Colonels Takushiro Hattori and Masanobu Tsuji assumed positions of greater responsibility than commander General Kenkichi Ueda. Because they lacked the wisdom, the larger vision and sense of responsibility which normally are attributable to a higher rank, these field-grade officers took decisions which in the end proved to be disastrous for Japan.

A particular case is the China incident. Although Army Headquarters continued to prepare for a conflict with the Soviet Union, the Army became dragged down by the fighting in China, which was initiated by junior officers. Those difficulties were compounded by those junior officers who initiated the advance into Indochina, shortsighted in their desire to end the China war. The Army clearly lacked control over its junior officers, lacked an overall policy on Japan's future, and because it dominated the Japanese government, that government drifted inexorably from one incident to the next, resulting in war with the western powers.

The ultimate tragedy of the pre-war IJA was that the views of field-grade officers, unaccustomed to considering the needs of others or to calculate and plan in a realistic and rational way, prevailed in the end and resulted in an ignominious defeat in 1945 for that same Imperial Japanese Army.

6.9. The Imperial Japanese Navy.

6.9.1. Introduction.

As has been pointed out previously, the Japanese Navy did not play a significant role in Japan's long history, notwithstanding the obvious fact, that Japan is an island nation. Reasons for this were manifold. Although Japan has many excellent harbours along its coastline, the cold tempestuous winters and the typhoon season in Summer made coastal navigation a dangerous undertaking. Both the Mongol invasions of 1283 and 1287 met their end due to these treacherous winds. Only the inland sea was exempt from these conditions, and here a kind of coastal trade between the islands of Japan developed. Moreover, the Empire was self-sufficient in foods and raw materials up to its westernisation, which generally precluded trade to a small volume between Nagasaki and mainland China. The Chinese and the Dutch were the only ones, who were allowed small trading posts in Nagasaki harbour during the Shogunate. As Japanese shipbuilders were prohibited from building ships larger than 80 tons, the Dutch and Chinese possessed a trade monopoly.

Japanese have always been good fishermen, fish being a staple of the Japanese diet.

---

395 Akira Fujiwara, in Borg/Okamoto, 193.

Therefore a cadre of seagoing people was available. But, by lack of unified command and doctrine, Japanese amphibious expeditions to Korea in the 16th century became a painful failure.\textsuperscript{338} (See page 588).

Thus there was no historical tradition as a frame of reference for the modern Japanese Navy, founded in 1887. Therefore, it is the more remarkable, that from almost nothing the JUN came into being as one of the most powerful Navies of the modern world before Pearl Harbor, holding third place amongst the nations after the First World War. At that time it had achieved victory over its Chinese and Russian foes in a number of memorable sea-battles, of which the victory at Tsushima was the most decisive and awe-inspiring.

The influence of the Dutch on the Japanese Navy has been less than many Dutchmen would expect, as they consider themselves the godfathers of the IJN. At the end of 1855, the Dutch steam frigate SOEMBING of the NEI squadron was transferred to the Shogun as a gift from King William III, becoming the first modern warship Japan possessed.\textsuperscript{331} The Shogunate however never established a coherent Navy, as it possessed a hodgepodge of mostly foreign-built ships, which in itself played a significant role during the civil war at the end of the Shogunate, ending with the battle of Hakodate.\textsuperscript{332} These actions opened the eyes of the Japanese elite to the importance of having a navy. The Dutch influence is more obvious in the training they gave the Japanese at Nagasaki after the opening of the country, resulting in a large number of naval terms in Japanese which have been derived from Dutch.

In the next pages an overview will be given about the evolution of thinking within the Japanese Navy on its strategic role, and derived from this its tactical doctrines and how these influenced the warship design, with of course the main emphasis on the interwar period. The role of the Navy in the fatal southward drive, which ultimately spelled the doom of old Imperial Japan, will also be highlighted.

6.9.2. The emergence of the Navy.

Just like the army was dominated by Samurai from the Choshu-Clan, the young Navy was in the custody of Samurai from the Satsuma-Clan, based on the Southern part of Kyushyu (Kagoshima). The victor of Tsushima, admiral Heihachiro Togo, came from Kagoshima. A Naval Academy was established in 1869, and in 1888 moved to Etajima on the Inland Sea, not far from Hiroshima. Etajima would become the Japanese Dartmouth/Annapolis/Willemsoord up to the Second World War.\textsuperscript{333} More than its military counterparts, the Naval Academy emphasized also general education and character-building in a 4-year curriculum, and delivered from its inception officers with a high professional competence. Moreover, Japanese naval officers had a much higher social status in the eyes of the


\textsuperscript{331} M.C. Vernon: "The Dutch and the opening of Japan by the United States" Pacific Historical Review, Vol. 28 (1959), 99 - 51.


\textsuperscript{333} For an interesting description of life at Etajima see Marder, op. cit., 265 - 285.
Japanese public than army officers. The Japanese used the British Navy as an example, and between 1870 and 1885 British instructors actually taught at the Naval Academy. After the opening of the Naval Staff College in Tokyo in 1888, one of the most influential instructors was Captain John Ingles, RN, who undertook the assignment of promising young Japanese naval officers to British naval institutions and ships. Congruent with all this, the Japanese Navy purchased modern warships, and ordered newer types from British shipyards. From 1885 Japan concentrated on the acquisition of steam-driven all-steel ships, with the Yokosuka Arsenal the first shipyard capable of building them. This shipyard had been built by French engineers, who subsequently also completed a number of ship designs. The French jeune école also influenced Japanese naval thinking in the 1880's, resulting in the construction of a fleet of Japanese torpedoboats, and the acquisition of the torpedo as a weapon. The famed French naval architect, Emile Bertin, stayed for a three-year period in Japan, and designed a number of armoured cruisers as a countermeasure against German armoured cruisers obtained by China. He also introduced the quickfiring gun, which gave the Japanese the victory over the Chinese in the Battle of the Yellow Sea. It has to be remembered, that the Japanese took enormous risks in attacking the Chinese fleet, as the Navy possessed only two thirds of China's overall naval tonnage.

All this was accomplished under the energetic leadership of an outstanding man of driving energy, who could be considered the father of the modern Japanese Navy: Admiral Gombei Yamamoto (no kin of the World War II naval leader Isoroku Yamamoto). Next to Navy Minister, Gombei would serve twice as Prime Minister, and assure the Navy of public support for its expansion into a first-rate Navy.

In this he was very much assisted by the books of Alfred Thayer Mahan (which were all translated into Japanese) and his theory of "Navalism" which brought a large number of influential Japanese under its spell. In 1932, the Naval Staff published a new translation of Mahan's Naval Strategy, and at the Naval War College, all officers had to study Mahan and Western naval history.

At that time, the Navy was still considered to be the secondary Service, the Army being the primary Service. Thanks to Yamamoto, the Naval General Staff became independent of the Army in 1893, with direct access to the Emperor by the Naval Chief of Staff. But to the chagrin of the Navy the chief of the Army General Staff retained overall responsibility for all Japanese military and naval operations. From this time can be traced the enmity between Navy and Army, which would reach dramatic proportions during the Second World War. The superior position of the Army Chief of Staff was only ended in 1903, just before the Russo-Japanese War.

The Triple Intervention in 1895 (by Russia, Germany and France, see page 601) was a strong stimulus for a fast expansion of the fleet. Yamamoto got through the Diet a budget

---

265 A. Marder, op. cit., 265.
268 Evans, op. cit., 21 - 22.
request for building a fleet which would consist of 6 battleships and 6 armoured cruisers, with a number of destroyers and torpedoboats attached. The battleships would be the biggest of their class, and therefore had to be built on British wharves. They were ready just in time for the struggle against Russia. Moreover, Japanese wharves built five protected cruisers and 39 destroyers based on British specifications. Just before the outbreak of war with Russia, the Japanese bought two powerful 7,600 tons armoured cruisers from Italy, the KASUGA and NISSHIN, which had originally been intended for Argentina. Thanks to the foresight of Yamamoto, the Japanese went into battle at Tsushima with a powerful, modern, homogeneous and balanced fleet, consisting of six battleships, eight armoured cruisers, sixteen protected and unprotected cruisers, twenty destroyers and fifty-eight torpedoboats. Tsushima established the Japanese Navy as a big-power Navy, and immeasurably strengthened her position with regard to the Army.

Tsushima resulted in a number of Japanese naval doctrines, the most important of which was the doctrine of the one decisive battle, which of course was Mahanian in its origin. This doctrine would influence Japanese naval strategy and tactics up to 1942. Another lesson of Tsushima, as interpreted by the British Navy of "Jacky" Fisher was the emergence of the all-big gun battleship. The DREADNOUGHT was a purely British development, but the Japanese accepted the reason behind it, even if it made their impressive battlefleet obsolete with one stroke.

Another doctrine was worked out at the Naval War College by naval theorist Tetsutaro Sato between 1907 and 1909. Based on the potentially largest Navy as a hypothetical threat, Sato worked out that the Japanese Navy always had to have a strength which was 70% of that fleet. Interestingly, although at that time the British Fleet indeed ruled the waves, Sato had the foresight to conclude that American industry could easily beat the British in warship construction, and he was therefore capable of predicting the emergence of the U.S. Navy as potentially Japan's most dangerous enemy. The 70% ratio would dominate Japanese naval thinking for the next thirty years. Based on Sato's reasoning, the Navy needed at least 8 battleships and 8 battlecruisers (which substituted for the armoured cruisers of pre-Tushima days). This fleet was accepted in the Imperial Defence Policy (IDP) of 1907 (See under Naval Planning). The "eight-eight" fleet would become a mantra of Japanese naval policies up to 1922, and its abandonment at the Washington Naval Conference was considered by many Japanese naval officers as an act of high treason. Some historians have judged this a highly unrealistic naval policy, as it selected arbitrarily the United States as the most likely opponent, only to justify the building of a strong fleet. On the other hand, it could be argued that the Japanese were founding their naval policy on a "worst-case" scenario: war with the United States. Evidently, the building of such a fleet was way beyond the financial and economic resources of the Japanese state, and the burden it imposed on state budgets was one of the internal driving forces for the Japanese government to accept the invitation of Secretary of State Warren

---

2968 Evans, op. cit. 58.
2970 Evans, op. cit., 64.
2971 Evans, op. cit., 143.
2972 Evans, op. cit., 151.
Harding to join the other Powers in a discussion on fleet reductions at the Washington Naval Conference.

Meanwhile the Japanese had passed another milestone. Their metallurgical industry and wharves had sufficiently expanded to allow the building of battleships and battlecruisers on Japanese wharves. The first all-Japanese battleship was the SETTSU, a pre-Dreadnought built at Kure Navy Yard.337 This was followed by the building of three battlecruisers of the KONGO-class. The battlecruiser KONGO itself was built between 1911 and 1913 at Barrow in England and was designed by a British naval architect, and thereafter used as a model for its three sister ships. The KONGO battlecruisers were, at the time of their completion, the most formidable capital ships of their period with eight 14-inch guns. Modernized between the world wars, they would prove their mettle in the savage battles around Guadalcanal in 1942, and the Philippines in 1944. As such, they were a triumph of Japanese naval engineering and construction, as the two last ships, the HARUNA and KIRISHIMA, were almost completely armed and equipped with Japanese-built guns and materials.

Very gratifying for the Japanese and their sense of national pride was the British request for Japanese naval assistance during the first World War in escorting troopships from Australia to the Middle-East over the Indian Ocean, giving the Japanese a temporary base in Singapore.3374 Moreover, a Japanese flotilla of one cruiser and 8 modern destroyers under Rear-Admiral Kozo Sato, based on Malta, assisted the Royal Navy in combating the submarine threat in the Eastern Mediterranean in the period 1917 - 1918. The efficiency and smart shiphandling of the Japanese was well-appreciated by the Royal Navy. The Japanese Navy had really come of age, as was also duly recognized by the other big naval powers of the time.

A development during the first World War, which proved to be of crucial importance, but which was almost not noted at the time, was the taking over by the Japanese of the former German possessions in the Marianas, Carolines and the Marshall Islands. It moved the Japanese Navy into a strategic area where it could block the movement of an American fleet on its way to relieve the Philippines. However, thanks to the Australians, the Japanese lost the race to the Solomons and Eastern New Guinea. The Treaty of Versailles acquiesced to Japanese control over those former German island chains, which would cause American naval planners so much trouble in the interwar years (Chapter 1).

From the end of the twenties, the navy expanded continuously, gradually even surpassing the Army in yearly estimations. In 1933 the Army absorbed 20% and the Navy 17% of the national budget. In 1936 the Army's share was 22%, the Navy's share 24%. After the China incident the total amount of the national budget destined for Army and Navy together was around 60%, with the Navy still outspending the army.3375

In contrast to the Army, the Imperial Japanese Navy IJN was manned for the most part by

337 Evans, op. cit., 159.

3374 Strangely enough, this fact is not mentioned in the exhaustive book of Evans, op. cit., while the Japanese mediterranean squadron is duly mentioned on page 169.

volunteers, although conscription was used on occasion. Reenlistment was consistently high. In 1926 the personnel strength of the navy was at its ebb, with about 63,000 officers and men. By the summer of 1941, this had grown to over 200,000 men.\footnote{Boyd/Millett, op. cit., 139.} This reflected the growth in number of ships, as total tonnage of warships increased from 547,000 ton in 1923 to 1.095.000 tons in 1941.

In the following paragraphs will be considered the evolution of Japanese strategical and tactical thinking, and its influence upon Japanese naval design, up to the Second World War.

