

The first discussion meeting of the Burma Campaign Society, on 9th May 2002 was entitled 'Was the Pacific War Inevitable?' The speaker was Dr Keiichiro Komatsu, who drew on the paper which he had presented to the Japan Society on 5 June 2001, as follows:

Misunderstanding and Mistranslation in the Origins of the Pacific War of 1941-1945: The Importance of "Magic"

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(This lecture is included by kind permission of Dr Komatsu and of the Japan Society. For details of membership of the Japan Society please contact the Director, The Japan Society, Swire House, 59 Buckingham Gate, London, SW1E 6AJ)

The purpose of this analysis

The purpose of this analysis should be understood as follows:

1. It is not a historical study giving a comprehensive account of the US-Japan relations in modern times.
2. It is a case study to analyse how misconceptions can lead to devastating conflict amongst different countries, taking as an example the failure of the US-Japan peace talks to avert the war in the Pacific in the early 1940s.
3. It is not to become involved in any political or ideological disputes, such as whether it was the fault of Japanese military aggression since the early 1930s or Western (and/or Japanese) colonialism, including its implied threat to Japan since the middle of the 19th century. Although the researcher recognises the significance of these disputes, he can hardly expect to find a measure with which to judge them conclusively. This is particularly the case in the subject researched here. Political or ideological disputes may well jeopardise an objective analysis of cross-cultural understanding and misunderstanding.
4. The terms 'they' or 'we' are avoided in this analysis except in quotations from other authors' texts. This is because the use of such terms causes one to effectively lose the objective point of view.

The researcher is Japanese but the study does not represent a 'Japanese viewpoint' in any sense except that it is the product of an individual who happens to be Japanese.

The theme of this analysis

The cause of wars cannot be said to be 'understudied' (Professor Sir Michael Howard).¹ Enormous studies in such subjects have already been published. However, the study of misunderstanding and misperception, and the persistence of stereotypes and 'images', has been an important part of the growth of the discipline of international relations since only as recently as the Second World War.

¹ Howard, Michael. *The Causes of Wars*, Unwin Paperbacks, London, 1984, p. 7.

It is pointed out by analysts in this field that one needs ‘to consider the subjective dimension in international conflict, to understand how and why the images held in other nations may differ from our own’ (*Image and Reality in World Politics* by John C. Farrell and Asa P. Smith).² Also, ‘What seems clear and distinct is apt to be influenced by what one thinks is fair and equitable. These beliefs are determined in large part by assumptions and theories, often implicit, about norms and political rights that may not be shared among conflicting states’ (*The Logic of Images in International Relations* by Robert Jervis).³ In fact, it is often ‘implicit’, and therefore it is difficult for one to recognise oneself ‘about norms and political rights that may not be shared among conflicting states.’

Points of the argument

The points of the argument here are that mutual misconception grew between the two sides over a longer period, not just immediately before the Pacific War but from long before it. In his publication of 1999, the researcher covers a period which spans centuries, from the time of the first Europeans landing in Japan up to the beginning of the US-Japan peace talks prior to Pearl Harbor.

The cumulative effect of such perception gaps in the talks preceding the Pacific War contributed to the outbreak of the conflict. The conflict was then precipitated by faulty communication, including the significant role played by ‘Magic’ (the decoded intercepts of Japanese diplomatic messages). In this sense it was therefore a very important factor which contributed to the outbreak of the War. Magic, rather than being something performed by magicians, is here a code name given by American intelligence which will be explained in detail later. Serious mistranslations and misinterpretation in Magic were significant factors in the failure to reach an agreement in the talks leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

It is worth explaining briefly here the Nagasaki issue to understand the ‘cumulative effect’ of misconceptions and perception gaps. This traumatic event in the early stages of the history of Japan’s relations with the West began with a dispute between Japan and Spain and Portugal over the Nagasaki ‘concession’.

This small territory in Nagasaki had originally been granted by the local warlord Omura Sumitada and his son to the Jesuits, officially represented by Alessandro Valignano based in Japan. In 1587 this was revoked by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the contemporary ruler of Japan. The subsequent Tokugawa shogunate banned the activities of Catholic missionaries and eventually started the well known ‘seclusion policy’ of the country which lasted until the mid-19th century. Indeed, the initial dispute between Valignano and Hideyoshi remains unsolved even now, four centuries later.

Many Catholics in Spain and Portugal have understood Hideyoshi’s action as ‘suppression of the religion’. For example, Diego Pacheco, SJ, who was granted the title of SJ by the Jesuit Society to represent the historical view of the Society, has emphasised on the basis of documentary evidence that ‘Nagasaki was given and was received, not as a concession of Japanese soil to foreigners nor as a colony’ (1989). In contrast, the majority of Japanese historians have noted that some Spaniards at the time thought it not wrong for Japan to come under the sovereignty of the Spanish King, and to approach it by converting the Japanese to Christianity. Thus, for instance, Professor Kiichi Matsuda who was granted

² Farrell, John C. and Smith, Asa P., eds. *Image and Reality in World Politics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1968, p. viii.

³ Jervis, Robert. *The Logic of Images in International Relations*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1970, p. 141.

the Henry-the-Navigator Prize by the Portuguese government, has emphasised on the basis of different documentary evidence that ‘the Tokugawa shogunate’s ban on missionary works motivated by their suspicion was well grounded’ (1992).

On the one hand, it is of course impossible to make a direct link between the ideas which men had about each other in the late 16th century and the conduct of diplomacy in the 20th century. On the other hand, it would be unhistorical to assume that 20th century misperceptions do not have their roots in earlier centuries. Such a view becomes even more untenable with the end of the Cold War and the re-emergence of centuries-old ethnic conflicts in Europe, or with the endurance of millennial conflicts between, for instance, Arabs and Persians on opposing sides of the Gulf.

During Japan’s ‘seclusion’ which lasted nearly 250 years, Japanese and Western peoples had very limited materials from which to learn about each other until the middle of the 19th century, with the exception of those written in the late 16th and early 17th century. This means that the initial images of each other developed in the late 16th and early 17th century were more or less ‘preserved’ until the 1860s when Japan decided to end her seclusion policy and opened up the country to the Western powers. From then it was only two or three generations before Pearl Harbor. Naturally then, both sides were influenced by the deep-rooted cumulative effect of historical gaps in perception.

Let us take the case of Henry Lewis Stimson in the 20th century, who was the US Secretary of State when the Manchurian Incident broke out in 1931 and Secretary of War during the period of the US-Japan peace talks in the early 1940s. ‘Stimson’s reference to “contrasting civilizations”, like [Indonesian President] Soekarno’s assertions concerning “Europeans”, indicates a further perspective within which Far Eastern developments were viewed’ (Professor Christopher Thorne).⁴ Similar perspectives were also reflected by both leaders who conducted the peace talks in the 1940s, US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Japanese Prime Minister Fumimaro Konoe. These perspectives were apparent at the proceedings with both leaders harbouring deep distrust of the other nation which they had expressed from their youth before the end of the First World War. This despite the fact that the two countries were allies in that War:

- Roosevelt insisted in 1913 that Japan was ‘the most powerful potential enemy of the United States and the Navy should be kept prepared for trouble with her.’⁵
- Konoe in 1918 wrote an essay entitled ‘Driving Out Anglo-American Self-Centred Pacifism (*Ei-Bei Hon-i no Heiwa Shugi o Haisu*)’.⁶

One can understand why the two leaders, a few decades after they had made these statements, were finding such difficulties in reaching an agreement on the basis of ‘mutual trust’, although both of them were seriously trying to do so in the talks for pragmatic political reasons.

The argument of the whole

Despite the number of historians who take the opposite view, this research shows that there were not very convincing crucial points between the sides that were worth fighting in the Pacific in the early 1940s. Nonetheless, war broke out between the US and Japan.

⁴ Thorne, Christopher. *The Issue of War – States, Societies, and the Far East Conflict of 1941-1945*, Hamish Hamilton Ltd., London, 1985, pp. 27-8. For details see Chapter 2, Komatsu, Keiichiro. *Origins of the Pacific War and the Importance of ‘Magic’*, Japan Library, Kent, UK, St. Martin’s, New York, US, 1999.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

This happened after the negotiators from both sides had been significantly misled and confused by the misinterpretation of Magic. It can be said that cumulative misconception between the US and Japan gave the mistranslations a direction and force they would otherwise have lacked.

The perception of the US and her foreign policy

The United States was a continental power with no real threat to its own security. A country thousands of miles distant from the coasts of Asia, bordered by Mexico and Canada, neither of which could be a significant threat to the Americans. This is in sharp contrast with the situation surrounding most other countries, including Japan.

To give one example, the distance between Vladivostok and Aomori in northern Honshu, the main island of Japan, is just 450 miles. That is equivalent to the distance between Washington D.C. and Boston, or Miami and Guantánamo, the American naval base in Cuba. This is probably enough for one to realise how significant the geographical position of the main Russian naval base in the Far East at Vladivostok is to the Japanese. In the American popular consciousness Russia means ‘Moscow’, and this point alone must be recognised as a significant factor which has created wide perception gaps between the US and Japan.