\textbf{6.9.3. Japanese Naval Strategy.}\footnote{\textit{Evans, op. cit.}, 187.}

Evans maintains that there was a decided lack of hostility between Japan and the U.S.A. in the period between 1905 and 1918.\footnote{Also H.Th. Bussemaker: "De Japanse Vlootstrategie, 1905 - 1945" Het Marineblad, Vol. 73 (1963), 47 - 73.} This however does not agree with historical fact. As illustrated in Chapter 1, there was considerable animosity between the U.S. and Japan around 1906, causing intense diplomatic activity resulting in the Lansing-Ishii agreement of 1911. The Imperial Defence Policy of 1907 was drawn up just because of this enmity, giving the navy the opportunity to plunder the national treasury in order to realise its "eight-eight" plan.\footnote{E.W. Edwards: "The Far Eastern Agreements of 1907" Journal of Modern History, 26 (1954), 340 - 355.}

If there was a lack of hostility against a major western power, this power surely was Great Britain. As Marder has pointed out, there was a psychological block because of the traditional friendship between the two navies and the deep-seated Japanese respect for Nelson and his heirs.\footnote{A.J. Marder: \textit{Old Friends, New Enemies: the Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy} Vol. I: Strategic Illusions, 1936 - 1941. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1981, viii.} He could have added that because the Royal Navy did not maintain a battle squadron in S.E. Asia between 1902 and 1941, there was also not so much reason for the Japanese to consider the Royal Navy as a serious potential enemy.

On the other hand, it has been pointed out by Sadao Asada that the abrogation of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty in 1922 resulted in the loss of Great Britain as the preferred assignment for top-ranking young naval officers. Germany instead took the place of Great Britain, as the Japanese were very impressed by the technological lead of the Germans over the British in naval engineering and optics.\footnote{Sadao Asada: \textit{The Japanese Navy and the United States}, Borg/Okamoto, 229.}

Japanese Naval Strategy at that time foresaw an invasion of the Philippines, which would cause the Americans to send their superior battlefleet towards Japan, which would be whittled away by Japanese screening forces before the decisive battle, à la Jutland, would take place somewhere south of Kyushu, near the Anami Island group of the Ryu-Ky-
With an increase in range of warplanes this decisive theater moved further to the South, until in 1940 it was in the Eastern Carolines/Marshall Islands area. The Japanese problem was the confrontation with a superior American battle line.

Acquiring the Marianas, Carolines and Marshalls partly solved that problem, because light screening forces could be stationed there. But the Japanese still refrained from building bases over there, which was in fact forbidden by Mandate rules. In the thirties the appearance of submarines and naval airforces made that area even less attractive for an American battlefleet to pass through on its way to the Philippines or Japan itself. It has to be stressed here, however, that Japan did not militarily reinforce its mandated islands up to the late thirties, although it caused many suspicions by its policy of forbidding the League of Nations to inspect those territories.

With the introduction of the Mitsubishi G3M Medium Bomber (codename "Nell") the Japanese obtained a plane which could, if operated from the Mandate Islands, be a realistic threat to the US battlefleet in those waters. Construction of airfields and seaplane ramps, for so-called commercial survey purposes had begun in 1934. At the end of 1936, the Navy dispatched a special survey squadron to the islands to survey the possible sites for potential air facilities. The squadron consisted of the seaplane tender KAMOI, the minelayer OKINOSHIMA, and a few destroyers, and visited also several ports and anchorages in the Philippines and the NEI. It was presented that the squadron made courtesy calls, but in effect the squadron surveyed sites which might be suitable as future air bases. Thereafter, more air bases were being built, resulting in eleven naval air bases in the Mandated Islands at the end of 1941. The air bases lacked however real defenses such as coast and anti-aircraft artillery, the reason being that the navy did not possess the construction battalions with earth-moving capabilities needed for such an undertaking. In strategic planning, the Japanese now assumed that the Mandated Islands could be used to whittle down the U.S. battlefleet by airpower operating from the Mandated Islands in combination with submarines. The place of the decisive battle, as a consequence, shifted from near the Ryu-Kyu's to a place East of the Marianas.

To solve the problem of the numerically stronger U.S. battlefleet, the Japanese Naval Staff developed a strategy of "interception-attrition operations" (yogeki zengen sakusen) in order to whittle down American superiority. This strategy had as a consequence the development of very aggressive tactics, as shown in the Japanese expression kenteki hissen, literally meaning "fight the enemy on sight". This was the Royal Navy tradition as understood by the Japanese from their studies of the tactics of the revered Nelson, those of Cradock at Coronel and of Jellicoe and Beatty at Jutland.

In the late thirties the Japanese had developed a plausible answer to the American War Plan ORANGE. It was what Pelz has aptly called an "ambush strategy", in combinati-

---

3382 Evans, op. cit., 189.


3384 Evans, op. cit., 465, note 45.

3385 A. Marder, op. cit., 318.

3386 Pelz, op. cit., 28.
on with a long attrition phase. Ocean-going long-range submarines would harass the American fleet as it left Pearl-Harbor for the Philippines. Near the mandate islands Nell-torpedobombers would attack, to be followed by attacks by submarines. Between the mandate islands and the Philippines the decisive battle would take place, starting with a night torpedo-attack by the heavy cruisers and destroyers with the recently developed Type 93 long-range torpedo. At daybreak Japanese carrier planes would attack the flight decks of the American carriers, not to sink them, but to avoid the launching of American reconnaissance planes. Whatever was left of the American battlefleet would be taken care of the next morning, with the YAMATO-Class battleships picking their targets at leisure because their main guns outranged the enemy guns, and midget submarines launched from motherships trying to inflict maximum damage. Night fighting was an essential ingredient of this strategy, and was widely practiced during pre-war exercises.

However, in 1940 a significant strategic shift took place. Official Japanese naval strategy was rather passive and defensive: wait until the Americans came close, and then annihilate them. The emergence of the concentrated carrier fleet (see below) in combination with worries about the presence of the American battlefleet astride the communication lines into S.E. Asia, made it possible to liquidate this threat by a surprise attack on the Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor. This was no longer a waiting game, but an aggressive strategy towards eliminating the U.S. Pacific Fleet at its berths by air power alone.

The 1941 Annual Operational Plan, drawn up at the end of 1940, was the first plan which assumed war with Great-Britain, the NEI and the USA together, the NEI having replaced France as enemy. Its integration with Army War Plans however ran into difficulties, as the army assumed an attack on Malaya, followed by a series of attacks on the NEI to be concluded with operations against the Philippines. The Navy however insisted that the Philippines had to be attacked first, because it did not want the possibility of American attacks in its flanks. As a compromise, it was decided to attack both Western possessions at the same time. As army resources for the operation were insufficient, the navy then decided that a larger number of planes needed to be involved in order to ensure success. The role of the Luftwaffe in the occupation of Denmark and Norway was taken as an example on how to accomplish such a complex operation with landbased airpower. The use of landbased airpower was necessary because 6 out of 7 operational aircraft carriers were necessary for the projected surprise attack at Pearl Harbor.

The attack on Pearl Harbor was a real deviation of Japan's decade-long strategy of waiting for the American fleet to come to the Western Pacific. In those decades the Japanese planners correctly foresaw the essentials of War Plan ORANGE: the relief of the Philippines by the American battlefleet. The problem was to reduce the superiority of that fleet before the decisive battle took place. Many studies and manoeuvres were dedicated to the solution of that problem. The whittling down of American superiority would be accomplished by Japanese light fleet units. First submarines would attack the battlefleet by day and night. Thereafter a force of destroyers and heavy cruisers would act the same. Then the

---

389 Evans, op. cit., 467.  
390 Evans, op. cit., 469.
fast battlecruisers would join the other warships in a night action set-piece battle.  The remains of the American battlefleet would then be annihilated in a Jutland-style battle by the Japanese battle line at dawn. During the thirties, when the attack potential of aircraft became obvious, the Japanese also added aircraft attacks on the American fleet as a measure to obtain the desired reduction of American fleet strength. This, in short, was the strategy by which the Japanese hoped to fight off American fleet superiority.

A number of flag officers, including Isoroku Yamamoto, questioned the wisdom of this defensive strategy. In their opinion, the decisive battle was not that between two battlefleets, but between dueling airforces in the great expanse of the Pacific in and around Micronesian bases. The idea of an attack on Pearl Harbor was already very old. Evans has pointed out that already in 1927 such an air attack was simulated in a series of war games at the Japanese Naval Staff College. A study emanating from the Naval War College in 1936, advised launching surprise air attacks from carriers aimed at both Pearl Harbor and Cavite in the Philippines. The enormous progress made by Japanese carrier torpedo-bombers in attacks against Japanese warships during manoeuvres in early 1940 convinced flag officers like Yamamoto that such operations were not beyond the possibilities of the Japanese carrier airforce. The daring attacks of British torpedo-bombers against the Italian Battlefleet at Taranto in November 1940 probably convinced Yamamoto, that the risks of such an attack could be met. At least he asked the Naval Attache at both London and Rome for all information about Taranto. On 7 January 1941 Yamamoto sent a memorandum on the possibilities of an attack on Pearl Harbor to navy Minister Oikawa. He saw two reasons for launching such an attack: it would break the morale and willpower of the American people and armed forces for a long drawn-out fight, and secondly it would allow Japan to occupy the whole western Pacific including S.E. Asia at leisure, as the American battlefleet needed at minimum half a year to reconstitute itself from the Atlantic and from remaining forces. Moreover, Yamamoto feared sneak air attacks against the Japanese home islands by the U.S. carrier force. After this proposal was made, the stature and personality of Yamamoto ensured the realisation of such a dangerous plan. As we know now, the plan was brilliantly executed, but its major flaw was, that Yamamoto badly misjudged the first reason for the attack. American morale did not collapse, but because of the attack, a divided American people closed ranks behind its President to avenge the shame of Pearl Harbor.

In the thirties the concepts of a decisive battle fought in the western Pacific resulted in the organisation of the seagoing navy into two fleets: the First Fleet contained all nine capital ships and an aircraft carrier division; the Second Fleet or "advance force" contained most

---

3291 See the disposition for such a night battle on page 281, Evans op. cit.  
3292 For the horrendous scenario of this climactic daylight battle see Evans, op. cit., 283 - 286.  
3293 Evans, op. cit., 473.  
3294 The leader of the Japanese air attack on Pearl Harbor, Cdr Mitsu o Fuchida, acknowledged in a televised interview in 1980 that the British victory at Taranto inspired the Japanese to study the problem of shallow-water launching of aircraft torpedoes against enemy battlehips.  
3296 Evans, op. cit., 476.
of the heavy cruisers and the destroyer and submarine flotillas. It was the Second Fleet, which was charged with sneak attacks by day and night on the advancing American battlefleet. At the end, the First Fleet and the Second Fleet would form the Combined Fleet in order to concentrate forces for the inevitable showdown. A Third Fleet, consisting of light cruisers, destroyers and submarines would take account of the US Asiatic Fleet in the Philippines. In 1936 a Fourth Fleet was established to watch over the Carolines whenever the Americans would try to break into that island chain, and to isolate the Philippines from American reinforcements.

It has to be pointed out that the Japanese high command stressed offensive operations to the detriment of the protection of their own lines of communications. In 1941 there were almost no warships in the Japanese navy with escorting of merchant ships as their exclusive mission. The Pacific War would expose this as a serious flaw in the operational effectiveness of the Japanese Navy.297

There was no enthusiasm at all among Japanese admirals for commerce-raiding operations. That kind of operation was simply not a part of the Japanese naval doctrines.

Another way to overcome the numerical inferiority was to invest in quality. From the twenties the Japanese designed their warships in such a way that these warships were superior to anything American on a ship-to-ship basis. In practice that meant that Japanese warships within each class had a higher tonnage than their American counterparts. The quality aspect was also extrapolated towards the evolving Naval Airforce. The third area of improvement was that of Naval tactics. By stressing night operations for all warship classes, the Japanese hoped to overcome part of their numerical inferiority. Night fighting therefore became a specialty of the Japanese Navy, and it would indeed cause the loss of many allied warships in furious battles and night actions during the Pacific war.

Night combat was made possible by two developments. One was the introduction of optical equipment like binoculars of superior quality, produced by companies like the predecessor of Nikon.298 The second was the introduction in 1935 of parachute-suspended star shells with a long burning time and high incandescence. It can be fairly stated that the Japanese Navy at the start of the war possessed the best night fighting equipment of all Navies, radar of course excepted.

Rigorous training of ship crews was another way to achieve equality or even superiority on a ship-to-ship basis. For that purpose Japanese fleet units practised battle conditions in the stormy seas north of Japan, where they were out of sight of spying western eyes. At all those manoeuvres seamen were lost due to heavy weather, but ships also collided, resulting in loss of life and ships. In August 1928 such a collision cost nearly 150 lives299 and the loss of the destroyer WARABI; in 1934 another destroyer was lost in a collision.

The consequence of this rigid training was high morale, but, in combination with the typical Japanese background of Shinto and Emperor veneration also the tendency to value spirit

297 Boyd/Millet, op. cit., 148.
298 Evans, op. cit., 275.
(Seishin) over technology, and willpower over firepower. However, in no way did this attitude block research on newer and better weapons, which will be covered in the following paragraphs. In this area, developments paralleled those in the army during the interwar period.

Fundamentally, the Navy's enemy was the United States Navy. However, from its earlier history, the Navy General Staff was determined that it could only fight one enemy at the time. Preferably, that would be the United States. If the army dragged the nation in a war with the Soviet-Union, then the defeat of that country would take precedence. This was a sensible policy during the interwar period. Nevertheless, the Navy's preference remained the Nanshin, the southward advance, as contrasted to the Army's Hokushin, or northern drive. For the entire interwar period, this was the fundamental difference in approach, and in warplans, between army and navy, and would split the cabinet on many occasions. Even the Imperial Defence Policy (IDP) reviewed by the Emperor in 1936 could not solve the issue. The United States was the main hypothetical enemy, allowing the navy to expand, but in turn the army was instructed to continue its build-up in Manchuria. The IDP of 1936 therefore solved nothing, and would not be reviewed again in the next critical five years.\footnote{Marder, op. cit., 289.} However, Marder tends to over-emphasize the lack of co-operation of the two services, stating for example that army and navy officers did "hardly seemed to come from the same nation".\footnote{A. Marder, op. cit., 289.} When they needed each other however, they could work together extremely well, as was illustrated in the drive into S.E. Asia in 1942. Sometimes one gets the feeling that the Japanese officers of both services have stressed these differences after the war in order to use it as an explanation for their defeat.

The China Incident, which cooled relations with the British to a considerable degree, and the completion of the Singapore Naval Base made Britain move up on the scale of hypothetical enemies. However, neither the navy nor the army had any detailed operational plan for the occupation of the South until 1940.\footnote{Evans, op. cit., 450.} Notwithstanding lingering feelings of admiration and respect by the older generation of naval officers for its "old friend" Great Britain, there was no doubt that, in a confrontation, the Japanese would win, as was confirmed by a wargame at the Naval Staff College in late 1938 to early 1939. But in contrast to what many Western strategists were thinking, there was no Japanese master plan behind the occupation of Hainan Island in February 1939 and of the Spratly Islands in March, both by the navy. It enlarged the IJN's opportunities for an eventual drive to the South, however. The main driving force behind these occupations had been Captain Yoshimasa Nakahara, member of the Naval Affairs Bureau of the Department of the Navy, mockingly called the "King of the South Seas" by his peers.

The quick collapse of the Netherlands and France in Europe in May - June 1940 opened many opportunities. The NEI were the richest of all the colonies of the Western Powers in S.E. Asia, and the weakest in military terms. But interfering in S.E. Asia could mean war with the United States, for which the navy did not yet feel itself ready. Moreover, it could mean that Japan had to fight five nations together: China, the U.S., Great-Britain, the Soviet Union and the NEI. This ran counter to common sense and history. The next two years would therefore see an IJN wavering between beckoning opportunities and strong
The first move had been the activation of the Fourth Fleet in May 1940. From Palau this fleet could occupy strategic positions in Celebes and East-Borneo (oil!) if the neutrality of the NEI needed "protection". The same month, war games and map exercises were held to determine the possibilities of such an occupation. It became clear that operations could not be limited to the NEI alone. Inevitably, first Britain and then the U.S. would intervene, meaning war with all three countries. The main worry was the U.S.A., as the participants did not believe it was possible to win a war against the U.S.A., if its duration was longer than a year.

However, the navy leadership thought it was impossible to win even a limited war against the U.S. without the oil sources of the NEI, which would require the paramount need to obtain those sources, which would inevitably lead to war with the U.S. It was a circular chain of reasoning which kept the navy leadership in its grip, as there is almost no evidence that other strategies were contemplated. The great worry of allied planners was indeed that Japan would only occupy the NEI, to invest thereafter Singapore, scrupulously respecting the neutrality of the U.S. Notwithstanding all their Intelligence sources, the Japanese command rejected as unrealistic such a step-by-step approach for which the allies did not have a political answer, and which they feared most. Obviously the Japanese leadership counted on western (racial) solidarity, which in reality did not exist - at least not directly after the catastrophic defeat of the democracies in Western Europe in 1940.

As we have seen on page 698, the army made a strategic about-face in June 1940 because of the opportunities which were offered in northern French Indochina. Army HQ now supported the navy in the move south, but assumed that the U.S. would stay out of an eventual conflict with Britain and the NEI. This would place the Navy in a very minor role, and would endanger the ambitious fleet expansion plans. Within the navy leadership, intermediate interests for the navy took precedence over long-range interests for the nation. Therefore the navy acquiesced to the signing of the Tripartite Pact in return for a far greater share of allocated resources, i.e. steel. It placed the navy in a difficult position, on the one hand it had to proclaim the necessity of a war with the U.S.A., but on the other hand the IJN had to acknowledge that they were not yet ready for it, in order not to lose the steel allotments. This hypocrisy as such was of course a source of friction with the Army General Staff.

Marder argues that the Naval High Command was the only organization which could have blocked the drift to war in the autumn of 1941. If the Naval Staff had told the Army that it did not believe in victory against the U.S., then war would have been impossible because the army was dependent on naval protection for the planned invasions. But the Naval Chief-of-Staff, Admiral Osami Nagano lacked, according to Tsunoda, the moral

---

340 Evans, op. cit., 452.
3401 Evans, op. cit., 453.
3405 Tsunoda/Morley, op. cit., 256 - 257.
3409 Marder, op. cit., 254.
courages to inform Army and Emperor that the war against the U.S.A. could not be won. Nagano however considered such a move as dangerous, because it could provoke an Army *coup d'etat* or may be even a civil war. Moreover, the younger officers (Lt.-Commanders to Captains) were all very warlike. Therefore, the top Commanders gave in to the Army and their staff officers due to lack of moral courage, and the Japanese bureaucratic tradition of *ringisei*.

Not all Admirals were faint-hearted, however. The Fleet Commander, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, declared on more than one occasion that Japan would be triumphant in a limited war, but not in a protracted war.\footnote{Tsunoda/Morley, op. cit., 272 - 273, 286 - 289.} Staff officers in charge of naval aviation warned in September 1941 that a protracted air war with the U.S. was out of the question.\footnote{Tsunoda/Morley, Ibid., 276.} Vice-Admiral Shigeyoshi Inoue, as Chief of the Naval Aviation Bureau, foresaw in June 1941 how an eventual war with the U.S. would proceed, and presented his views in a remarkable prescient memorandum.\footnote{This memorandum has been reproduced in Tsunoda/Morley, Ibid., 280 - 281.} It was discarded by Navy Minister Oikawa, and by Nagano, however, and Oikawa ensured that Inouye was transferred to the Carolinas as Commander of the 4th Fleet; thereby effectively removing him from influencing the decision to go to war. So it came about, that Navy Minister Shimada and Navy Chief-of-Staff Nagano launched Japan into a war for which they had in effect no sound long-range strategy of winning.

### 6.9.4. Japanese warship design.

At the end of the First World War, Japan had acquired the industrial infrastructure to build warships of any size, including all their equipment. No English-language publication has as yet appeared with the full history of the Japanese armaments industry, but it is clear that the Japanese wrought a near-miracle in attaining a modern armaments industry within three decades. Foremost in this were the Navy Yards at Yokosuka, Kure, Sasebo and Maizuru. Also the great private shipyards of the Mitsubishi Shipbuilding Company at Yokohama, Kobe and Nagasaki, the Uraga Dockyard and the Ishikawajima Yard near Tokyo, the Kawasaki shipyard at Kobe and the Fujinagata Shipyard at Osaka were building warships.\footnote{Evans, op. cit., 209.} This industrial situation allowed the designers of the Japanese Navy to specify ships which fitted the strategic and tactical requirements as laid down in the war plans.\footnote{Saburo Toyama: "The Outline of Armament Expansion of the Imperial Japanese Navy during the years 1930 - 1941". *Revue Internationale d'Histoire Militaire*, no 73 (1991), 55 - 67.}

Japanese battleships were specified with one thing foremost in mind: outranging the enemy. The tactical principle was to have guns which could hit the enemy battleline outside the enemy’s range, meaning that the enemy could not fire back. This would place the Japanese battleships in a very advantageous position. This tactical concept known as *autoreenjō*\footnote{Evans, op. cit.250, note 26.} was later extrapolated also to the use of submarine and above-water ship...
torpedoes, and of course airplanes.

The principle was first applied at the design of the battlecruiser KONGO, whose 14-inch (36 cm) guns could fire a projectile over a distance of 25 kilometer - a distance greater at that time than any warship then afloat could attain. Its effects were enhanced by the development in the thirties of an uniquely Japanese development in fire-control.\textsuperscript{3414} As the Japanese optics in their rangefinders surpassed American and British optical instruments at that time, it was a good system of firecontrol, until the Allies introduced radar on their ships. It also caused the appearance on large Japanese warships of the typical pagoda mast, loaded with rangefinders and other optical instruments, crowned by a large rangefinder. In case of the battleships, this optical equipment was 35 meters above the sea, allowing a view which was equal to the range of the big guns. The Japanese also modified the turret design, making possible to attain a maximum elevation of 43 degrees, which resulted in a maximum range of 33 km,\textsuperscript{3418} (close to the theoretical maximum range) using the Type 91 Armor-Piercing Shell of 14". The Japanese, by these measures, thought to have an advantage of 4 to 5 km in range over the American battleship.

Specifically for night actions, the Japanese naval command decided to modernise three battlecruisers of the KONGO-Class.\textsuperscript{3416} These ships were equipped with heavier propulsion machinery, increasing their speed to 30.5 knots. High speed was considered essential in night fighting, in order to surprise the enemy.\textsuperscript{3417} Upon their completion, these ships were assigned to the Second Fleet, which was tasked for night battles.

The ultimate consequence of the outranging strategy was the construction of superbattleships with 18" (45 cm) guns, which could demolish any American battleline far outside its shooting range. In the planning of the eight-eight fleet, the Japanese had already test fired 48 cm guns (guns close to a 19"-bore) in 1920.\textsuperscript{3418} As the Washington Treaty forbade the construction of such monstrous superbattleships, the Japanese did only design studies and test-firings during the treaty period. In 1933 experiments were done with an 18-inch gun at Kure Naval Yard. In october the same year Cdr Shingo Ishikawa delivered proposals for the design of five superbattleships with 20-inch guns. When the Washington Treaty had run out in January 1937, the Japanese Navy had its design specifications ready for a superbattleship, of which two were projected initially.

The nine 18.1 inch guns (46 cm), heavy armour, and a top speed of 27 knots resulted in a design for ships of almost 70,000 tons, nearly twice that of any other battleship afloat at that time. Architects were Yuzuru Hiraga and Keiji Fukuda. After some adaptations, only the Kure Shipyard (YAMATO) and the Mitsubishi Shipyard at Nagasaki (MUSASHI) could accomodate the enormous hulls. The third ship, the SHINANO, was laid down in a huge drydock at Yokosuka, the fourth at Sasebo, but this one was never completed. All this happened in deep secrecy. Both the YAMATO and MUSASHI were launched in 1940, but

\textsuperscript{3414} Evans, op. cit., 251 - 253.


\textsuperscript{3416} Alan Payne: "Battlecruiser KONGO" Warship, no 19, July 1981, 146 - 153.

\textsuperscript{3417} Evans, op. cit., 276 - 277.

\textsuperscript{3418} Evans, op. cit., 293.
the secret was well-kept and the Allied intelligence community was unaware of the construction of these dinosaurs. And dinosaurs they were, designed for extinction, because at the time of their launching, airpower was changing the parameters of naval superiority. They proved vulnerable to multiple (aerial) torpedo hits on bow and stern, and that undid both ships: the MUSASHI in the Philippines in October 1944, the YAMATO near Okinawa in April 1945. At the time of Pearl Harbor the Japanese possessed 10 battleships, with 3 abuilding: the superbattleships mentioned above. It has to be noted that all 10 had been laid down before the Washington Naval treaty came into force, with the 4 KONGO-battlecruisers the oldest ships (1913) and the 2 NAGATO-Class battleships the youngest (1921). However, all ships had been updated and reconstructed in the late interwar years.

In cruiser design, the Japanese had a different philosophy than most other navies. Due to the Washington Treaty and its limitations on battleships, a new naval race started with the heavy cruiser, which according to the Treaty was limited to 10,000 tons and 8"-guns. These so-called Treaty Cruisers, or A-Cruisers, would become the mainstay of the Japanese Second Fleet for night combat. For the B-cruisers or light cruisers the Japanese foresaw a dual role: as fleet scouts and/or as destroyer flotilla leaders. Some sixteen light cruisers were laid down in the twenties, of the TATSUTA, KUMA- and SENDAI-Class. These ships were not modernised, as they did not fit into the attrition strategy and were therefore inferior to the more modern light cruisers of the western navies at the outbreak of the Pacific war. They served honorably as flotilla leaders, however, for example in the Battle of the Java Sea (the JINTSU and the NAKA).

Even before the Washington Treaty, the navy had specified a cruiser that would combine heavy armament and high speed with a hull of modest size. The Chief Naval Architect, Capt. Yuzuru Hiraga, designed a 3000-ton cruiser, YUBARI, with design characteristics which were to be repeated in heavier ships of the class. The YUBARI entered service in 1922 and would be the prototype of a number of Hiraga-designed cruisers which would give Japan the lead in this category. Emboldened by their first success, Hiraga and his deputy, Lt.Cdr Kikuo Fujimoto, designed the first two of Japan's A-Class cruisers, the KAKO and FURUTAKA, mounting six 8"-guns and twelve 24"-torpedo tubes on a 7000-ton hull. The fixed torpedotubes, built within the hull, would be a feature of all the

---


next A-Class cruisers, a feature which did not appear on British and American heavy cruiser designs. This was required by the naval general staff because of the attrition strategy, which would have to be executed by the A-Class cruisers. The next two A-Class cruisers, the AOBA and KINUGASA were of the same basic design as the FURUTAKA.\textsuperscript{342} It would be the next class of A-Cruisers, the 4 ships of the MYOKO-Class, which would definitively establish Japan's lead in cruiser design.\textsuperscript{343} The 10,000 ton ships mounted ten 8"-guns, eight torpedo tubes in fixed mounts within the hull, and achieved a speed of 35 knots. The NACHI and HAGURO of this class would wreak havoc upon the Allied cruisers during the Battle of the Java-Sea.