According to Professor Robert E. Osgood, the United States has formulated a foreign policy which mixed ‘ideals and self-interest’.⁷ In a sense, the US, with no real threat to its own security, could ‘enjoy a luxury’ of such a foreign policy. Of course, ‘self-interest’ is the necessary criterion for the decision making of a nation in its foreign policy to protect its own people and property, and therefore one cannot blame the US or any other nation for this.

Thus, the importance of ‘principles’ in US foreign policy must be recognised, both before and after the Second World War. Examples of such principles were the ‘Open Door’, which was in more recent terms somewhat the free trade principle, and the ‘territorial and administrative integrity of China’, in addition to other principles.

The researcher wishes to note one point made by Professor George F. Kennan that the Open Door ‘was not an American policy but one long established in British relations with China’ in the late nineteenth century. Up to that time, the British had been the overwhelming masters of the Chinese trade and controlled as much as 80% of it. Then, ‘the British policy was beginning to move quickly away from the Open Door doctrine ... through the winter of 1898-99’ and joined the rivalry for concessions. Subsequently, in the summer of 1899 the US Secretary of State, John Hay, and his colleagues prepared the Open Door notes and presented them to the powers.

Thus, the fact is that it was not originally an American invention, despite that Mark Sullivan wrote in *Our Times* (issued in 1926); ‘The “open door” policy in China was an American idea. It was set up in contrast to the “spheres-of-influence” policy practiced by other nations’.⁸ Thus, the belief that the Open Door was an American invention was already in itself a significant misconception which was seen as early as the mid-1920s.

President Roosevelt’s foreign policy position

⁷ Osgood, Robert Endicott. *Ideals and Self-Interest in America’s Foreign Relations – The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1953.

⁸ Kennan, George F. *American Diplomacy 1900-1950*, The American Library of World Literature, Inc., New York, 1951, pp. 24-36.

As president, Franklin Roosevelt was always concerned with domestic politics partly because of the strong sentiment of isolationism in the country at that time. In foreign policy, he gave primacy to Europe, not Asia. He was increasingly concerned by the growing power of Nazi Germany in Europe. Most British people would know what this means, but for the Japanese this is not necessarily the case, because they are in Asia, not Europe.

US foreign policy towards Nazi Germany

Roosevelt supported Britain and her allies against Nazi Germany after Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939, and Britain and France declared war against Germany on the 3rd. This date, the beginning of the Second World War in Europe, is also significant in the history of Asia: evident when one looks at a certain 'link' between the Russian invasion of Poland on 17 September and contemporary developments in Russo-Japanese military clashes in the Far East. This point will be expanded upon later.

American isolationism at the time was based on their experience involved in the First World War, and they preferred to avoid being involved in the Second World War 'in Europe'. In fact, when Roosevelt ran for a third term, public-opinion polls showed that most Americans favoured Britain but wished to stay out of war in Europe. Roosevelt therefore had to pursue very carefully his policy to support Britain in Europe, and at the same time avoid appearing to be against the popular sentiment of isolationism.

The 'Germany-first' military strategy was decided in December 1940 immediately after he was re-elected to an unprecedented third term. He was the first and last US president to have a third term since it is no longer permitted. He was carefully moving away from the neutrality between Britain and Germany to which he had been tied by Congressional legislation before the outbreak of war in Europe. In March 1941, around three months after the decision of the Germany-first strategy, the Lend-Lease Act passed with much debate through Congress, and on the basis of this act, the US Navy was to supply the Allies on credit. Germany extended its war zone to include Iceland and the Denmark Strait between Iceland and Greenland (the area west of Iceland) on 25 March. Roosevelt retaliated by extending the American Neutrality Patrol to Iceland in April 1941. The US eventually occupied Iceland in July 1941.

The US – undeclared participant in the battle against Nazi Germany

Lend-Lease was extended to the Soviet Union after the outbreak of the Russo-German War, which started on 22 June. Although it was extended to Russia to support the war against Nazi Germany, again this was a very important development in terms of the impact on the Japanese who saw Russia as the most serious threat to Japan at the time.

At this stage, Japan was already involved in the war in China (from 1937). However, there was as yet no declaration of war from either Japan or China. Both were hesitant to commit officially to war. This was partly because both were trying, for different reasons, to end the conflict. Again, this will be explained later in this paper.

Japan and the US were not yet participants in the Second World War when the German-British war started in 1939. In this particular sense, the positions of Japan and the US were somewhat similar. Thus, some important role to stabilise the world situation at that time could have been pursued by the two countries, but the reality was different.

On 11 September 1941, Roosevelt announced the well known 'shoot on sight' order: the US Navy was to shoot German and Italian warships on sight. In reality this order made the

US an undeclared participant in the battle of the Atlantic against Germany and Italy. Again, it is a likely point that was not fully aware by the Japanese at that time, and this is still, to a certain extent, true today.

The perception of Japan and her foreign policy

Japan is geographically and historically close to the Asian continent. Japan saw the political situation across the Japan Sea, between the Japanese islands and the Asian continent, as unstable and her policy was more pragmatic because of this: a real threat to Japan existed, and she therefore gave less importance to 'principles' in international politics.

The Japanese were thus preoccupied with the frontier region of China, Korea, Manchuria and Mongolia. Even today some significant differences between Japan and the West in their primacy in international affairs can be observed. For instance, whereas Western media gave greater coverage to the unstable developments in the Balkans after the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, there was a lot more attention focused in the Japanese media on the Taiwan Strait and North Korea. One should not be surprised by such perception gaps and by differences in world-views.

Japan in the China Incident from July 1937 (The Second Sino-Japanese War)

The heavy conflict between Japan and China, which grew out of the skirmish at Marco Polo Bridge, south of Peking (Beijing), in 1937, has not yet been clearly named by historians. It is of course a 'war' in the reasonable definition of the term, and moreover, considering that, by 1940, Japan had sent over a million officers and men overseas, a full scale war. In this sense, the military conflict from 1937 up to the time immediately before the declaration of war in 1941 is a 'war', often called the 'Sino-Japanese War'.

Many Western observers have called it the 'Second Sino-Japanese War' with the war of 1894-95 being the 'First Sino-Japanese War'. The first war was against the Ch'ing Dynasty which had been established and ruled by the Manchus, one of the Tungusic nations from the Northeast part of the continent, whereas the second war was between Japan and the Republic of China, established by the Han Chinese, the people of the historical core of Chinese civilization, after they had recaptured power to rule mainland China through the Revolution of 1911-12 against the Manchu rulers.⁹ In Japanese there is no confusion since the war of 1894-95 is called the 'Ch'ing-Japanese War' (Nisshin Senso) and the other is called the 'Sino-Japanese War' (Nitchu Senso).

On the other hand, some scholars from both Japan and the West still prefer to call the latter the 'China Incident' since, strictly speaking, neither the Chinese nor the Japanese ever declared war on the other until December 1941 when they finally did so immediately after Pearl Harbor. Neither side wanted to recognise the conflict as 'war' partly because they were in continual negotiations for a cease-fire, although this was unsuccessful. Those preferring to call it the 'China Incident' have recognised the significance of the mediating efforts made by various peace-feelers of the military and civilians from both countries on a public and private basis, in addition to those who were from the West. Indeed, some Americans tried to mediate between the sides on an individual level, the British and Germans were more directly

⁹ The Han Chinese nationalist movement leading up to the outbreak of the Revolution in 1911 developed under the four-character slogan 'Drive out the Tartars, revive the Chinese nation (tao-man fu-han)'. By 'Tartars', they meant the occupying Manchus of the Ch'ing Dynasty, and other barbarians from beyond the Great Wall in the North. 'Chinese nation' referred specifically to the Han Chinese, as distinct from other 'foreign' dynasties such as the Mongol Yuan and Manchu Ch'ing.

involved, and even the French and the Italians attempted to play a mediating role. This is why it is often called an ‘incident.’

It is worth explaining here, however, the following linguistic point to avoid any misunderstanding on this subject. As emphasised by Professor Richard Storry at the University of Oxford, ‘It is important to note that the Japanese used the word *jihen* for the Manchurian and China Incidents, and the word *jiken* for such occurrences as the February Mutiny, and the 15 May Incident. The Japanese compounds are different from each other, and have different meanings. The fact that both have been translated as “Incident” does not do justice to the niceties of the Japanese language. For whereas *jiken* means “event” – and is therefore adequately translated as “Incident” – *jihen* means “emergency”, something a great deal more extensive and serious than *jiken*’.¹⁰

It is not known how the skirmish between the Japanese and Chinese armies at Marco Polo Bridge on 7 July 1937 began, but it subsequently led to the large scale China Incident. In retrospect, one can see that there was no clear purpose among the Japanese leaders as to why they had to fight in China. As pointed out by Professor Ryoichi Tobe of the National Defence Academy (based in Yokosuka), a peace agreement became more difficult because nobody knew the conditions to be ‘agreed’ in the China Incident. This is quite different from the case of the Manchurian Incident where the field officers created a pre-conceived plan, i.e. a plot. Professor Tobe observes that the Manchurian Incident had clearly defined aims in terms of both territory and time, and so was self-limiting. The China Incident, on the other hand, began with no clear purpose or driving force to guide and limit the conflict, with the result that it developed into the full-scale Pacific War lasting eight years until 1945.¹¹

As noted by Professor John W. Hall at Yale University, ‘The common assumption that the revolt by the First Division was part of a direct chain of events which pushed Japan into calculated war with China has been brought into question by later research ... Japan blundered into the war with China.’¹² This is the reality.