Fujimoto designed the next batch of heavy cruisers, the four ships of the TAKAO-Class. These ships resembled the MYOKO, but had their torpedo tubes no longer mounted in the hull, but in trainable twin mounts on the upper deck. Between 1931 and 1934 the four "light" cruisers of the MOGAMI-Class were built, 10,000 tons with fifteen (!) 8"-guns in five triple turrets. As the London Naval Treaty of 1930 gave Japan more tonnage than it already had in the category of light cruisers, this was the Japanese way of circumventing that treaty. After the abrogation of the Naval Treaties in 1937, these ships were converted to 8"-cruisers.\textsuperscript{344}

At the time of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese navy possessed 18 heavy cruisers (with 1 being built) and 20 light cruisers, with 9 light cruisers on the yards. The heavy cruisers were all very modern, the oldest (FURUTAKA) being from 1926. The light cruisers were in all aspects obsolete at the start of the war, being indeed very light in tonnage and armament. All were from the period 1919 - 1925, and almost all three- or fourstackers. Their intended replacements were not completed in time for the start of the Pacific War.

Meanwhile, a number of accidents caused concerns about the stability and longitudinal strength of the new Japanese warships, as designed by Fujimoto. On 12 March 1934 the light destroyer TOMOZURU capsized in a storm, with heavy loss of life. On 21 September 1935 the ships of the Fourth Fleet were hit by a typhoon east of Honshu, weakening the hulls of the MYOKO and MOGAMI, and causing the loss of the bows of two destroyers.\textsuperscript{345} The Japanese navy launched an extensive program aiming at improving the stability of its ships, which were top-heavy with armament. The MOGAMI and MIKUMA were even placed in reserve, and partially reconstructed, and the cruisers of the TAKAO-Class were also modified. Fujimoto was relieved of his duties. All the lessons learned were incorporated in the two new A-Cruisers of the TONE-Class which were still on the wharf at that time.\textsuperscript{346} News of these problems leaked out to the western Press, and may have attributed to the general opinion in, specifically British, naval circles that the Japanese warships and the cruisers and destroyers in particular, were paper tigers.

\begin{footnotesize}

\textsuperscript{343} Donald L. Kindell: "Japan's MYOKO Class Cruisers" \textit{Warship International}, Vol. 3 (1966), 153 - 156.

\textsuperscript{344} Ed.: "Conversions of MOGAMI-Class Cruisers" \textit{Warship International}, Vol. 3 (1966), no 1, 27 - 28.

\textsuperscript{345} Evans, op. cit. 242 - 243.

\textsuperscript{346} H. Langerer e.a.: "TONE - A different approach to the Heavy Cruiser" \textit{Warship}, no 41 (January 1987), 35 - 42., no 43 (June 1987), 138 - 149, 44 (October 1987), 223 - 232.
\end{footnotesize}
As mentioned above, Japanese destroyers tended to be over-armed for their size.\textsuperscript{3427} The Japanese naval staff saw the destroyer as the executor of torpedo-attacks at night aimed at the enemy battlefleet, and therefore placed heavy emphasis on correct maneouvering of its 16-ship destroyer flotillas led by a light cruiser acting as flagship. Only with concentration of such a large number of ships had a volley of launched torpedoes against the enemy line any chance of hitting.\textsuperscript{3426} Japanese destroyers were therefore an integral part of the attrition strategy, and Japanese doctrine woefully downplayed the role of the destroyer as submarine hunter.\textsuperscript{3429} Japanese destroyers as specified by the naval staff were fast, had an significant armament of the new 24"-inch (61 cm) torpedotubes and had an enormous endurance, making it possible to operate with the A-Class cruisers. The 24 ships of the FUBUKI-Class, built between 1926 and 1931, were the most advanced and powerful destroyers of their time, with enclosed bridge and gun mounts, which made them able to perform even in stormy seas. But most obvious was their torpedo armament: eighteen 24-inch torpedoes with nine torpedo launchers in three triple mountings. These 2,000 tons ships were years ahead of other navies;\textsuperscript{3430} and ideally suited for the attrition strategy envisaged. At the end of the thirties, the KAGERO-Class of 18 ships was added to the fleet with the same armament as the FUBUKI-Class, maintaining Japan's lead in destroyer development over other nations. The Japanese destroyer was in fact an all-out attack vessel against larger ships, and as such the logical successor to the smaller torpedoboat, which the Japanese had used with such success in the Chinese-Japanese war. Its inadequacy in escorting convoys and chasing submarines would only become painfully clear during the ensuing Pacific War.

The problem of protecting Japan's sealanes had been thoroughly studied.\textsuperscript{3431} But the Navy's priorities were the building and servicing of as many attack ships as possible, to be directed against the enemy battleline. Essentially defensive operations such as convoying and antisubmarine warfare did not fit in this mindset. Teitler\textsuperscript{3432} has presented a convincing case that because of its inherent inferiority, the Japanese naval strategy had to be based on a decisive battle, because any other strategy would have to account for a protracted war - which Japan never could win. Therefore, the protection of the sea-lanes against enemy submarines had a very low priority; winning the "decisive" battle had the highest priority. Moreover, in defining "vital" sealanes, the Japanese tended to consider as vital the lines of communication between Japan proper and the North Chinese and Manchurian Coasts. That the South China Sea and the Central Pacific also contained vital sealanes too, was not recognized as a high priority. When the civil members of the National Planning Board raised their worries about the threat of American submarines astride the Japanese sealanes, Chief of Naval Staff Osami Nagano told them not to worry,
and informed them that because of national security, he could not discuss the details of the navy's preparations with them.\textsuperscript{343}

In fact, during the interwar years, the only ASW vessels (Japanese: Kaibokan) built by the Navy were the four ships of the SHIMUZU-class of about 1,000 tons.\textsuperscript{344} The ships were however too slow to catch up with the fast U.S. fleet submarines, and had too few depth charges on board. Because the Japanese were unaware of the deep diving qualities of the U.S. fleet submarines, the depth charges were set at a too shallow depth. Moreover, sonar sets (or asdic as the British call it) were far more primitive than the British and American sets, and only about 20 destroyers were equipped with those sets. In summary, neither in ships, equipment, training and doctrine was the Japanese navy prepared to defend the sealanes of its island empire, which was one of the glaring deficiencies of this navy in the Pacific War.

At the start of the Pacific War, the Japanese navy possessed 100 destroyers, with 43 on the yards being built. However, of these the 3 MOME-Class ships, the 13 MINEKAZE's, the 7 WAKATAKE Class Ships, the 4 KAMIKAZE's and the 12 MUTSUKI-Clas s ships were too light and too obsolete to serve with the fleet, and were therefore primarily used for convoy escort duties. This left 61 modern to very modern destroyers for fleet duties.

The Japanese also had a very different philosophy about the use of submarines.\textsuperscript{345} Germany was the leading nation in submarine development in WW I. As with the destroyer, the Japanese naval staff saw the submarine as a weapon of attrition. Rear-Admiral Nobumasa Suetugu, who took over command of the navy's first submarine division in 1922, was a firm believer in this role for the submarine. He worked out submarine tactics for reconnaissance, port blockade, and for operations against an enemy fleet.\textsuperscript{346} For that purpose, larger boats were needed, and in 1924 the I-51 was completed, at 1400 tons the largest of Japanese submarines.\textsuperscript{347} Moreover, the Japanese hired German consultants and former U-boat commanders, and perfected their designs. In the twenties they designed the J-submarine, a fleet submarine with a range of 15,000 kilometer, with two 5.5 inch deck guns and six torpedo tubes. These ships could easily reach and patrol the American westcoast. But commerce raiding was not a part of the Japanese naval strategy, because Japan aimed for a limited war of short duration, in which commerce raiding had no place. As such, the Japanese also developed a blind spot against the possibility of American submarines going after the Japanese Merchant Fleet.\textsuperscript{348}

Together with the Dutch Navy, the Japanese Navy was the only major navy which

\textsuperscript{343} Evans, c.s., 437.
\textsuperscript{344} Evans, op. cit., 439.
\textsuperscript{347} Evans, op. cit., 215.
\textsuperscript{348} G. Teitler, ibid., 415 - 435.
experimented with airplane-submarine cooperation, for which it used the long range Kawanishi Flying boats.\textsuperscript{3439} These experiences resulted into the construction of a class of submarines equipped with reconnaissance aircraft. These boats would be used in the Pacific war in raiding Sydney Harbour and Diego Suarez in Madagascar. Suetsugu's tactical doctrines became part of the overall doctrine of the Japanese navy in the thirties, with submarines to watch over the sortie of the U.S. battle fleet from Pearl Harbor, the stalking of the U.S. fleet over the Pacific, and the joining up with the Japanese battle fleet at the climactic battle. Concealment was stressed, because the submarine manoeuvers had highlighted the vulnerability of above-water submarines for all kinds of attack. This tactic, in combination with the accent on submarine operations against warships only, was responsible for the dismal performance of the Japanese submarine weapon during WW II.\textsuperscript{3440}

As in the Dutch and German Navies, the Japanese evolved tactics for the use of submarines in "wolfpacks", not to chase convoys, but in chasing warships. The submarines with reconnaissance aircraft on board were planned to be the command ships for each wolfpack. But as has been pointed out by Evans, the Japanese never did develop one type of standardized "fleet" submarine, like the U.S., but squandered their scarce resources on all kinds of submarine designs.\textsuperscript{3441} At the start of the Pacific War, the Japanese possessed 54 operational submarines and had 19 submarines under construction.

An unique Japanese development was the midget submarine.\textsuperscript{3442} Captain Kaneharu Kishimoto of the Submarine section of the Kure Naval Base was the inventor of this new weapon. In his vision, small and cheap midget submarines could be used to attack the main American battle fleet or to blockade enemy bases. This project too, like the superbattleships, was shrouded in utmost secrecy. These submarines, measuring 46 tons and manned by a two-man crew, were armed with two 45 cm. torpedo tubes. They were powered by batteries, enabling them to run under water for 15 minutes at 19 knots, or on the surface at 6 knots for 13 hours.\textsuperscript{3443} The boats were 24 meters long and cigarlike in shape. Four tenders were equipped to transport each twelve midget submarines. The purpose was to transport these submarines to the area of the decisive battle, and let them loose upon the enemy fleet. In 1940 some large fleet submarines were converted for transportation of midgets to enemy harbours. As such, midget submarines were employed at the Pearl Harbor operation and in Sydney Harbour in May 1942.

As can be deduced from the foregoing, the Japanese naval staff placed much trust in the torpedo as a decisive weapon. Faced with the short range of the standard Whitehead torpedo, which thus made the torpedo-launcher susceptible to enemy fire, the Japanese experimented from 1928 onward with a different propulsion system, using pure oxygen in place of compressed air and fuel. In 1933 the first succesful oxygen torpedo was launched. That year the Japanese christened the new secret weapon the Type 93 torpedo, which has

\textsuperscript{3439} Evans, op. cit., 218.
\textsuperscript{3440} Evans, c.s., 434.
\textsuperscript{3441} Evans, op. cit., 387 - 389.
\textsuperscript{3443} Evans, c.s., 272 - 274.
become known in the West as the "Long-Lance" torpedo due to its extreme range. The 24"-torpedo (61 cm) weighed 2700 kilograms, was 9 meters long and had a warhead of 500 kilograms. This was at least 60% more than comparable Anglo-American torpedo warheads.\(^4\)\(^4\) It was capable of speeds up to 48 knots and ranges as far as 40,000 meters.\(^4\)\(^4\) The torpedo left practically no visible wake. It was a deadly weapon which fully fitted the Japanese strategy of outranging the enemy. But because of the size and weight of the new torpedoes, it were primarily the cruisers which were equipped with this awesome weapon. Indeed, the Long Lance would account for many Japanese victories in the cruiser battles of 1942 and 1943, starting with the battle in the Java Sea. Because of the security measures undertaken, the Long Lance was indeed a nasty surprise for the Allies.

In order to exploit the characteristics of the Long Lance torpedo, the Japanese developed the tactic of long-distance concealed firing (enkyori ommitsu hassha) with the cruisers and large destroyers firing up to 200 of these torpedoes at the enemy battleline at a distance of at least 20,000 meters - at night! (See paragraph 6.9.3) As a result of rigorous training in nightly torpedo attacks, during World War II Japanese forces were able to sight the enemy before they themselves were spotted, and would commence engagements by launching salvos of Long Lance torpedoes while still outside the range of US gunfire.\(^4\)\(^4\)

Another secret weapon developed by the Japanese was the technique of underwater shots or Suichudan. When trying out their naval guns against the hull of the unfinished battleship TOSA, which had to be destroyed because of the Washington agreements, the Japanese discovered, in 1924, that armour-piercing shells which hit the water in front of a ship in fact could hit ships below the armour belt and could penetrate into vital spots. It all depended on the angle of incidence of the shell, and the distance from the ship. They redesigned their AP Type 91 shells in such a way that if the shell fell short of its target, it still could penetrate the ship. In order to attain that effect, the shell needed a long-delay fuse. It turned out in actual combat, that many AP-shells failed to explode on a direct hit, and thus were duds.\(^4\)\(^7\) The secret of the Suichudan-shells was only revealed after the war.

One of the areas in which Japan was quite deficient was the application of pure and applied science in its war effort. Due to the secrecy measures, and the natural distance existing between the officers with their exalted status and the lowly civilian, the two Service Departments had no links with Universities and their research groups. Japan possessed internationally very highly regarded theoretical physicists, two of whom would obtain a Nobel prize for theoretical work done during the war, but the military were totally unaware of the potential of nuclear research.\(^4\)\(^8\) Electronics research had been underway at Universities and in the Navy's Technical Research Center since the early 1930's, around

\(^{4\text{a}}\) Boyd/Millett, op. cit., 159.

\(^{4\text{b}}\) Evans, op. cit. gives on page 270 a comparison graph on range versus speed for the Type 93 and the standard U.S. Mark 15 torpedo. See also A. Marder, op. cit., 309 - 310.