¹⁰ Storry, Richard. *The Double Patriots – A Study of Japanese Nationalism*, Chatto and Windus Ltd., London, 1957, pp. 215-6.

¹¹ Tobe, Ryoichi. *Piisu • Fiiraa: Shina Jihen Wahei Kosaku no Gunzo* (The China Incident Peace Movement Group), Ronso-sha, Tokyo, 1991, pp. 378-9.

¹² Hall, John Whitney. *Japan – From Prehistory to Modern Times*, Charles E. Tuttle, Tokyo, 1971, p. 338.

Japan's major concerns in the region (late 1930s – early 1940s)

As emphasised by Professor Albert M. Craig at Harvard University, 'Japan's concerns were Asian, not European. From the end of 1938, Japan's main problem was how to settle the mess in China. Each new cabinet proclaimed its intention to extricate Japan from China. Obviously this was to happen on terms favorable to Japan.'¹³ What these terms 'favourable to Japan' were was, however, unknown by the Japanese themselves and therefore various groups and factions considered different terms to propose to China. This was the real problem.

There was a similar lack of unanimity in China because it was very unclear, at that time, as to who would eventually rule China –the Nationalists, or the Communists. If the Nationalists would eventually be strong enough to rule the whole of China, then would the country be ruled by Chiang Kai-shek who was supported by the Allies as the leader of the Nationalist Party, or by Wang Ching-wei (more familiarly known as Wang Chao-ming in Japan) who was the leader of the left-wing group of the Nationalist Party at that time and was once a colleague of Sun Yat-sen (more familiarly known as Sunbun in Japan), the founder of the Nationalist movement. Some contemporary observers even thought power might go to the warlords based in various regions in China.

Taking the case of Chiang Kai-shek and his colleagues, it was reported on the basis of interviews carried out immediately after the clashes began to expand in July 1937, that the Nationalists did not want a full-scale war against the Japanese since they wanted to defeat their domestic enemies and gain control of the whole of China. They also recognised, however, that they would have to fight if the Japanese continued to invade China, even though this would increase Communist power. In fact, the Communists eventually came to power in the whole of China, except Taiwan, only four years after the end of the War.¹⁴

Another relevant reason for avoiding a declaration of war particularly considered by the Japanese Ministry of the Navy, was to continue securing American supplies for the survival of Japan's economy: so long as it was not a war under international law, supply from a third party including the US could not be interrupted (based on the records of the Japanese Judge Advocate of the Military Authorities). The US and Chinese authorities also accepted that 'there was no war' to maintain the supply route from the US to China.

Amid these circumstances there were various groups trying to negotiate a cease-fire between different powers in Japan and different powers in China. When this researcher studied in detail the various attempts to end the war in China at that stage, he found not only enormously complicated misconceptions between the Japanese and the Chinese Nationalists, but also between the different groups in Japan and the different powers and factions in China.¹⁵

It is said that in July 1940 when the second Kono Cabinet was formed in Tokyo, there were up to 17 active negotiation channels between the Chinese Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-shek and Japan.¹⁶ It was indeed very messy. Thus, to quote again the same

¹³ Reischauer, Edwin O. and Craig, Albert M. *Japan – Tradition and Transformation*, Charles E. Tuttle Co., Tokyo, 1978, p. 258.

¹⁴ Matsumoto, Shigeharu. *Shanghai Jidai – Jaanarisuto no Kaiso (Ge)* (The Shanghai Period – The Memoirs of A Journalist (Vol. 3)), Chuokoron-sha, Tokyo, 1874-1975, pp. 138-42, pp. 148-54.

¹⁵ These include gaps of perception towards developments in the region between the Nationalists and Communists and various ethnic minorities in China. For details see Chapter 5, Komatsu, op. cit.

¹⁶ Tobe, *Pisu · Fūraa*, op. cit., p. 357. See also Tanemura, Suketaka. *Dai-hon'ei Kimitsu Nisshi* (Confidential Diary of the Imperial Headquarters), Daiyamondo-sha, Tokyo, 1952, p. 36.

passage by Professor Hall, the China Incident ‘did not result, as did the Manchurian Incident, from any preconceived plot on the part of the army’s field officers.’¹⁷

Russia was the Japanese Army’s major concern

The Japanese Army’s main concern was not China or the US but Russia. Let us take the example of Kanji Ishihara, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Kwantung Army, the Japanese regional Army based in Manchuria. He was the strategic planner who had conceived the plan to cause and escalate the Manchurian Incident in 1931. At that time Ishihara emphasised the need for maintaining Manchuria as a buffer state between Far Eastern Russia and Japan.¹⁸ His purpose was not to invade ‘mainland China’, but to create buffer zones in the front with Far Eastern Russia.¹⁹ After all, ‘The Kwantung Army was an “army which looked northward”, consistently regarding Russia as the potential enemy, and tended to judge that Tokyo underestimated the seriousness of the Russian threat’ (Professor Toshihiko Shimada).²⁰

Later, in June 1937, one month before the China Incident broke out, Ishihara, now Major General and Chief of the Military Strategy Department of the Army General Staff, said ‘We must concern ourselves only with defending ourselves against the Russian Army in the North, so I will never agree to sending even one soldier against China.’²¹

Nearly one and a half years later, the Army members themselves expressed their position – they ‘unanimously’ agreed that Japan would ‘have to fight the Soviet Union within the next few years’ while the possibility of ‘a war with Britain must be considered 100 years later or 200 years later in the future’ (the Army’s statement at the meeting with the Navy in November 1938).²² Of course, ‘100 years later or 200 years later’ might be ‘five generations later, six generations later or even more’, and therefore nobody would have to take responsibility. In other words, they had no intention of fighting against Britain at all, but acknowledged the possibility of fighting against the Soviet Union.

As pointed out by Professor Waldo H. Heinrichs, Army Minister Hideki Tojo (later Prime Minister) was ‘known for his “particular dislike of the Russians” and his prediction in 1938 that Japan would have to fight the Soviet Union.’ This was reported by the US intelligence to the American government at that time (1941).²³

¹⁷ Hall, op. cit., p. 338.

¹⁸ For details of Ishihara’s thoughts immediately before and after the Manchurian Incident see his presentations and reports recorded at that time in Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai (The Japan Association of International Relations). *Taiheiyo Senso e no Michi – Bekkan – Shiryō hen* (The Road to the Pacific War – Separate Volume – Source Materials), Asahi Shimbun-sha, Tokyo, 1963, pp. 74-187.

¹⁹ See Komatsu, op. cit., p. 55.

²⁰ Shimada, Toshihiko. *Kanto-gun* (The Kwantung Army), Chuokoron-sha, Tokyo, 1965, p. vi, p. 123.

²¹ Eto, Shinkichi. ‘Nikka Jihen’ (The China Incident), in Murase, Okio. *Sekai no Rekishi 15 – Fashizumu to Dai-ni-ji-taisen* (World History (Series 15) – Fascism and the Second World War), Chuokoron-sha, Tokyo, 1975, p. 308.

²² Tobe, Ryoichi. ‘Rikugun to Ji-ki Taisen’ (English Title: The Imperial Japanese Army and a Next World War), in Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai (The Japan Association of International Relations). *Kokusai Seiji 91 – Nitchu Senso kara Nichi-Ei-Bei Senso e* (International Politics Vol. 91 – From the Sino-Japanese War to the Japanese-Anglo-American War), Yuhikaku, Tokyo, 1989, pp. 76-8.

²³ See the original memorandum transmitted to the US Department of State by the War Department on 17 October 1941 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1941, Vol. IV*, United States Government Printing Office, Washington, 1956, p. 520. This was an ‘estimate of General Tojo’ originally reported on the same day (the 17th) by Sherman Miles, the Acting Assistant Chief of Staff of the Military Intelligence Division, to the Chief of Staff George C. Marshall.

Involvement of the Western powers in the Far East

As noted by Professor George Kennan, from the late 19th century towards the early 20th century, the Russians made evident their determination to have a special position in Manchuria, including a naval base at Port Arthur (Lushun) and a commercial port at Dalian, both of which were secured in 1898, and both of which were to be connected by railway with the new Trans-Siberian. The Germans consolidated their control over the port of Kiaochow and their influence in the Shantung Peninsula. The French, coming up from Indo-China, successfully negotiated with the Ch'ing government for the lease of a port, for railroad concessions, for the appointment of a French citizen as head of the Chinese postal services, and for other favours. 'To balance the Russian position at Port Arthur' the British 'leased a strategic port on the other side of the Gulf of Pechili. They went into the railway concession business in a big way, particularly in the Yangtze Valley' and leased Kowloon in 1898.²⁴

Then, the Russians moved southwards even further by putting pressure on Korea and in March 1900 secured a naval concession in Masan on the southern coast of Korea as the anchorage of the Russian fleet. This meant that the Russian Navy could now connect Dalian and Vladivostok by anchoring in Masan which lies only 50 miles from Tsushima in Japan, the same distance as from London to Oxford. In January 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was established under the Taro Katsura Cabinet. From 1903, the Russian Army increased the number of troops stationed along the border of the northern part of Korea. In February 1904 the Russo-Japanese War broke out after the failure of the negotiations between the two countries (which had begun in 1903), and Japan fought with the support of Britain on the basis of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The US also took a favourable view of Japan, and seeing her as a small power fighting the despotic Tsarist Empire and defending Manchuria from Russian penetration. President Theodore Roosevelt stated that 'Japan is playing our game'.²⁵

In July 1905, three months before the end of the Russo-Japanese War (16 October), the US Secretary of War William Howard Taft visited Tokyo and signed an agreed memorandum with Prime Minister Katsura: 'Secretary Taft observed that Japan's only interest in the Philippines would be, in his opinion, to have these islands governed by a strong and friendly nation like the United States ... Count Katsura confirmed in the strongest terms the correctness of his [Taft's] view on the point.' Thus, Japan accepted the American acquisition of the Philippines as a consequence of the Spanish-American War of 1898. The memorandum continues: 'In regard to the Korean question, Count Katsura observed that Korea being the direct cause of our [Japan's] war with Russia it is a matter of absolute importance to Japan ... [to preclude] the possibility of Korea falling back into her former condition ... Secretary Taft ... remarked to the effect that, in his personal opinion, the establishment by Japanese troops of a suzerainty over Korea to the extent of requiring that Korea enter into no foreign treaties without the consent of Japan ... would directly contribute to permanent peace in the East.'²⁶

Japan's acquisition of Korea took place in 1910, five years after the memorandum had been signed between Taft and Katsura, and in the following year, 1911, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was renewed and lasted another decade until 1921.

²⁴ Kennan, op. cit., pp. 28-9.

²⁵ Bailey, Thomas A. *A Diplomatic History of the American People (Tenth Edition)*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1980, p. 517.

²⁶ Ferrell, Robert H. *America as a World Power, 1872-1945*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, South Carolina, 1971, pp. 78-80.

Following the Russo-Japanese War, however, US-Japanese relations began to be more difficult. The Americans reacted against the Japanese because the Kwantung Army resisted when the US attempted to expand her concession in Manchuria. Conversely, the Japanese reacted against the Americans because of the immigration dispute in California.

The termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was eventually terminated at the Washington Disarmament Conference of 1921-22, since the US had put a lot of pressure on Britain and Japan to abrogate it. As Thomas A. Bailey states, ‘Looming ominously in the background was the bugbear of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance ... Big-navy zealots in America were insisting that the Alliance was now directed solely at the United States, and that in certain contingencies America would have to fight both Britain and Japan in the Far East.’²⁷ This despite the fact that Britain and Japan avoided listing the US as a hypothetical enemy of the Alliance in its renewal of 1911, and Britain’s obligation to participate in the Alliance in the event of the outbreak of a US-Japan war was intentionally deleted.

The US contingency war plan of 25 October 1920, ‘The Naval Operations of Red-Orange [Anglo-Japanese] Campaign’, maintained the assumption that Japan would occupy Alaska in the event of the outbreak of an Anglo-American war.²⁸ ‘In December, 1920, London revealed that it would not consider the Alliance binding in the event of a war between America and Japan, but the Hearst press and other anti-Japanese spokesmen refused to trust this announcement’ (Bailey).²⁹

The termination of the Alliance caused a mood of anger in Japan. While the Japanese Navy began to worry about the danger of an ‘Anglo-American Alliance’, the Army faced the Russian Far Eastern Army without any allies. Thus, the decision to dissolve the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was significantly influenced by Anglo-American mistrust, and the consequence of the decision was to create or deepen Anglo-Japanese mistrust. Both of these suspicions can be traced back to American-Japanese distrust, which had been developing since immediately after the end of the Russo-Japanese War. This all served to accelerate the unstable developments involving the Kwantung Army in Manchuria, the Army now facing the serious threat posed by the Russians in the North.

In 1929, a Chinese local warlord Chiang Hsueh-liang based in Manchuria became involved in a dispute with the Soviet Union over a railway concession, and this turned into a war in which his forces were defeated by the Russians. Then, in 1931, two years after the defeat of Chiang’s Army, the Manchurian Incident was caused by a group of field officers in the Kwantung Army, creating a buffer zone in front of the Russian Far Eastern Army.³⁰ This happened ten years after the termination of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and the Japanese Army increasingly continued to confront the Soviet forces on the northern front for the next

²⁷ Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 638.

²⁸ For source see Komatsu, *op. cit.*, p. 43, pp. 66-7.

²⁹ Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 638.

³⁰ This happened following the involvement of the Kwantung Army in complicated conflicts between several Chinese warlords based in the region, a variety of ethnic minorities trying to pursue ‘independence’ from China and/or Russia, Chang Kai-shek’s attempted military expeditionary drive from the South towards the North from 1926 onwards, in addition to sensitive relations with the Russian and British concessions in Manchuria. The succession of events includes a series of civil wars within the Chinese Peiyang military clique and the assassination of Chiang Tso-lin, Chiang Hsueh-liang’s father, in 1928 by a group of officers in the Kwantung Army in reaction to Chang Kai-shek’s attempted military approach towards Peking. For details see Chapter 4, Komatsu, *op. cit.*

nine years until the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy was established in 1940 in an attempt to stabilise the situation.

This Pact resulted in the creation of even more serious distrust between the US and Japan in the peace talks of 1941. Thus one again sees how the cumulative effect of misconceptions caused the deterioration of international relations between countries.

Origins of the Japanese ‘Russophobia’

The historical role played by the American naval vessels, under the command of Commodore Matthew C. Perry, which sailed into Uraga Bay in 1853 to open Japan for trade, is well known. However, an important fact which should not be overlooked is that ‘The first of the new Western powers to arouse the fears of the Japanese was the Russians. Having pushed across Siberia and to the Pacific by 1638, Russians had colonized the Amur valley’ (Professor J. Hall).³¹ The serious nature of the sensitive relations between the Japanese and the Russians originated in the late 18th century when the Tokugawa shogunate was alerted to the Russian advance around the area of Sakhalin and the Kurile Islands, north of Hokkaido (the northern-most island of the four main islands of Japan). As noted by Professor Edwin O. Reischauer of Harvard University, ‘The Russians were the first to exert pressure on Japan’ in their attempt ‘to open official relations in Hokkaido in 1792’³²

The series of military clashes between the two sides began in the early 19th century and included Russian raids on Sakhalin in September 1806 and the Shana War (Incident) of April to May 1807 in Etorofu (Iturup) Island in the southern Kuriles. Japan’s policy of seclusion was still in force at this time so international conflict was very rare and these northern conflicts with the Russians were thus especially notable to the Japanese. Consequently, the shogunate fortified the northern front against Russia and in 1806 gave orders to local authorities to drive off all foreign ships.³³

The 1812 invasion of Russia by the French Army led by Napoleon I removed the heavy Russian pressure to Japan from the North and the Russian threat was for a while considered by the Japanese to be ‘almost negligible’. However, this lasted only ‘until after the Crimean War’ of 1853-56.³⁴ It is worth being aware that for the Russians these conflicts in the early 19th century were perhaps very minor local incidents which occurred in the ‘Far East’, however to the Japanese they were quite traumatic experiences in their foreign relations.³⁵

It is also worth noting that the territorial disputes over the southern Kuril Islands, including Etorofu, still remain unresolved and continues to be the major issue between Russia and Japan even after the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the creation of the new Russian Federation during the post-Cold War period. Indeed, these disputes have prevented the establishment of a peace treaty between the two sides, an issue that has continued from the end of Russo-Japanese fighting in the Second World War up to the current Cabinet and the Russian government of President Vladimir Putin.

³¹ Hall, op. cit., pp. 247-8.

³² Reischauer and Craig, op. cit., p. 116.

³³ Lieutenant Laxman, as Russian Empress Catherine II’s envoy, sailed into Nemuro Harbour in Hokkaido in 1792 and was given permission by the shogunate to visit Nagasaki. N. P. Rezanov, the director of the Russo-American Company, then entered Nagasaki in Kyushu with Laxman’s permit in 1804. It was after the shogunate’s refusal to trade that Rezanov’s officers began to implement this series of raids on the northern regions over the next few years. Ibid., pp. 116-17. Also, Hall, op. cit., pp. 247-9.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 249.

³⁵ It was eventually confirmed between Russia and the shogunate in 1813 that these raids had not been planned and carried out by the Russian central authorities on a national basis.