\(^{4\text{c}}\) Thomas G. Mahnken: "Gazing at the Sun: The Office of Naval Intelligence and Japanese Naval Innovations, 1918 - 1941" Intelligence & National Security, 11:3 (July 1996), 434.

\(^{4\text{d}}\) Evans, op. cit., 263 - 266.

the same time that it started in Europe and the U.S. The Japanese naval expert in that area, Cdr Yuji Ito, visited Germany in 1940 and was fully informed about German developments. Based on his reports and those of another Japanese officer stationed in London, the Chief of the Intelligence Division of the Navy General Staff asserted that without radar, the Navy simply could not enter the war. The message got through at last, and a navy ministry instruction of 2 August 1941 finally ordered a crash program of radar development. However, no Japanese ship or aircraft was equipped with radar when the war broke out.

Turning back to naval construction, the Japanese Navy had at the time of the Pearl Harbor attacks the following ships which were in the process of being built or completed: 3 Superbattleships, 8 aircraft carriers, 1 heavy and 9 light cruisers, 43 destroyers, 19 submarines and 33 submarines ordered. Its requirements for steel were such that Japanese blast furnaces and steelworks could not fulfill all orders placed, resulting in much clashing and haggling between the Navy and Army Staffs about allocation of steel.

We have still not covered one aspect of armament in which the Japanese Navy was spectacularly successful: the naval airforce. This will be covered in the next paragraph.

6.9.5. The Naval Airforces.

The First World War saw the arrival of the airplane, also for naval purposes, but it was still too young a weapon to be taken really seriously by the Naval general staffs of every navy. But the potential was recognized by a number of visionary Admirals and officers of lower rank.

In the twenties, the direction of development was on the use of floatplanes for artillery spotting and the deployment of airplanes to act as scouts for the fleet. A number of battleships and cruisers were equipped with catapults for that purpose. In Japan directly after the First World War, there was consensus in navy circles that the potential of aircraft was large, but Japanese plane manufacturing capabilities were as yet not on a par with those in the West. Eyeing the arrival of a French air mission in 1919 on invitation of the Army, the Japanese Naval Staff decided to seek the assistance of the British Navy. It has to be remembered that the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1912 was still in force at that time. In 1921 an unofficial British civil aviation mission was invited to Japan. The 27-member mission was headed by Sir William Francis-Forbes Sempill. The mission, which hoped to acquire Japanese orders for the British Aircraft Industry, brought with it well over a hundred aircraft. The Japanese were not so much interested in orders, but as it turned out in obtaining licenses for their own fledgling aircraft industry. Private Japanese firms were very interested too in obtaining British licenses. Mitsubishi obtained them for aircraft for the experimental Japanese carrier HOSHO, and the firm of Aichi got licenses from Heinkel. Other successful Japanese firms were Nakajima and Kawanishi, founded in 1928 with a number of Short licenses for flying boats. The Japanese Navy issued specifications for aircraft types to these firms, which made competitive bids. After testing of the prototypes by the Navy, contracts would be awarded to the firm which offered the best product. This competitiveness resulted in a rapid rise in the quality of Japanese airplanes and engines. The issuing of specifications and the testing of designs was carried out by the Naval

---

346 Evans, op. cit. 411 - 413.

Aviation Department, which was created in 1927. The Naval Air Arsenal at Yokosuka pooled all work on aircraft design and flight testing for the Navy.

Under the energetic leadership of then Rear-Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto (1935 - 1936) the Naval Aviation Department succeeded in self-sufficiency in aircraft design and manufacture. By the end of the thirties the Japanese had designed, developed and produced some of the best combat aircraft in the world. That started in 1934 with the specification of a single-seat carrier fighter. After careful selection, Mitsubishi obtained the production order for what would be the A5M Type 96 carrier fighter ("Claude"). It proved to be a superb fighter and a rugged plane, ideally for carrier flight-deck operations. Even as the A5M was being distributed over the carriers and land units, the Navy Aviation department was already working on the design of a fighter, which would be able to escort bombers on their long flights to China, and which could wrest air supremacy from any attacking fighter. The result of this effort would be the A6M Type 0 ("Zeke"), which would become world famous as the Zero fighter. It proved to be highly manoeuvrable, fast, and as the engine could be set on a position of extremely low fuel consumption, the Zero had the astounding range (flying distance) of 3400 kilometers. It had been expressly designed for operations from Formosa over Luzon and from Southern Indochina over Singapore.\footnote{A. Marder, op. cit., 306 - 307.}

The navy, however, had also been very successful in the design of bombers. We have already covered the Mitsubishi G3M Type 96 two-engine medium bomber ("Nell"), a land-based attack plane which could also be equipped with a torpedo. The Nells were used during the China Incident for the first trans-oceanic bombing raids. When the Chinese started their offensive towards Shanghai in August 1937, Nells were flying the 2000 km distance between Taichoku (Taipei) on Formosa and Omura on Kyushu to Shanghai to attack Chinese positions and airfields around Shanghai.\footnote{Boyd/Milet, op. cit., 162.} The Naval Air Corps bore the brunt of air assignments in China, and learned a lot in the process. The Army Air Corps would therefore never match the efficiency of the Naval Air Corps.

In 1937 the Navy acquired a carrier-based plane which could undertake multiple roles: torpedo attacks, high level bombings and reconnaissance. This was the B5N Type 97 ("Kate") carrier attack aircraft, a three-seat monoplane manufactured by Nakajima.\footnote{A. Marder, op. cit., 308.} The Kate was extensively used as a tactical support bomber in China, and it helped to destroy the American battleships at Pearl Harbor. It was undoubtedly the best torpedo bomber of the time.

In 1939 the Navy acquired a carrier-based dive bomber, the D3A Type 99 ("Val"), manufactured by Aichi. Of the same generation as the German Stuka and the American Douglas Dauntless, it proved to be an excellent divebomber, which during the first year of the Pacific War sank more Allied warships than any other type of Axis aircraft.

Due to the extreme distances in the Pacific, the navy needed a patrol plane for long-range over-water reconnaissance. Kawanishi introduced a large flying boat in 1936, which resembled the Dutch and German Dornier flying boats. It was the H6K type 97 ("Mavis") flying boat, with a range of almost 3,000 kilometers. Its successor became the robust
Kawanishi H8K Type 2 flying boat ("Emily"), which entered service in 1941, and which had a resemblance to the British Short Sunderland flying boat.

The Japanese failed however in the development of reconnaissance planes operating from aircraft carriers. The Japanese considered it a waste of offensive capability to include specialized reconnaissance planes on the flight decks, leaving that mission to float planes catapulted by cruisers, which accompanied the carriers. Near coastal areas, the flying boats performed reconnaissance missions. As a result, the American carrier airforces had a better reconnaissance capability than their Japanese counterparts.3464

All in all, the Japanese Navy possessed in 1941 what undoubtedly were the best airplanes in the world in their class.3465 Moreover, the Japanese also had a quantitative lead over their enemies in the future theatre of operations. On 7 December 1941 the IJN possessed 906 landbased planes and 1354 carrier-based planes, making up a total of 2262 planes.3466 These numbers already indicate the enormous importance of the carrier airforce.

But what was the Japanese situation with respect to that essential component of naval airpower, the aircraft carrier? At that time the aircraft carrier was a totally new ship design, and it went through many trials before an optimal design materialized in the mid-twenties. Moreover, the Washington Naval Treaties allowed only carriers of up to 23,000 tons, with exemptions being made for the Americans and Japanese, who were allowed to convert a number of capital ships into carriers: the KAGA and AKAGI, and the LEXINGTON and SARATOGA.

Japan's first and essentially experimental aircraft carrier was the HOSHO which was, with her 8,000 tons and 150 meter long flight deck, a small carrier indeed. She proved invaluable however in testing out a number of problems of lay-out and carrier operations. The two big carriers KAGA and AKAGI gave naval designers many problems in the provision of boiler exhausts, which were designed in the form of huge shafts canted down over the sides of the ships in order to provide a flush flight deck. In the thirties the carriers were reconfigured with a small island on a continuous flight deck, which gave the carriers a higher carrying capacity (from 60 to 90 planes).

Next the Japanese designed a carrier of less than 10,000 tons, the RYUHO. The design was not a success, as the plane load was too small, and the ship proved to have stability problems. The next two carriers were the fast (35 knots) SORYU and HIRYU, both of approximately 16,000 tons and with a carrying capacity of 70 planes. The expiration of the Washington Naval Treaty made it possible for the Japanese to build aircraft carriers to their liking, and the result were the SHOKAKU and ZUKAKU: fast 22,000 tons ships with an air complement of 72 planes: 27 divebombers, 27 torpedo bombers and 18 fighters. In performance and capability they exceeded all American carriers until the ESSEX-class came into service in 1942, and the unavailability of those 2 carriers at the Midway

3464 Evans op. cit., 329.

3465 The best description of the planes mentioned is given by René J. Francillon: Japanese Aircraft of the Pacific War, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis Md 1987.

operation may have caused the Japanese defeat at Midway. To increase their carrier air arm on short notice, the Japanese started the conversion of 5 passenger liners into light aircraft carriers in August 1940. Only three of them had been converted at the outbreak of war: the HOSHO, ZUIHO and TAIYO.

Japanese carriers differed from American carriers in three main respects. The first was the use of enclosed hangars under the flight deck, while the Americans used open hangars which allowed for ventilation. The closed hangars were firetraps if bombs penetrated through the flight deck, but in Winter and in stormy seas they provided more comfort than open hangars. Neither the Americans nor the Japanese employed armoured flight decks, as the British did with their box-like carrier hulls, with the armoured flight deck part of the structural design of the ship. Moreover, as the Japanese stowed all their planes in the hangars, the carrying capacity of Japanese carriers was less than those of American carriers, who normally stowed their planes on part of the flight deck. Lastly, there was a difference in operations, as the Japanese required clear flight decks in operations, and the Americans used crash barriers to separate parked planes from starting and landing planes. The speed of launching aircraft was therefore determined by the speed of the elevators, which meant in practice that the Americans could launch their airplane complements faster than the Japanese. A fourth difference turned up during the war. That was the lack of fire suppressant technology on board of the Japanese carriers, in contrast to the Americans who had developed this for their carriers, and who had also better firefighting capabilities and more trained crews.

In the early thirties, with the delivery of better aircraft, the JUN developed a new doctrine about using carrier aircraft to attack an enemy fleet. First horizontal bombing runs were tried at different heights on ships of different sizes and speeds. The experiments proved, that horizontal bombing was only successful against stationary targets which were approached from low to medium heights, and by employing large formations. At the end of the thirties horizontal bombing of moving ships was discarded, as two other means of attack had proven to be more accurate. These were aerial torpedo attacks and dive bombing.406

In the early thirties the Japanese had developed the Type 91 aerial torpedo, which could be dropped at a speed of 200 km/h and a height of 100 meters. With a range of 2000 meters, a speed of 42 knots and an explosive charge of 150 kilograms the Type 91 was markedly superior over the American Mark XIII aerial torpedo. Therefore, with the advent of the Kate torpedo bomber and in the hands of a dedicated corps of torpedo pilots, the Japanese had a deadly weapon in the aerial torpedo.

In divebombing, the American Marine Corps had done pioneering work. The Japanese started experiments with divebombing in 1931 and found out, that the accuracy of divebombing was phenomenal - almost 100%. With the introduction of the Val in 1937 and with continuous training to perfect divebombing operations, the Japanese naval airforce possessed a deadly weapon against ships at the start of the Pacific War.

Like in the American airforce, there was heated debate in JUN circles in the mid-thirties about the value of the fighter. The appearance of the Nell-bomber, which was even faster

406 Evans, op. cit., 327.

407 Evans, op. cit., 319.
than all contemporary fighters when it was introduced, rekindled the discussion. The argument was solved by the China incident, proving that bombers were indeed vulnerable to interceptor fighters which could be vectored to the bombing formations. In order to protect their bombers, the Japanese needed air superiority fighters. The Claude proved to be an outstanding fighter because of its extreme maneuverability, which would also be ensured by the design specifications for its successor, the Zero. In the years up to the Pacific War the Japanese worked out tactical defense patterns for fighters in protecting the aircraft carriers against attack, and in escorting attack planes.

The Japanese naval airforce was unique amongst other naval airforces in its sizable component of land-based aircraft. This was due to the island nature of Japan, and the IDP of 1918 which essentially saw Japan as an island fortress, which had to be protected against air attacks. Therefore the coasts of Japan were eventually ringed by naval air bases.

In the twenties and thirties, the Japanese naval staff did not consider the home islands as unapproachable by the U.S. Fleet. There were fears that this powerful fleet, with aircraft carriers added, would break through into the Pacific coastal waters of the home islands. Moreover, starting from the mid-thirties the Soviet Union acquired the capacity to bomb Honshu from the Maritime province in Eastern Siberia with its long-range bombers. In particular the then Rear-Admiral Yamamoto therefore argued that Japan required long-range bombers as well. His efforts resulted in the “Nell” bomber with its 2.000 kilometer range. The landbased naval bomber gave the IJN the possibility to hit back at an approaching American fleet “out of range”, i.e. without that fleet being able to bomb the airplane bases, and therefore fitted in the naval strategy of autorenji. As in other navies, there was conflict within the upper echelons of the Japanese Navy between gun enthusiasts and airpower fanatics, with the airforce men being the challengers.\footnote{Evans, op. cit., 336 - 340.} It is a compliment to the forceful personality of Yamamoto, that even with the gun club dominant, he wrestled for and achieved the institution of a powerful landbased naval force. It was a feat which was not repeated in either the American or the British Navy.