Following the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate, the new Meiji government in 1870 again defined Russia as the major hypothetical threat to Japan. Subsequently, the Japanese so-called 'victory' in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 was obtained at the cost of the highest number of casualties ever in the history of Japan. Relations with Russia again became traumatic, particularly to members of the Army. It did nothing to diminish, in the Japanese perceptive, the threat from the North. In fact, the size of the Russian Far Eastern Army increased rapidly after the War.

On the basis of the new 'Directives for Japan's National Defence' (Teikoku Kokubo Hoshin) of 1923, the Navy became responsible for the potential threat of the Americans, while the Army remained responsible with regard to the Russian threat. This continued to be the situation until Autumn 1943, nearly two years after Pearl Harbor. This was also several months after the first major defeat of the Army by the American forces in Guadalcanal Island in the Pacific, where the Japanese troops suffered over 21,000 casualties out of its total strength of around 31,000 on the island.

Furthermore, the creation of Manchukuo (1932), as a result of the Manchurian Incident of 1931, established a long and ill-defined frontier with the Soviet Union and Outer Mongolia. The border was originally 'agreed' between the Manchu Ch'ing Dynasty and Imperial Russia through centuries of fighting, and on the basis of 11 vague and complex treaties between the two sides, starting with the Nerchinsk Treaty of 1689. In fact, Vladivostok did not become Russian until as recently as 1860 when it was finally taken by the Russians from the Manchu Dynasty. Under these circumstances, it was not clear which geographic line was the 'correct' border between the sides. This was an issue which proved to be so complicated that border disputes continued until up to as late as the 1990s between the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union and the subsequent Russian Federation. The Sino-Soviet military clashes around the Ussuri River in the 1960s are particularly well known.

In June 1934 the Soviet Far Eastern troops alone matched in number the whole of the Japanese Army, including those troops stationed in mainland Japan. The total number of Japanese troops on the Russian front was less than 30% of that of the Russians, thus the Kwantung Army faced the Russians under a strong sense of crisis.

The number of reported conflicts between the Russian and Japanese armies were: 152 between 1931 and 1934, increasing rapidly to 136 in 1935 alone, then 203 in 1936, and then over 1,600 clashes up to the end of the Pacific War. They include major battles such as the Kanch'atzu Incident of 1937, the Ckangkufeng Incident of 1938 and the Nomonhan Incident of 1939. These conflicts took place despite the fact that the official Russian declaration of war on Japan was announced only on 9 August 1945, just six days before the end of the Pacific War.

The Japanese Nineteenth Division lost over 20% of its members in the Ckangkufeng Incident of 1938 in return for nothing but a withdrawal under orders from Tokyo. This is, however, not well known in the West, and thus becomes one of many similar events which have created significant gaps of perception between Japan and the West.

The Nomonhan Incident of 1939 and its aftermath

The Nomohan Incident was a series of great military clashes between the Japanese-Manchukuoan allied troops and the Russo-Outer Mongolian allied troops in the remote border area of eastern Siberia called 'Nomonhan' in Japanese ('Nom-un-Khan' in the Mongol language). The heavy fighting began initially between the Outer Mongolian troops and the Manchukuoan troops in the Khalkhin River around the border, and the Japanese and the Russian troops then became involved in a series of clashes. The Japanese Kwantung Army suffered as many as 18,000 casualties in only four months between May and September 1939. In the case of the Twenty-third Division, stationed at the front with the Russian Far Eastern forces, the number of casualties reached more than 70% of its total strength of 11,000.

The Russian and Outer Mongolian troops lost at least 19,381 men in the same Incident (reported at the academic conference held in Tokyo in May 1991).³⁶ Thus, it was a major battle in the full definition of the term, but as noted by Professor Alvin D. Coox, the occurrence of these conflicts is again not well known in the West.³⁷

It is likely that the Russo-Japanese clashes in Nomonhan were again caused by extensive misunderstanding and confusion between the Russians, Outer Mongolians, Manchukuoans and Japanese, including questions of how to understand the contents of the Kyakhta Treaty of 1727 agreed between Russia and the Ch'ing Dynasty, and the change of the administrative line within the territory of the Ch'ing Dynasty in 1734.³⁸

Regarding the border disputes of the time, the Russian recognition of the border between Mongolia and Manchukuo 'changed' in the middle of the 1930s following their geographic search (implemented probably at the request of Outer Mongolia). There are many other theories and speculations about how the military clashes began, although much is still unclear due to the shortage of primary sources, particularly ones from the Soviet/Russian side.³⁹

The Manchukuoan side translated a huge amount of public records, amounting to around 50 volumes, originally written in the Manchu language (an official language of the Ch'ing empire) into Chinese and then into Japanese in order to send them to the relevant Japanese authorities. The Manchukuoan side in fact recognised (on the basis of these records) that the Russians' mid-1930s reinterpretation of the border was justified. In this sense, the Russians 'corrected' the border on their maps, rather than 'changed' it. The materials translated by the Manchukuo were, however, too difficult to read and understand for most of the Japanese leaders responsible for developments in the region. Therefore, these materials were virtually ignored by them. This happened partly because, due to technical problems in translation caused by the differences of linguistic structure, the translated texts still required proper knowledge of Chinese in addition to that of Japanese, together with those of the local languages of both Manchu and Mongol.

For instance, in the translated materials the Manchu and Mongol names of places and persons were written phonetically in Chinese characters (*kanji*), even though *kanji* are

³⁶ For details see Tanaka, Katsuhiko, ed. *Nomonhan • Haruha-gawa Senso* (The Nomonhan-Khalkhin River War), Hara Shobo, Tokyo, 1992, pp. 79-92, pp. 144-84, p. 198.

³⁷ Coox, Alvin D. 'Nomonhan Jiken Saiko' (English Title: Reflections on the Nomonhan War: Six Decades Later), in Gunjishi Gakkai (The Military History Society of Japan). *Gunji Shigaku (The Journal of Military History)*, Vol. 128, *Tokushu: Nomonhan Jiken* (A Special Number: The Nomonhan Incident), March 1997, Kinsei-sha, Tokyo, 1997, pp. 4-6.

³⁸ Komatsu, op. cit., pp. 90-91.

³⁹ For more details see *ibid.*, pp. 89-94.

primarily ideographic characters. This means that the readers of the translated texts had to distinguish between *kanji* which were being used ideographically and those being used phonetically to describe Manchu and Mongol terms. As one example, the city deep in the interior of Manchuria known as Harbin (originally from the Manchu language) could have been misunderstood by readers as ‘the Har beach’ although Harbin does not have any seashore, because the ‘bin’ of ‘Harbin’ is written phonetically using the ideographic *kanji* meaning ‘beach’.⁴⁰

Indeed, here can be seen similar linguistic difficulties to those which greatly misled the outcome of the US-Japan peace talks when the American Magic interpreters were confused by the decoded Japanese messages. The Magic team were able to decode these messages, but the messages appeared in Japanese phonetic letters (*kana*) only, since the ideographic *kanji* characters had already been converted by the Japanese radio operators into *kana* letters from the original messages, which were written in a mixture of *kanji* and *kana*. The Japanese operators had to convert all *kanji* into *kana* letters to send them in Morse code, because the code does not recognise ideographic characters.

Apart from these linguistic arguments, Professor Katsuhiko Tanaka has pointed out that the idea of ‘borders’ was in itself a very ethnic cultural concept, and that the causes of the Incident could be interpreted, in a certain sense, as a conflict between the concepts of ‘borders’ of the Japanese, who were traditionally islanders with little sense of land borders, and of the Russians, who were traditionally surrounded by long and strictly controlled land borders in the great Eurasian continent, and of the Mongol nationalities, nomadic people with a loose sense of borders.⁴¹

It is worth noting that the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact was announced on 23 August 1939, only three days after the beginning of the Russian heavy attack on the Japanese from the 20th in Nomonhan. For the Japanese this Pact meant the possibility of an increase in the Russian troops facing the Kwantung Army. Indeed, by the 29th, the Kwantung Army was facing defeat under the intensified Russian attack with three divisions and over six machinery brigades with tanks and 300 planes. Then, immediately after attacks by the Japanese-Hsingan (part of Manchukuo) troops resumed in early September, the formal cease-fire of 15 September 1939 was agreed between the sides in Moscow. On the 17th, only two days after the cease-fire in the Far East, the Russian forces invaded Poland. As already mentioned, it was an important month because the US President became increasingly supportive of Britain after Germany invaded Poland on 1 September.

In short, the Second World War began in the same month as when the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed; just before Germany invaded Poland the Japanese had been fighting against the Soviet forces in the Far East; immediately after the cease-fire in the Far East the Russians invaded Poland on the basis of the new Pact with Nazi Germany. These events are therefore not separate but historically linked from the Russian point of view.

It is also important to be aware that the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact (established in 1936) was, in the eyes of contemporary Japanese, clearly violated by the Germans. Prime Minister Kiichiro Hiranuma eventually resigned, stating that ‘Japan’s foreign policy is in a state of having been practically betrayed’.⁴²

⁴⁰ For more details see *ibid.*, pp. 91-2, p. 119.