During the war with China, Japanese naval air played a very dominant role in Central- and South China as a strategic bomber force, while the Army Airforce operated in Northern China. The reason for this sub-division was purely practical, as only the navy had the required long-range bomber (the Nell) but also because lack of interest and fear of loss of face prevented the Army High Command in establishing a strategic airforce of its own with planes obtained from the Navy. When the Japanese Navy executed a number of amphibious operations along the South China coast, it was reasonable that these were covered from the air by navy fighters, and it was during these campaigns that the Zero was employed for the first time. It turned out that navy flyers were very effective in shooting up enemy airports, and the practice obtained here was used later with devastating effects by navy fighter pilots at airbases in Luzon, Malaya and the NEI. They proved that the fighter was not a purely defensive weapon in air combat, but could also be used for strafing enemy ships and airfields.

Another lesson learned from the Chinese experience was that a few bombers accomplished almost nothing. In order to be effective, bombing formations had to be large and had to be escorted by fighters. The Dutch bomber force never learned this lesson from experience as it had been wiped out beforehand. The British and American strategic
airforces learned this lesson the hard way in the early years of the war. At Pearl Harbor, as well as at the ensuing air-sea battles, the Japanese launched succeeding waves of bombers and fighters against the same target, with devastating effect. The most important gain the Japanese naval airforce made over China, however, was the skill and expertise which the navy fighter pilots obtained, which made them together with the Zero such formidable opponents in the first year of the Pacific War.

Because of the positive experience in China with massed bombers, the Japanese started to experiment with aircraft carriers concentrated into aircraft carrier squadrons. Up to 1940 the two carrier divisions (each of 3 to 4 ships) were attached to different Fleets. With the support of Yamamoto, on 1 April 1941 the First Airfleet came into being: a concentration of all seven Japanese aircraft carriers in three carrier divisions, two seaplane divisions and ten destroyers, all under one Air Commander. Unlike the American carrier task forces, this First Airfleet did not operate on its own, but as an organic unit within the Japanese battle fleet. It possessed awesome firepower with its 474 planes, made up of 137 fighters, 144 dive bombers and 183 torpedo planes. Without its existence, the Pearl Harbor operation would probably not have taken place, or would have been less successful.  

In summary, at the start of the Pacific War the Japanese Navy had not only the largest carrier air force in number of ships and planes, but its planes were qualitatively better than those of the West, and their pilots were at the peak of their fighting effectiveness. The Japanese Navy, under the stimulating leadership of Isoroku Yamamoto, had forged the thunderbolt, which was now ready to be thrown upon the unsuspecting Allies.


The IJN possessed a Headquarters organisation which was almost a replica of that of the Army General Staff. It consisted of the usual departments, Operations, Personnel, Intelligence, War Plans, etc. The oceangoing fleet consisted of the Combined Fleet and Naval Forces in China. The Combined Fleet was made up of the First Fleet (the battle force) and the Second Fleet (the scouting force), the Third Fleet with the supply ships and transport ships, and two "local" Fleets next to the China Fleet. This was the Fourth Fleet, based at the Palaus, and the Fifth Fleet based at Hokkaido. In addition, there was the Sixth Fleet or Submarine Fleet with its own command, and the Carrier Fleet, based at Kure.

The strength of these Fleets as per 1 September 1941 is given in the Table below.

---

336 Evans, op. cit., 349.

Table 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fleet</th>
<th>Based at</th>
<th>Commander</th>
<th>Fleet composition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Hiroshima</td>
<td>I. Yamamoto</td>
<td>10 battleships, 4 heavy cruisers, 2 light cruisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with 27 destroyers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Hainan (Sana)</td>
<td>N. Kondo</td>
<td>11 heavy cruisers, 2 light cruisers and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28 destroyers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Formosa (Takao)</td>
<td>I. Takahashi</td>
<td>1 light cruiser with 12 destroyers, 6 submarines,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46 transports, 6 minelayers, 12 minesweepers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6 gunboats, 12 patrol craft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Truk</td>
<td>S. Inouye</td>
<td>4 light cruisers, 8 destroyers, 16 submarines, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>transports, 7 minecraft, 15 gunboats, 3 patrol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>vessels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Ominato</td>
<td>B. Hosogaya</td>
<td>2 light cruisers and 24 destroyers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Kwajalein</td>
<td>M. Shimizu</td>
<td>40 submarines with tenders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carriers</td>
<td>Kure</td>
<td>C. Nagumo</td>
<td>10 aircraft carriers, 16 destroyers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Combined Naval Airforce, based at Kanoya Naval Station in South Kyushu, was organized as follows:

1st Air Fleet, based on carriers: 474 planes.
11th Air Fleet, based at Formosa: 110 fighters, 120 bombers.

The 11th Air Fleet consisted of the following Air Flotillas:

21st Air Flotilla, based at Formosa, consisting of the
- Kanoya Wing: 27 torpedo bombers, 9 fighters, 6 recon planes
- 1st Wing: 27 torpedo bombers, 18 fighters.

22nd Air Flotilla, based in southern Indochina around Saigon:
- Mihoro Wing: 36 torpedo bombers, 9 fighters.
- Genzan Wing: 27 torpedo bombers, 18 fighters.

23rd Air Flotilla, based at Formosa:
- Takao Wing: 27 torpedo bombers, 18 fighters.
- 3rd Wing: 27 torpedo bombers.

24th Air Flotilla, based at the home islands:
- Chitose Wing: 27 torpedo bombers, 18 fighters.
- training units, with 450 trainers.

At the start of the Pacific War the Naval Airforce consisted in total, of about 2200 planes of all types.

In Japan itself the Naval Airforce operated from a number of airbases. In Kyushu were located the Kanoya Airbase, and around Nagasaki the Omura and Sasebo airfields. In the Northeast of Kyushu was located the Saeki Airfield. On Honshu were located the airbases of Kure, Mihoro, Maizuru and Ominato in the North. In the Kanto plain around Tokyo were located the Yokosuka, Yokohama, Kasumigaura, Kiarazu and Tateyama Airfields. A
The IJN did not possess a Marine Corps as with almost all Western navies. Naval landing parties up to the First World War were recruited from fleet personnel. Approximately one third of ship’s crews had received infantry and small-arms training, and this was the major cause for the fact that in western eyes Japanese warships tended to be overmanned. However, in the twenties, the Japanese started to experiment with more permanent amphibious units known as Special Naval Landing Forces or Rikusentai. These units were recruited and trained at the four major Japanese Naval Bases: Kure, Sasebo, Maizuru and Yokosuka. Their officers were naval officers. The rikusentai were first deployed in China, in particular during the Shanghai fighting in August 1937, and were later also employed in S.E. Asia. In some western publications they have been called “marines”, but this is an incorrect description.

Each rikusentai had the strength of an enlarged army battalion, with about 2,000 men divided in 4 companies. Three companies each consisted of 6 rifle platoons and 1 heavy machinegun platoon; the 4th company possessed four 3-inch naval guns for artillery support. An organization chart of Maizuru no 2 Rikusentai as per 19 November 1941 is shown in the Handbook on Japanese Forces.

Before the Pacific War, the Rikusentai received extensive training in landing operations and beach defense, but their training in infantry tactics and weapons appears to be of a lower standard than that of the Japanese Army. The Japanese Army however was fully aware of the importance of close cooperation with the navy in order to land on defended coasts, and together with the Navy rikusentai a number of landing exercises were undertaken on the Japanese coasts between 1922 and 1929. A series of guidelines for amphibious operations arose from this. The mediocre performance of the Rikusentai at Shanghai in 1932 resulted in the decision of the Naval Staff to increase the firepower of the rikusentai, and to give them more limited missions, which could be supported and executed from warships. The whole question of developing adequate landing equipment was left to the Army. It therefore was the Army, which specified designs for infantry and tank landing craft, and as we have seen on the previous pages, the Army specifically appointed three infantry divisions for training in amphibious operations. The role of the Navy was restricted to provision of naval shore bombardment and convoying army landing craft to the beaches. The many unopposed landings of Army and Navy (in perfect harmony!) on the China coast after 1937 perfected the amphibious doctrines which had been developed by the two services.

Impressed by the success of German paratroop operations in Western Europe in 1940, the Navy started to invest in paratroops, for which it used the Rikusentai. At the start of the
Pacific War, the Navy had two paratroop battalions ready, which were used with devastating effect at Palembang in the NEI in February 1942. The Navy and Army undertook many unopposed landings in the S.E. Asia campaign, and these were remarkably successful because of the professional training of both army and naval forces in this type of landings. But the Japanese never acquired the tactical capability for amphibious assault against well-defended shores, as the dismal failure of the first landing at Wake demonstrated. It was just that kind of operation, for which the U.S. Marine Corps had prepared, and which would pay such great dividends at the South and Central Pacific operations later in the war.

It must be stated that the Japanese never thought of having Construction Battalions such as the U.S. Navy’s “Seabees”, equipped with earth moving machines and fulfilling engineering tasks for the navy. The lack of such battalions became obvious when Japan started to build airfields in the Mandated Islands, and had to hire civil contractors to do the job, which slowed the speed of construction under naval supervision considerably.

6.9.7. Naval Intelligence.

Japanese Naval Intelligence was never as important as its Army counterpart. The Departments 3 and 4 of the Naval General Staff were responsible for Human Intelligence (Department 3) and Signals Intelligence (Department 4). Department 3 was subdivided according to geographical regions. The Fifth Section was concerned with the Americas and the Philippines, the Seventh Section with the European Powers and the Soviet Union. In the 4th Department the Eleventh Section was charged with Crypto-analysis, in which it was never very successful. The entire 3rd Department was rather small: only 29 officers compared to 161 officers for the whole of Naval Intelligence.

For human intelligence agents were employed who were paid out of secret funds by Naval Attachés. Before the Second World War it was not too difficult to obtain blueprints from naval ships being built at wharves in Western countries, for example the Brooklyn Navy Yard in New-York. Attachés worked closely with Japanese business and technical representatives abroad. Naval officers were assigned intelligence duties at Japanese consular offices all over the world. (See below). Important in this respect were the consular offices in Port-Said and Alexandria, Malta and Italian ports, in order to watch over the British Mediterranean Fleet and its eventual departure to the Far East. Moreover, the flow of weapons towards China from Western countries could be monitored in that way.

Department 3 scored some notable triumphs, specifically with respect to the planning of the Pearl Harbor operations. We have seen in subchapter 6.8.5., page 694, how Navy Sub-Lieutenant Takeo Yoshizawa was able to report, up to the last moment, all kinds of details regarding the US Pacific Fleet and the Army Airforces stationed on Oahu. As Vice-Consul attached to the Japanese Consulate-General he bought picture postcards with

---

346 Evans, op. cit., 446.
348 Barnhart/May, op. cit., 427.
347 A. Marder, op. cit., 334.
aerial views of Pearl Harbor in large quantities and sent them to Japan. The navy flyers attacking Pearl Harbor on 7 December had fixed those postcards to the cockpit screens of their planes.346

Another successful spy was Lieutenant Naojirō Takagi, who was sent from the Japanese Consulate-General in Batavia to the Dutch port city of Surabaya, which also harboured the Dutch fleet. He set up shop as a potato merchant, using his shop to store clandestinely imported weapons destined for Javanese nationalists.347 He also duly reported the Dutch Fleet movements to his superiors via diplomatic code.

Department 4 dealt with Signals Intelligence. There are no reports about the Japanese navy being able to break western naval codes before or in the war. But the Japanese were very successful in traffic analysis of call-signs, volume of traffic and routing of traffic of Allied warships by using HF/DF (High-Frequency Direction Finding) techniques. A large number of listening stations were set up along Japanese-dominated coasts and islands in the Pacific. Using HF/DF techniques, Japanese Naval Intelligence was able to follow the course of the three American heavy cruisers dispatched to Singapore in 1940 and even to predict the date of their arrival in Singapore.347

Using the same techniques, Department 4 was able to intercept the radio traffic between shore and Merchant Ships, which provided a good insight in the flow of goods and resources. For example, the Japanese Navy was quite aware of the reinforcement of Wake Island by these interceptions.347

A windfall for the Japanese was the so-called AUTOMEDON-case.347

The German raider ATLANTIS, commanded by Captain Bernhard Rogge, intercepted the Blue Funnel Liner m.s. AUTOMEDON in the Indian Ocean on its way to Singapore on 11 November 1940. The ship had left Liverpool on 24 September 1940 with, on board, secret documents for Malaya Command, Hongkong and Shanghai, as well as for the Attachés in Japan. The documents included the top-secret COS Appreciation of 15 August 1940 on the military situation in the Far East,347 instructing the new C-in-C Far East, Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, that he was not to expect any reinforcement being sent to the Far East.347 After arrival in Japan, this was the only document for which the German Naval Attaché in Tokyo, Rear-Admiral Paul Wenner, asked permission from his superiors to hand it over to the Japanese. Admiral Raeder gave that permission on 12 December 1940, after which Wenner handed it over to the Vice-Chief of Naval Staff, Vice-Adm. Nobutake Kondo.347 Chapman claims, that this document had far-reaching consequences, from inducing the Germans to attack the Soviet-Union to Yamamoto deciding to proceed with

347 Louis Allen, op. cit., 552.
3471 Chapman/Andrew & Noakes, op. cit., 152.
3473 PRO COS (40) 592 of August 15, 1940.
3474 Chapman/Andrew & Noakes, ibid., 160.
3475 Chapman/Andrew & Noakes, ibid. 161.
the Pearl-Harbor attack, up to the Japanese decision to invade Southern FIC. This last claim seems a wild one, as the COS-Document was, at the time of that decision (2 July 1941), already almost a year old and completely out of date.