⁴¹ For more detail on the various theories over the origins of the Nomonhan Incident see *ibid.*, pp. 90-3.

⁴² Reischauer and Craig, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

Indeed to this day many Western observers have shown a lack of recognition of the significant developments throughout this period in the northern border areas in the Far East, thus resulting in the creation of further gaps of perception between Japan and the West. Ted Morgan, a biographer of President Franklin Roosevelt, for example over-emphasises the 'stability' in the region, making the extraordinary statement in his work published as late as 1985: 'Never, until August 1945, did a Russian soldier fight a Japanese soldier.'⁴³

--- END OF PART ONE ---

⁴³ Morgan, Ted. *FDR: A Biography*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1985, p. 591.

The Kan-Toku-En Manoeuvres

In the aftermath of the Incident and other military clashes, the Japanese Army began to prepare a new military plan against the Soviet Far Eastern Army. It is called the Kan-Toku-En (the Special Manoeuvres of the Kwantung Army) and was originally defined in late 1940. Again, as already mentioned, it is very significant because in the same period, December 1940, the US decided on the Germany-first military strategy. So it means that the US decided to look at Europe against Nazi Germany, while the Japanese Army decided to concentrate on the Russian front. It was not the case that the US and Japan recognised that they were facing a serious conflict which was worth fighting 'behind' themselves in the Pacific.

The Japanese Army made a plan to deploy 1.2 million of its total strength of troops in the North on the basis of a decision of 10 July 1941. It is not difficult for one to recognise the significance of the large proportion of the size of troops planned to be sent to the Russian front – '1.2 million'. It is particularly the case when one compares it with the other military operations in the front with the Western Allies. For instance, in the cases of the major battles in the Pacific between the Japanese and the Allied forces (mainly Americans) during the Second World War, the Japanese Army sent 'only' around 31,000 troops to Guadalcanal, 'only' 26,000 troops to Saipan Island and 'only' 23,000 troops to Iwo Jima. The British war veterans who fought in Burma (now Myanmar) have emphasised an important fact that the military campaign there was the largest engagement with the Japanese in the War, and still, Japan sent 'only' around 231,000 troops to Burma.

This despite the decision of the Japanese government – non-participation in the war between Germany and Russia (made on 2 July 1941) after Germany repeatedly requested Japan to attack Russia in the Far East. On the one hand, this is one of the developments to show that Japan's decision was very independent from that of Germany. On the other hand, this is a case to show that even after the decision was made on 2 July, the Japanese Army deployed their troops into the northern front with Russia for its own purposes, and not for the sake of Germany.

Let us take as an example the crisis of 2 August 1941 in the front with the Russians where weather conditions (known as the Dellinger phenomenon) caused Russian radio communication to be sealed off, indicating the possibility of an imminent Russian attack on the Japanese. Under the tension already heightened both in the field and in the Tokyo Headquarters, Commander-in-Chief of the Kwantung Army requested Tokyo to give them permission to retaliate against the Russian troops immediately, in the event of large-scale Russian air raids. It was really close to a war between Japan and the Soviet Union just around four months before Pearl Harbor. They eventually found out that the radio silence was just due to extreme weather conditions, and therefore they successfully avoided any clash with the Russians at this occasion.

It can certainly be said, however, that in the event of the outbreak of a war between Japan and Russia in August 1941, there would have been no possibility of the outbreak of the US-Japan war in the Pacific in December in the same year.⁴⁴ It was particularly the case considering the fact that the number of the Soviet troops was as many as 1.6 million when they actually invaded Manchuria against the Kwantung Army four years later (August 1945).

The shift of the Japanese Army in the North

Under the circumstances, through to the beginning of November 1941 the number of Japanese troops in the northern front (in Manchuria and Korea) was rapidly increasing up to

⁴⁴ See more details in Komatsu, op. cit., p. 109.

800,000 in total under the Kan-Toku-En Manoeuvres. It was, indeed, only one month before the Pearl Harbor attack.

In contrast, the number of Japanese troops in the southern and eastern areas facing the Western Allied forces was in total less than 100,000 during the same period. Even by the date of the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, the number facing the Western Allied forces increased to only 150,000 troops while 740,000 troops were still stationed on the northern front against the Russian forces. This number was even larger than those of the troops stationed in mainland Japan (680,000 troops) and in China (530,000 troops) on the date of Pearl Harbor.⁴⁵ This increase of troops in the North continued even after Pearl Harbor, up until the summer of the next year, 1942.

As Professor Shimada observes, the volume of ammunition sent to the northern front was so large that a half of it remained when the Pacific War ended, even though much of it was increasingly sent to the southern and eastern fronts as the fight against the Western Allied forces escalated throughout the four-year war in the Pacific.⁴⁶ When the War was over in August 1945, the Japanese Army still maintained nearly 700,000 troops in the North, although they were no longer the 'first class' troops that had already been sent to the fronts in southern and eastern areas against the Western Allies.⁴⁷

What were the positions of the Japanese Army and the Navy?

As already mentioned, the positions of the Army and of the Navy had been significantly different particularly since 1923. Although one should not over-emphasise the problem, it is now widely known that the relations between the Army and the Navy were unusually sensitive. It is perhaps enough for one to realise how serious it was when one finds the fact that the first Army-Navy joint operational plan in the history of the Japanese armed forces was only formulated as late as 20 January 1945, the last in the four years of the Pacific War.⁴⁸ It is true that the troops of the Army joined the attack in British Malaya on the same date as the Pearl Harbor attack started, but it was not the determined policy of the Army to be involved in the war with the US and Britain until up to immediately before the outbreak of the war in the Pacific.

Also, it is an important fact to know that Colonel Hideo Iwakuro of the Army emphasised at the Liaison Council Conference held on 26 August 1941, less than four months before Pearl Harbor, about the serious difference in military and economic power between the US and Japan; the capacity ratio in steel was 20 to 1, oil more than 100 to 1, coal 10 to 1, electric power 6 to 1, cars more than 100 to 1, planes 6 to 1 and labour force 4.5 to 1. Overall, US capacity was twenty times greater than Japan's.⁴⁹

The Navy was also not confident enough to continue to fight in the Pacific at all in the event of the outbreak of a war with the Allies. In fact, considering the capacity of the Navy it was too vast an area to cover for the Japanese fleet, and therefore the principal strategy was to fight only when the enemies entered into waters that were defined as directly strategically sensitive to mainland Japan. In this sense, Pearl Harbor was a very exceptional plan made by

⁴⁵ Ikuta, Makoto 生田惇. *Nihon Rikugun-shi* (A History of the Japanese Army), Kyoiku-sha, Tokyo, 1980, p. 177.

⁴⁶ Shimada, op. cit., p. 176.

⁴⁷ Ikuta, op. cit., p. 232.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 222.

⁴⁹ Colonel Iwakuro used the research prepared by Colonel Kenkichi Shinjo. See Ito, Takashi and Shiozaki, Hiroaki. *Ikawa Tadao • Nichibei Kosho Shiryo* (Tadao Ikawa's Historical Record of US-Japan Negotiations), Yamakawa Shuppan-sha 山川出版社, Tokyo, 1982, p. 515.

Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto (Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet), on the basis of his outstanding personality as a naval strategist, and even Yamamoto himself stated in autumn 1940 to Prime Minister Konoé that ‘should the war be prolonged for two or three years, I have no confidence in our ultimate victory’.⁵⁰

He also predicted on 29 September 1941, less than three months before Pearl Harbor, that a US-Japan war must last several years [far longer than two or three years] in the event of the outbreak of such a war.⁵¹ Thus, Japan was not ready, from the military point of view, to fight with a power as mighty as the US and its allied countries at all.

Why did Japan eventually decide to join the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy on 27 September 1940?

In the words of Professor John Hall, ‘The Soviet potential for action in Asia was in inverse proportion to its involvement in Europe. The threat to Russia in Europe was Germany. This made relations with Germany extremely important to Japan.’ In fact, the Japanese defence policy has been in their intention consistent for over a century until up to very recently, which is ‘targeting Russia’ as the most threatening hypothetical enemy, whether it is Tsarist Russia or the Soviet Union, although it is a bit different recently, and North Korea is a more serious and/or immediate problem to Japan.

This ‘traditional’ defence policy has been, at least in the eyes of Japan, consistently contained in the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 against Tsarist Russia, then in the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy established in 1940 against the Soviet Union, and subsequently in the US-Japan Security Pact against the Soviet Union in the post-war period. All these treaties held Russia to be the principal threat. In contrast, from the Western point of view, it was a great difference whether Japan was on the side of the Anglo-American power or the German power. This gap in perception has not been fully understood by Japan or by the West. On the other hand, one should not overlook the fact that, even in the years of the late 1930s and early 1940s, there were significant differences between Japan and Germany in their policies.

It is true that the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern Pact of 1936, targeting the Soviet Union as the only communist country in the world (not yet a military alliance), led eventually to the Tripartite Pact as the military alliance. However, as noted by Gerhard Krebs of Freiburg University, the negotiations establishing the latter Pact lasted for more than two years from spring 1938 onwards, since Japan initially insisted on limiting the hypothetical enemy to only one country, the Soviet Union, while Germany wished to list Britain and France.