Another unexpected windfall was the publication in LIFE Magazine of 3 February 1941 of air photographs made by civil aircraft of the British Battleship KING GEORGE V, arriving in Chesapeake Bay with the new British Ambassador to the United States on board. These pictures had a high resolution, and the Japanese learned to their amazement that the ship was equipped with main gunnery radar sets, and surface and air warning sets, none of which was available to the Japanese. This caused a rude shock in naval circles (See also pag. 729).

The Naval Special Service Organization (Kaigun Tokumu Bu) provided agents for the Naval Attachés at Embassies and Ministries, but also had an important office at Shanghai. This organisation also ran extensive intelligence-gathering operations based on the use of Japanese fishing boats which ranged the Southern seas and the Pacific. These fishing vessels were equipped with heavy radio gear and hydrophones, and under cover of fishing activities carried out much unauthorized hydrographic research. Japanese hydrographic maps of the Southern seas therefore were the best available. The fishing vessels ranged from Ceylon to Australia to the South Seas Islands, and were particularly active in the thirties.

The organising company for a majority of the fishing vessels which operated in NEI waters was the Japan Ocean Bonito & Tuna Fish Company at Batavia. Another front office for espionage was the Nanyo Warehousing Company. Its branch office in Batavia was run by a former naval officer, Naoyu Aratama, who had been dismissed for his role in the ni-ni-roku incident.

In the twenties Japanese Naval Intelligence used personnel on Japanese freighters to make unauthorized hydrographic soundings around possible invasion beaches and around harbours. In Chapter 4 on Australia some of those Japanese activities around Newcastle on the East coast have been mentioned.

As was also the case with Army Intelligence, Naval Intelligence was very operations-directed. It produced highly accurate hydrographic charts, but did not possess the specialized knowledge to judge long-term strengths of its principal enemy: the United States. It knew all the characteristics of almost any warship of the Western powers in S.E. Asia, including the blue-prints, but lacked insight in the building capacity of American wharves over a number of years. As with the Army, the Navy culture gave top recognition to officers serving on ships. Naval officers working in Intelligence were considered papershufflers unfit for ship commands. Therefore, Intelligence did not attract bright young officers. Moreover, according to one source, in the interwar years the Navy sent its

---

347 Chapman/Andrew & Noakes, Ibid., 167
3477 Chapman/Andrew & Noakes, Ibid., 168.
347 A. Marder, op. cit., 337 - 338.
347 Elphick, Ibid., 217.
3480 Barnhart/May, op. cit., 454., Chapman/Andrew & Noakes, op. cit. 172.
top men to Germany, not to Britain and the U.S.A. In 1936 more naval officers were stationed in Germany than in either western country.\textsuperscript{3481}

Naval Intelligence therefore made some bad mistakes. It completely misjudged the American reaction on the Japanese occupation of Southern Indochina.\textsuperscript{3482} It had expected a recall of the ambassadors, not the economic blockade that the Americans imposed. The Japanese Naval Attaché in Washington, Captain Ichiro Yokoyama, had warned several times that a complete embargo could be expected if Japan occupied all of Indochina. But the Japanese Naval Intelligence Chief, Rear-Admiral Minoru Maeda, had downplayed Yokoyama's warnings.\textsuperscript{3483}

Naval Intelligence was also not able to untangle the agreements as a result of the Singapore Staff Conferences between Great Britain, the Netherlands and the U.S. as to the military assistance which each would offer the two other parties. It has been pointed out on page 737 that Japanese intelligence never got wind of the results of the Singapore Staff conferences. Therefore, Naval Operations surmised that the U.S. would intervene militarily, even if Japan bypassed American possessions like The Philippines. The Chief of Naval Intelligence since October 1940, Maeda, reported after the war that in his opinion Britain and the U.S. could not be separated, because they were of one race, the Anglo-Saxon race.\textsuperscript{3484} Neither Army nor Navy Intelligence had any idea about the deep political and strategic divisions between those two nations, because of this narrow racist view. Nevertheless, Maeda's conclusion was probably correct, because notwithstanding their quarrels, those countries would assist each other in the long run. The same lack of information existed about the separability of Britain and The Netherlands. It was believed that a secret mutual defence treaty almost certainly existed, causing Britain to take up arms against Japan if she invaded the Dutch East Indies.\textsuperscript{3485} Therefore the Navy considered it only safe to attack in the South if the American fleet had been neutralised. From the available documentation published, it is clear that Naval Intelligence did not foresee the psychological aspects of the Pearl Harbor attack, which made it possible for Roosevelt to unite the divided Americans behind an all-out war without mercy against the Japanese. This psychological blunder illustrated the fact, that Japanese Intelligence did not study this type of imponderables because it thought of it of as giving no added value. They could not have been more wrong!

An even larger mistake was the concentration of naval thinking on annihilation of the American Fleet. It had been a doctrine for years that this annihilation would take place in a Tsushima-type battle somewhere between Japan and Hawaii. Yamamoto in fact promised

\textsuperscript{3481} Barnhart/May, op. cit., 447.

\textsuperscript{3482} It was not the only one to make that mistake. The German Naval attaché in Tokyo, rear-Admiral Wenneker, informed his superiors in Berlin on 15 July 1941: "Occupation of Indochina expected soon in connection with the supply of raw materials. Serious repercussions on the part of Britain and America not anticipated" See Chapman/Andrew & Noakes, op. cit., 188, note 80.

\textsuperscript{3483} Barnhart/May, op. cit., 446.

\textsuperscript{3484} A. Marder, op. cit., 328.

\textsuperscript{3485} A. Marder, op. cit., 329.
to accomplish the same goal with his daring plan for a surprise attack on Pearl Har-
bor. The basic premise was that after the loss of its battlefleet, the United States
would sue for peace, as China and Russia had done. This assumption should have been
challenged by Naval Intelligence - which did not dare to do so, due to the exalted status of
the Chiefs of Staff and of Yamamoto as Fleet Commander, and their own lowly status in
the hierarchy. This was the most serious failure of Japanese Naval Intelligence, which
would ultimately lead the country to ruin and capitulation.


On 15 November 1940, the Naval Staff put the fleet in the first phase towards full mobilisa-
tion, by placing the 4th Fleet and the 6th Fleet under the direct command of the Comman-
der of the Combined Fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto. Moreover, activities on ships under
repair were increased at the cost of the planned modernisation of a number of ships. Work
on new ships was also accelerated in order to have them available in 1941, and the
construction of ships which had been just laid down was postponed.

Further mobilisation of the fleet went on very gradually:

- In December 1940 the naval garrisons at Palau, Saipan, Truk and Ponape were fully
  manned.
- In February 1941 the Headquarters of the 4th Fleet was moved from Palau to Truk.
- March 1941 saw the completion of air bases in the Marshall islands.
- In May and June 1941 the 11th Air Flotilla moved to the Mandate Islands for training
  purposes. At the end of June the squadrons were reassembled at Kanoya Naval Air
  station.
- The 3rd Fleet was employed in the peaceful occupation of Southern Indochina
  in July 1941.

As has been outlined above, Army and Naval operations chiefs could not agree, in the
Summer of 1941, on how to obtain the resources of S.E. Asia. The army favored lightning
operations against Thailand and Malaya, and, only after these had been secured, actions
against the NEI. In a third stage the Philippines would be attacked, but the Army strongly
preferred avoiding an attack on the Philippines in order to spare troops and time for the
inevitable war with the Soviets. With this three-stage plan, the army planned the use of
only six divisions, therefore minimally weakening the Amur front in Manchuria.

The Navy disagreed. They wanted only a diversionary force to be landed at Malaya. The
main effort would be against the Philippines. When those were secured, Celebes and
Borneo would be invaded, as well as Timor. The capture of Timor would isolate Java from
Australia. Thereafter Java and Sumatra would be occupied, after which Singapore could be
invested at leisure.347

Neither service was happy with the other's plan. The Navy considered the Philippines in
American hands too risky during an invasion of Malaya or the NEI. Therefore, the
American battlefleet had to be destroyed first. The Army on the other hand considered it
sheer lunacy to start operations in Burma, Thailand and the NEI without securing Singapo-

346 Barnhart/May, op. cit., 454.
347 Barnhart/May, op. cit. 448.
The Navy was only willing to accept the Army's strategy if the destruction of the American battlefleet was assured. This was Yamamoto's plan, which was however not divulged to the Army until November 1941. When the Army proposed to use ten instead of six divisions, the Naval Staff at last agreed that planning for the southward advance could now proceed on this basis in earnest.

On 15 August 1941 the 2nd phase of Fleet mobilisation was ordered. All training exercises were cancelled, and the fleet units returned to their home base in order to receive their maximum war complements. All naval reserves were called up, and warships in reserve were activated. Around 1 September 1941 the 21st and 23rd Air Flotillas were moved to southern Formosa, the 22nd Air Flotilla to southern Indochina, and strengthened considerably with new planes and pilots.

Meanwhile planning for the Nanshin went on unabated. The invasion of the southern area became the responsibility of the Third Fleet under command of Vice-Adm. I. Takahashi. The Third Fleet was primarily an amphibious fleet with a supporting force of carriers, cruisers and destroyers. The invasions would be covered at a distance by the Second Fleet under Vice-Adm. Nobutake Kondo, which would consist of the battlecruisers KONGO and HARUNA and the heavy cruisers ATAGO and TAKAO with 10 destroyers. This fleet would be operating in the Gulf of Siam. For the North Philippine operations at Luzon, the Third Fleet would make available 2 heavy cruisers (the ASHIGARA and MAYA), 3 light carriers (the just-completed ZUIHO, HOSHO and TAIYO), 4 light cruisers and 16 destroyers with assorted lighter craft. Landings at Legaspi (Luzon) and Davao (Mindanao) would be undertaken by the Fourth Fleet under Rear Admiral Takeo Takagi at Palau, which consisted of the heavy cruisers NACHI, HAGURO and MYOKO, the light aircraft carrier RYUUHO and 2 light cruisers and 13 destroyers.

The close support for the Malay landings would be given by the Third Fleet under Vice-Adm. Jisaburo Ozawa with 5 heavy cruisers (CHOKAI, KUMANO, SUZUYA, MIKUMA and MOGAMI) with 2 light cruisers and 14 destroyers. The appearance of the two capital ships of the British Eastern Fleet (the PRINCE OF WALES and the REPULSE) therefore caused real panic in the Close Support Force. 349

The Naval Air Force for the southern operation was the 11th Air Fleet at Formosa, commanded by Vice-Adm. N. Tsukahara. Malaya was covered by the First Air Group, consisting of 6 reconnaissance planes, 39 fighters and 99 bomber and torpedo planes from Genzan, Mihoro and Kanoya in the homeland, but now based on 3 airfields outside Saigon. As the distance from those airbases to the landing beaches in Malaya was about 600 miles and just on the limit of the range of the Zero fighters, priority had been given to a fast occupation of the Thai airstrips at Singora and Patani, and the British airfield at Kotabaru.

The Philippines would be covered by the 23rd Air Flotilla under Rear Adm. R. Takenaka. Because the range of the Army Airforce fighters was too short, a subdivision had been made along 16 degrees latitude, which divided Luzon. The Northern part, closest by Formosa, would be worked over by the Army airforce. The Navy had proposed to provide air cover South of 16 degrees latitude from three light aircraft carriers. Moreover, the first landings should be aimed at acquiring the airstrips at Aparri, Laoag and Vigan in northern Luzon. As Yamamoto insisted on assembling all his carrier fighters on the 6 carriers

planned for the Pearl Harbor operations, no Zero fighters were available for southern Luzon. The staff of the 11th Air Fleet however had discovered that the range of the Zero could be extended from 450 miles to 550 miles by adjustments in the fuel intake and by flying at constant speeds. This solved the problem of coordinating Zero flights from carriers with landbombers from Formosa. The Zeros would also fly from Formosa.

It has to be remembered that this was not the only feat of successful improvisation shown by the Navy within a short timespan. We have not covered the preparations of the Hawaiian operation in depth because so much has been already published about it, but it has to be taken into account that between October and December 1941, the Japanese modified their aerial torpedoes for running in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor, and moreover improvised armour-piercing bombs from 40.6 cm grenades in use with the battleship main batteries. These grenades had to be dropped from an altitude of 3000 meters by Kates, which also had to be modified. All this was accomplished within a few months.

The Naval Airforces at Formosa, with their long-range Zero fighters, were therefore assigned to that part of Luzon south of 16 degrees latitude, with the important American airforce base Clark Field and the U.S. Naval Base at Cavite. The Davao operation would be supported by the Carrier RYUHO with 13 Vals and 9 Zeros.

Total planning for southern operations by both the Naval and the Army General Staffs was accomplished in a couple of months, including the interservice discussions. On the lower operational levels the cooperation between naval and army officers proved to be smooth and efficient. The Japanese plan for the invasion of the Nanyo was brilliant, as it used just enough forces to accomplish its assigned tasks, and did so within the estimated timeframe of 100 days foreseen for the conquest of that same Nanyo.


The road to war was a long road, and war was not a foregone conclusion even in the early thirties. We have discussed how the military wrestled control over Japan's destination from the civilian government. This however was a very gradual process. The military was not monolithic, and because of the rifts between Army and Navy, and the serious differences of opinions among factions within both Army and Navy even during the Pacific War the military never took over complete control over the Government. Nevertheless, even those civilian Japanese in positions of power in Government and Foreign Affairs tended to view the world and policy choices from the same background as the military, i.e. kokutai, which bound them to both the Emperor and the military, and therefore severely limited their effectiveness in countering the policy choices of the military.

Let us review the chain of events, which caused the gradual militarisation of Japanese foreign policy.

1. The Naval Disarmament Conference in London in 1930 resulted in factionalising of the Navy into a Treaty faction loyal to the civilian Government and a Fleet faction which wanted outright Fleet expansion. The Government signed the treaty, but the authority of the subsequent civilian cabinet under Prime Minister Wakatsuki had been considerably weakened.
2. The Mukden Incident in September 1931 brought the weakness of the Wakatsuki-Cabinet - and of the Emperor - in sharp focus. He did not sufficiently recognize and suppress the acts of *gekokuyo*, which enabled lowly officers such as Lieutenant Colonel Kanji Ishiwara and Colonel Seishiro Itagaki to determine Japanese foreign policy. The Western Powers failed to act upon the ringing alarm bells going off over all the Far East.

3. The Shanghai-Incident of May 1932 illustrated the existence of irresponsible officers within the Japanese Navy too. Its containment resulted in even more loss of civilian and Imperial control over events, and the 5-15 mutiny liquidated civilian premiership.

4. The Fleet faction, which had purged members of the Treaty-faction from the Naval Staff, was instrumental in the failure of the Second Naval Disarmament Conference in London in January 1935. This ended the fifteen-year "battleship holiday" caused by the Washington Naval Disarmament Treaties of 1922. The ensuing armaments race would, in the long run, be detrimental to the Japanese position.

5. The North-China policy of the Kwantung field Army in 1936 went directly against Japanese Foreign Policy goals, and as the Kwantung Army was not brought under control by Army Headquarters, the Army became a risk factor. The 2-26 mutiny, ended the role of the Kodo-Ha faction in the Army, but reduced the Emperor's influence even further, and brought the premierships into the hands of Admirals.

6. Because the Army leadership still did not have a grip on its expeditionary armies, the 7-7 incident in 1937 at the Marco Polo bridge escalated into a general war against China - obviously without any preconceived plans by both the Government and the military as to how to manage this war, which as a consequence became a quagmire, and resulted in conflicts with Western powers (The sinking of the PANAY in 1937, the Tientsin crisis of 1939).

7. As a result of weak leadership at the top, the systematic insubordination within both Army and Navy reached worrisome proportions in Southern China and on the Indochinese borders, where no strong foreign countervailing powers existed. Where suchs countervailing power existed, i.e. along the Amur in Manchuria, unauthorized military excursions into Soviet territory were severely punished by the Red Army (Changkufeng and Nomonhan). Japan however was not yet committed to a war against the western powers.

8. That fateful step came with the Tripartite Pact in September 1940. Although not intended by the Japanese government as an anti-western alliance, the Pact was perceived as such by the Western Powers. It was the crossing of the Rubicon.

9. When, after the failure of the economic missions to Batavia, Japan decided to occupy Southern Indochina, the Western Powers struck back with oil embargoes. Japan had either to back down, or to challenge the West. In desperation, its leaders took the second alternative.

At heart the problem was the Japanese Constitution. The Meiji Constitution with its privileged position reserved for Army and Navy, made it legally possible for the military to gradually increase their hold on power. The proud achievements of the Meiji statesmen in modernizing their country were ultimately nullified because they did not dare to codify in the constitution real civilian control over the Emperor and the two services which he nominally commanded.
After these general conclusions, I would like to share some personal conclusions with the reader. This chapter is the only one of my dissertation, which has been written solely on the basis of secondary sources, as I have not mastered the Japanese language. The question is, what additional insights or information has been obtained by studying those secondary sources, which were mostly written in English. It is up to the reader to decide whether he shares my enlightenment by studying those secondary sources, or whether he concludes that it all concerns "old news".

I was personally surprised by the fact, that neither the Japanese Army nor the IJN had any concrete war plans for the conquest of the NEI, at least up to the middle of 1941. Maybe there are secret plans still hidden in Japanese archives by one of the services to conquer the NEI, but these have not turned up in the secondary sources I searched for this study. This is remarkable, as we know that Japanese public opinion clamored for an invasion of the Nanyo already after 1935. In Chapter 3 on the NEI we have described the numerous hints by Japanese officials about their interest in acquiring all kinds of rights in Dutch New Guinea as from 1936. The Amau-doctrine of 1934 gave another hint about Japanese intentions (page 670, 671). The amount of intelligence-gathering activities by Japanese spies in the NEI was so extensive in the thirties that it was strongly believed that they were filling in the details of a very comprehensive invasion plan. From the sources studied it can only be concluded that all this activity consisted of gathering operational intelligence. The failure of Japanese Intelligence in acquiring the contents of the Singapore Staff Conferences is therefore rather surprising. The Japanese assumed some kind of guarantee by either Great Britain or the U.S.A. to the NEI, or even a double guarantee by both Governments towards the NEI. As the Japanese were not fully aware of the kind of guarantees given, they were reluctant to occupy only the NEI - which was exactly the nightmare of all three western governments concerned.

In this respect another surprising revelation from the sources studied was the Japanese anxiety that invading the NEI might result in the destruction of the oil wells - something the Japanese wanted to avoid at all costs. The Dutch had used the threat of blowing the wells more or less openly, and obviously the Japanese took Dutch threats seriously. That was also the reason the Japanese preferred peaceful economic penetration of the NEI over a military conquest, which would ruin the oil production facilities.

Dutch propaganda about the loyalty of the natives of the NEI towards the Queen and the Dutch NEI government however were correctly estimated by the Japanese as being fake. Therefore the Japanese started a radio-propaganda offensive towards the natives, based on the cry "Asia for the Asians!", in the hope of mobilising the natives and calling upon them to help save the oil wells and other natural resources of the NEI from a Dutch "scorched-earth" policy whenever the time for an invasion of the NEI came. It is no coincidence, that Japanese propaganda broadcast in the Indonesian languages started in September 1941, after the failure of the economic missions. Japanese radio propaganda was not hindered by the Dutch, and was rather successful - at least in the Sumatra oil fields, which were largely saved from destruction by Indonesian oil production crews.

The Japanese Government had a rather negative opinion about the success of Dutch colonial rule. Japan was willing to accept French sovereignty over FIC in lieu of a Japanese occupation, but the maximum the Japanese wanted to grant to the NEI government was a kind of gradual transfer of sovereignty to an Indonesian state entity, which would be economically controlled by Japan (page 678).
The secondary sources also reveal the reason of the lack of an agenda by the Japanese at the start of the discussions with the Kobayashi mission. This puzzled the Dutch under Van Mook. It is now clear that the reason was political, and not economic: the Dutch had to agree to make the NEI part of the Greater East-Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. (See page 667). The Japanese Government did not imagine that the Tripartite Pact which Japan had concluded with the Dutch arch-enemy, Germany, would make such an approach completely illusory.

Also very interesting is the revelation from secondary sources that the failure of the Yoshizawa-mission was the direct cause for the occupation of southern FIC, because that brought the NEI (and Singapore) within bombing range. (pages 679 - 680). In English-language publications on the war in the Pacific, this link is not discussed at all.

Up to now, I have been rather alone when I stated in Dutch-language articles about the Japanese Army that it was not a modern fighting force. In Dutch historiography, the Japanese have always been pictured as possessing a modern, well-equipped army, in order to believably explain the fast demise of the Dutch troops. It therefore came as a pleasant surprise to find out that the English-language secondary sources backed my claim. The Japanese army lacked firepower and mobility, and was therefore still more or less a First World War army. Nomonhan, and later on the Pacific War, bore this out clearly. (See page 694).

The interbellum was all over the world a rather anti-semitic and racist period, as is illustrated by the rise of Nazism. White cultural superiority resulting in a racist treatment of colonial peoples in that period has been well documented. Less known and rather surprising however were the references in the secondary sources towards Japanese feelings of racial and cultural superiority towards white "barbarians", but even more so towards their Asian brethren. In order to understand those feelings, and to place them into perspective, I have dedicated a subchapter to Japanese culture.

Racism worked two ways. White superiority feelings blinded the colonial powers from correctly judging the Japanese dedication to develop and produce weapons, planes and ships of a high quality, resulting in an almost fatal underestimation of the Japanese armed forces and their fighting prowess. Japanese superiority feelings made them underestimate the fighting qualities of their western adversaries, in particular the Soviet Union (until Nomonhan!) and the United States. According to one author, who had direct access to Japanese primary sources: "to the Japanese, the U.S. armed forces were permeated by drunkards and brawlers, and were prone to desert or to resign, unheard of in the Japanese Army". Therefore, they fatally underestimated those powers, as they also underestimated their Chinese adversary.

This chapter tries to answer some questions about the causes of the rapid Allied defeat in South-East Asia. Contrary to what is maintained by many historians up to now, the Japanese did not possess a modern, well-equipped Army. It lacked firepower and armour, but compensated for that by its fierce tactics and fighting attitude. Against enemies in S.E.

---


Asia, which had equal or slightly better firepower, the Japanese prevailed by their fighting prowess and aggressiveness, but Nomonhan was an unsettling reminder about what would happen if confronted with a modern Western Army, as happened almost from the middle of 1942. The Japanese army could be, and was, badly beaten.

The Japanese Navy reigned supreme over the Pacific from the mid-thirties. Nevertheless, this shining armour had some flaws which were not visible at the time of conquest. The most serious was the lack of a survival strategy for a war of attrition. Japanese Naval thinking was absorbed by a short campaign, which would result in the destruction of the American battlefleet, assuming that as with the Russians after Tsushima that would lead to a peace-treaty. The enormous wartime potential of the United States was recognized, but was not taken seriously for the limited war planned for, which did not happen. The lack of sealane protection and the inability to quickly replace the lost planes and specifically their pilots would doom the IJN. And it was the Navy, which was in the drivers’ seat heading towards war in the fateful year of 1941.

One of the persistent myths of this episode is about the all-knowing, all-present Japanese spy in the pre-war colonies in S.E. Asia. That myth was exploded after the war, when it became clear that Japanese Intelligence was operations-oriented, and moreover too inadequately staffed to process all the reports from the alleged thousands of spies. One of the surprises of this study is also the lack of prewar operational planning for an invasion into the South. The Navy had plans for fighting the U.S. Navy which were regularly updated, and the Army had the same for the Soviet Union. But planning for an attack to the south started late in 1940, in both services! It has also been shown that because the main priorities of both services lay elsewhere, the western colonies were conquered with minimal commitments of army divisional manpower and navy ships, although it has to be acknowledged that both services invested a sizable portion of their airforce in those operations in the South.

As is clear from this study, ringisei was far more endemic in both the Japanese Army and Navy than was generally known. Clear cases of ringisei were the murder of Chang Tso-Lin in 1928, the Mukden Incident, the Shanghai-incident of 1934, the China Incident itself, the Changkufeng- and Nomonhan-incidents, and the most destructive of all: the Tonkin-Incident of september 1940. Again, without some comprehension of the Japanese cultural background, these events are difficult to grasp by westerners. The same applies to the position and the power of the Emperor, to whom I have dedicated a paragraph, showing him as a complex and human figure; no warmonger, but surely also not an angel of peace.

What has also been very clear from the secondary sources is the conclusion that ultimately Japanese aggression failed due to a lack of fundamental thinking on the ultimate consequences of a protracted war with the United States or the Soviet Union. The Japanese could never win such a war, even not with only one of the two powers. They had no war plans or blueprints for invading Hawaii, or the American West coast, and therefore should have thought about ways to terminate a war, even when they had won some preliminary battles. The same applies to the Soviet Union. The army had plans for the conquest of Eastern Siberia up to Lake Baikal, but no plans to invade the immense taiga and steppes West of it towards the Ural and the Caspian Sea. When and where would the Army have ended its aggression, in order to start peace talks? In this, the Japanese Army, like its Navy counterpart, was typically shortsighted. Japanese military leaders gambled on a short, limited war with the West. A number of reputed historians have called this a va
banque policy based on faith and mystical beliefs. It has been shown by Sagan that the Japanese indeed were desperate, but took a calculated risk which might have worked to their advantage.

Another conclusion which could be drawn is on the limited usability of Japanese factionalism to explain the drift to war. Early English-language sources, and the IMTFE Records, all stressed factionalism within the army. (Kodo-Ha versus Tosei-Ha) This factionalism has been made responsible for the drift of the Army towards war. More recent translations from Japanese primary sources have highlighted, however, that factionalism existed in the Navy too (the Fleet and the Treaty factions), and in the Foreign Ministry. When placed within the framework of a broad ground swell in support of a further expansion of "Lebensraum" in Japanese public opinion, by civilians of all strata of society, factionalism looses much of its historical pretenses. Factionalism existed, of course, but its influence has to be judged within the framework of an all-pervasive chauvinism and racism, which put Japan first regardless of international consequences. The same applies to the interservice squabbles, which have been labeled in some secondary publications as being very destructive. In my opinion, the importance of those interservice squabbles have been overstated, as they had more to do with differences between the services of where to attack first, than with fundamental love of peace within one service compared to the other. At least the Emperor, who seemed to be genuinely interested in constraining the war-mongers, was confronted time after time with an unified front by his senior Commanders, downplaying any differences of opinion. It therefore has to be asked, whether the intraservice and interservice squabbles had been more than a smokescreen, which has been purposely laid down after the war by the responsible Japanese decision-makers in order to absolve themselves from any culpability.

To my opinion, the English-language secondary sources do not pay enough attention to the function and role of the advisors of the Emperor. In fact we still lack an English-language history on this subject. It seems that there are enough primary (Japanese) sources on this subject, such as diaries and books, but I found the available English-language material incomplete and lacking in perception and depth.

The same observation holds true for Japanese source material which applies to the Netherlands East Indies, with the exception that I could not even determine whether such primary source material exists and has been printed in Japan, waiting only to be translated into English or Dutch. It is my sincere hope that one or more young Dutch historians, fluent in Japanese, might be paid by Dutch scientific institutions to translate whatever primary Japanese source material is available, in order to gain a better understanding of prewar Dutch-Japanese relations in the fields I have tried to study in this chapter.

It is my sincere hope, that this dissertation might be a good starting point for future Dutch historians to pursue their studies in the Japanese archives.