Then, after suffering heavy casualties in the Nomonhan Incident, and thus having lost confidence in its ability to face the threat by the Russians during the negotiations with Germany, the Army again started to seriously consider establishing an alliance with Germany in order to create a potential second front against Russia.⁵² The Navy initially opposed it, but eventually compromised with Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka 松岡洋右

⁵⁰ Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai (The Japan Association of International Relations). *Taiheiyo Senso e no Michi – Dai 7-kan – Nichibei Kaisen* (The Road to the Pacific War – Volume 7 – The Outbreak of the US-Japan War), Asahi Shimbun-sha, Tokyo, 1963, pp. 336-7.

The translated version of Admiral Yamamoto’s statement into English is quoted from Wohlstetter, Roberta. *Pearl Harbor – Warning and Decision*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1962, p. 337.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

⁵² Ikeda, Kiyoshi. *Kaigun to Nihon* (The Navy and Japan), Chuokoron-sha, Tokyo, 1981, p. 65.

who prepared a draft of a military alliance with Germany, maintaining a condition of Japan's right of 'independent' decision-making with regard to her participation in the war in Europe in the event of the outbreak of war between Germany and the United States.⁵³ Matsuoka himself stated, 'Of course, we should firmly suppress any useless anti-Britain and anti-American activities [in Japan]'.⁵⁴

The national interests of the US and Japan in the early 1940s

Concerning the national interests of the US and Japan in the early 1940s, there were many reasons why both sides desired to begin the peace talks and reach an agreement to avert a war in the Pacific, since no crucial points worth fighting between the sides existed. Of course, one can try to explain in retrospect why the war broke out, but before the war, the strategists, or leaders, did not see such crucial disputing points worth fighting, and therefore they started the talks.

In short, the US wished to concentrate on the front in Europe against Germany while Japan wished to concentrate on the northern front with Russia in the Far East. Nonetheless, the Pacific War broke out in 1941.

The US-Japan peace talks prior to Pearl Harbor

Let us now briefly see the history of the US-Japan peace talks in the early 1940s. There were two widely recognised phases in the development of the talks leading up to Pearl Harbor from 1940.

The informal talks (November 1940 - April 1941)

The informal talks started in November 1940 and continued until April 1941. It led to the formation of the Draft Understanding Proposal (*Nichibei Ryokai-an*) in April. On the basis of this proposal, semi-formal talks began with the meeting between Secretary of State Cordell Hull and the Ambassador to Washington, Kichisaburo Nomura (Admiral), on 16 April 1941. Even now it is very sensitive as to whether the talks were formal or semi-formal. Both the US and Japanese authorities have maintained them to be 'semi-formal', rather than 'formal', because, in a simplified way of expression, the talks eventually failed. Whatever the definition, they failed to make an agreement.

The semi-formal talks (April 1941- December 1941)

Ambassador Saburo Kurusu was sent to Washington in November to help reach an agreement in the talks between President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Hull and Ambassador Nomura. Regarding the motivation of the Japanese authorities in sending Kurusu, it is now obvious that the Japanese, like the Americans, were earnestly worried as to whether they would reach an agreement or not. Kurusu arrived in Washington less than one month before Pearl Harbor. The US-Japan talks continued up to the moment immediately before the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese Navy. Even up to just hours before the beginning of the attack the talks were still, technically, underway.

The three phases in the semi-formal US-Japan peace talks

⁵³ See more details in Komatsu, op. cit., pp. 100-5.

⁵⁴ Ike, Nobutaka. *Japan's Decision for War – Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1967, p. 10.

prior to Pearl Harbor

The semi-formal talks were conducted by a succession of three Japanese Foreign Ministers and two Prime Ministers, while the participants from the US, President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull, maintained their tenure throughout the talks, right up to Pearl Harbor in December 1941. The development of the negotiations can be divided into three phases:

First phase (April 1941 – July 1941)

The talks were conducted by Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka under the second Fumimaro Konoe Cabinet until July.

Second phase (July – October 1941)

The talks were conducted by Foreign Minister Teijiro Toyoda (Admiral), under the third Konoe Cabinet (formed on 17 July). These two cabinets were, of course, led by the same Prime Minister. It is widely understood that the only reason why the second Cabinet was resolved by Konoe was because he wished to remove Foreign Minister Matsuoka from his cabinet.

Third phase (October - December 1941)

When Prime Minister Konoe realised that his proposal to hold a summit meeting with the American President was not accepted by the US, he decided to resign. Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo under the Hideki Tojo Cabinet was appointed on 18 October. Under this Cabinet, Pearl Harbor eventually began. However, ‘Tojo did not become premier in order to lead Japan into war’ (Professor Robert Butow).⁵⁵ The researcher is particularly concerned by what happened regarding the serious Magic misinterpretations in this phase. Of course, Magic existed even before the third phase, but the crucial influence to the outcome of the talks by such misinterpretations can be found in the last two or three months when the following three important proposals were presented by both sides:

‘Proposal A’ (*ko-an* in Japanese) by Japan (presented 7 November 1941)

‘Proposal B’ (*otsu-an* in Japanese) by Japan (presented 20 November 1941)

‘The Hull Note’ by the US (presented 26 November 1941)

Three important proposals presented by the sides in the third phase

Foreign Minister Togo sent the contents of the two Proposals A and B on the same day, 4 November, in three coded telegrams known as #725, #726 and #727, and instructed Ambassador Nomura that Proposal A was to be presented to the US first. Togo also explained to Nomura that Proposal B, as the second proposal to the US, had already been prepared in Tokyo to save time in the event of the American rejection of Proposal A. In his words, Proposal B was ‘drawn up with the thought in mind that it is better to prevent something from happening before it arises’.⁵⁶

The tragedy was that the Americans had read all of these messages in advance through Magic before Nomura passed the proposals to them, and therefore they were not in a position to consider Proposal A seriously when it was presented to them on the 7th. When one knows that their counterparts in the negotiations had already prepared the next proposal in the event of one’s refusal, who would wish to consider the first proposal? Then, Proposal B was presented to the US on the 20th. Thus, in these crucial times nearly two weeks between the

⁵⁵ Butow, Robert J. C. *Tojo and the Coming of the War*, Princeton University press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1961, p. 314.

⁵⁶ *The “Magic” Background of Pearl Harbor*, Vol. 4, Department of Defense, Washington D.C., 1978, Appendix, p. A-16.

presentation of Proposal A and that of Proposal B were entirely wasted, and this was not known by the Japanese at that time.

Amongst a number of serious mistranslations by Magic, an example is the term, *saigo*, which was translated as ‘final’ in Proposal A. In the dictionary, it is true that it can mean ‘last’ (hence ‘final’), but *saigo* can also mean the ‘latest’. Although it was used to mean ‘the latest’ repeatedly in Proposal A, it was translated as ‘the last’ by Magic every time when it appeared. This despite the fact that the Magic interpreters correctly translated the passage explaining that Proposal B had already been prepared by Tokyo as a ‘substitute plan’ in the event ‘If there appears to be a remarkable difference between the Japanese and American view [on Proposal A]’, and thus it was impossible to be understood as a ‘final proposal’.⁵⁷ Consequently, Magic created more aggressive and fearsome images of the Japanese than they really were.

The same mistake was made repetitively by Magic, and even in the post-war period many observers have been misled by the Magic version of the texts. Wohlstetter, for example, states in her publication that ‘This sort of phrasing – “our Government’s last effort” – was repeated in much more urgent fashion in a three-part cable dated November 4 and translated by us on the same day. This was cable No, 725.’⁵⁸ She also emphasises that ‘Proposal A and B are consistently referred to as ultimatums in Tokyo MAGIC’. In her eyes, the messages even ‘suggested careful concealment of a plan’⁵⁹ and thus were deceitful. Such comments are made despite the fact, which was shown by several testimonies, that Foreign Minister Togo and Prime Minister Tojo agreed; ‘Japan should compromise further, if the American authorities indicated any interest in either Proposal A or B.’⁶⁰

Then, the Hull Note of 26 November became the fatal proposal from the US to Japan. Initially, the US authorities had prepared two versions of the American proposals to Japan. One was the provisional agreement known as the *modus vivendi*, a three-month truce, and the other was the overall plan of agreement with ten items known as the Ten Point Note. The intention of the US was to propose to Japan the Ten Point Note with its harsher conditions, which Japan would find harder to accept, and to which the *modus vivendi* with its more acceptable conditions would be attached for avoiding the immediate outbreak of a US-Japan war in the Pacific. However, the US eventually removed the *modus vivendi* and presented the Ten Point Note alone to Japan, which is now called the Hull Note.

The Japanese were very disappointed by the Note, and it eventually triggered the Japanese decision to launch the attack on Pearl Harbor. In retrospect, there are a lot of questions as to whether the Japanese interpretation of the Hull Note was proper or not, and therefore whether Japan really had to be disappointed by the Note or not. Another issue was whether the opinion of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on the US proposal to Japan, which was sent in a telegram to the US, was adequately understood by Hull and

⁵⁷ See details in Komatsu, op. cit., p. 297 (on Telegram #726 and #727), p. 303 (on Telegram #762), p. 305 (on Telegram #781).

⁵⁸ Wohlstetter, op. cit., p. 193.

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 200-1.

⁶⁰ See *Kyokuto Kokusai Gunji Saiban Sokki-roku* (English title: Japanese Record of Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East), Vol. 9, Court House of the Tribunal War Ministry Building, Tokyo, Japan, Yushodo Shoten, Tokyo, 1968, p. 602,

See also Kase, Toshikazu. *Nihon Gaiko-shi 23 – Nichi-bei Kosho* (A History of Japan’s Foreign Policy Vol. 23 – US-Japan Negotiations), Kashima Kenkyusho Shuppan-kai, Tokyo, 1970, p. 260,

See also Togo, Shigenori. *Jidai no Ichimen* (A Dimension of the Times), Chuokoron-sha, Tokyo, 1989 (originally published in 1952), p. 313.

Roosevelt or not. In any case, the historical outcome from the proposal by Cordell Hull was fatal.

Japan's formal decision to begin hostilities against the US at Gozen Kaigi of 1 December 1941

The Gozen Kaigi (the Conference of the Council of the Japanese Supreme Command in the Presence of the Emperor) was opened at 14:05 (Tokyo time) on 1 December, and at this conference Japan formally decided to begin hostilities against the US. It is very important to note, however, that the proviso that the attack would be aborted if the diplomatic negotiations were successful was still in effect.

Proviso (abort the attack) was in effect

The proviso was in effect on the basis of the following orders:

‘the attack would be aborted if the US-Japan negotiations were successful’ (the First Combined Fleet Order = *Rengo Kantai Meirei Dai-ichi-go*, 5 November),

‘be prepared to abort [the attack on Pearl Harbor] if diplomatic negotiations were successful’ (the Fifth Navy Chief of Staff Order = *Dai-kai-shi Dai-go-go*, 21 November).

Therefore, the fact that the Japanese Combined Fleet left Hitokappu Bay in Etorofu Island in the Kurile Islands for Pearl Harbor on 26 November did not mean that it was too late to prevent a war by reaching an agreement in Washington. The departure of the Combined Fleet was preparation for the event, but without the ‘final’ decision. It was not a preparation after the ‘final’ decision.

Similarly, on the side of the US, General Douglas MacArthur who was based in the Philippines received the ‘Offensive Air Operations’ (the revised Rainbow Five War Plan) on the 21st, the same day when the Fifth Navy Chief of Staff Order, ‘Proceed at sea in readiness for war’ with the proviso mentioned above, was transmitted to Admiral Yamamoto. On the 28th (Hawaiian Time) the US Eighth Fleet left Pearl Harbor for Wake Island on the basis of Stage One of the War Plan of the Pacific Fleet (WPPac-46). Again, the US Army and Navy were preparing for war in the event, but without the ‘final’ decision. Therefore, the outcome of the peace talks was still entirely dependent on what would happen in Washington.

What were the technical problems at that time?

When the Combined Fleet was briefed on the Pearl Harbor attack plan on 13 November, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, stressed to commanders that all warships had to withdraw if the US-Japan diplomatic negotiations in Washington were successful by one o'clock on 7 December (Tokyo Time). The attack actually happened on 8 December (Tokyo Time). In the event of reaching a US-Japanese agreement in Washington immediately before the attack, the following technical problems could prevent aborting the attack at that time.

Radio communication facilities between the fleet and the dive bombers and torpedo bombers were developed effectively enough to be able to call them back at any time after take off. So even after the Japanese planes took off from the aircraft carriers, there was still the facility to call them back without attacking. However, those facilities of the fighter planes had some technical weak points.

Also, the fighter planes did not have radio operators on board, unlike the bombers. Therefore, such communications could only be really effective as long as the fighter planes

were flying together with the bombers. They were trained to fly together. Thus, even after taking off there was still the possibility to avoid the war. This argument is based on the text published by the Military History Department of the National Institute for Defence Studies of the Defence Agency (Tokyo, 1967).⁶¹

Military developments in the conflict immediately before the Pearl Harbor attack

Japanese forces near Malaya shot down a British plane on 6 December. As far as the researcher is aware, the details of the event are not yet known, but it seems to have been a kind of an accidental incident rather than part of a calculated military action, because it was not expected. The subsequent developments were as follows:

183 Japanese planes took off for Pearl Harbor on the next day, the 7th, at 11:30 (Washington Time).

A Japanese submarine was sunk by the US warship *Ward* on 7 December at 12:15 (Washington Time), still before the Pearl Harbor attack.

So, in a sense, if the attack on Pearl Harbor had been eventually aborted, then the legal dispute at present could have been how to solve the problem caused by the above mentioned events, the British plane was shot down by the Japanese and the Japanese submarine was sunk by the American Navy.

The war began

The Japanese Army landed in British Malaya on 7 December at 12:15 (Washington Time). These troops in the region had not been notified that the Navy had postponed the start of the Pearl Harbor attack for two hours.

It was quite a tangled situation for both the Army and the Navy, and they both took a risk from this lack of communication. In fact, if the Army and the Navy did not start to attack simultaneously, the Army alone could be involved in the battle with the British forces. Particularly, if these negotiations reached a successful agreement in the next two hours, although that was of the remotest possibility at this stage, after the landing of the Army in Malaya and yet no attack on Pearl Harbor had been initiated by the Navy. What would then have happened?

Much more realistic risks were taken by the Navy. This is because if the British Army had reported to the US forces that the Japanese started the attack, then the Navy would not have been successful in its 'surprise attack' on the American bases in the Pacific. This confusion was caused because they were already scattered over a wide area, indeed nearly one quarter of the Earth, and it was considered very dangerous for them to send radio messages to each other anywhere outside Japan. The subsequent developments were as follows:

Japanese naval aircraft started to attack Pearl Harbor on 7 December at around 13:25 (Washington Time, 07:55 Hawaii Time).

Then, the Embassy of Japan in Washington finished typing the ultimatum around 25 minutes after the beginning of the attack (7 December at 13:50, Washington Time).

The Japanese Ambassadors, Nomura and Kurusu, arrived at Hull's office at 14:05 (Washington Time).

⁶¹ Boei-cho Boei Kenkyu-sho Senshi-shitsu (Military History Department of the National Institute for Defence Studies of the Defence Agency). *Hawaii Sakusen* (The Hawaii Action), Asakumo Shimbun-sha, Tokyo, 1967, pp. 230-1.

They were made to wait another 15 minutes by Hull, and at 14:20 they handed over the ultimatum.

What is Magic in this context?

Magic is the name given to the American decoding of the secret Japanese codes used in diplomatic communications before and during the Pacific War of 1941-1945.

The term 'Magic' was used to describe the work as well as the personnel involved in this brilliantly successful decoding activity. The researcher wishes to use the adjective 'brilliant' here since he really believes that it was brilliant, although in general terms he would not use such adjectives so as to keep the discussion objective. The word 'Magic' is used in this paper in its familiar usage to indicate the actual decoded and translated material itself.

What is the background of the issue of the Magic mistranslations?

The existence of Magic was not generally known until it was revealed after the end of the Pacific War. The Japanese therefore did not know that it was mistranslated, so nobody could check whether the communications were made adequately or not in the efforts between the United States and Japan to reach an agreement. Thus, what was interrupted by Magic was not known by anybody. The questions about the accuracy of the Magic translation were first raised at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), the so-called Tokyo Trial, which was opened in May 1946, and part of the Magic translations was published by the Pearl Harbor Joint Committee of the US in October of the same year.

Therefore, this issue was not raised for the first time by this researcher himself, and in fact it has been discussed since immediately after the end of the War. However, the Magic version of messages, which were then declassified and released for publication, were very limited both in quantity and quality alike.

The researcher wishes to note that Mr Jackson Noyes Huddleston Jr, in his unpublished study of the early 1960s, has already made a substantial contribution in giving a correct version of the translation from Japanese messages in their context in comparison with Magic. However, he eventually gave up publishing his work in 1963 after he had faced the unusual difficulties which he himself recorded at that time: 'Roberta Wohlstetter, whose definitive study on Pearl Harbor was published last year [1962], informed me that ... "What you [Huddleston] should know is that access to MAGIC will automatically disqualify you for writing or speaking on the subject. This is a strict rule of Intelligence. It took me [Wohlstetter] about a year to be convinced about this."'⁶²

Around three decades later, the researcher was allowed full access to Huddleston's work on Magic by Huddleston himself and finds most of his translation acceptable, although some changes have been made without interrupting the flow of the major part of Huddleston's version in the researcher's publication of 1999. There have also been published by other authors some examples of the Magic mistranslations, including the works by John Toland, by Toshikazu Kase and by Shinji Sudo in addition to the arguments by Ben Bruce Blakeney of the Defence at the Tokyo Trial who found some substantial mistranslations in Magic at that time. They have not, however, put the issues as the major subject in the centre of their analysis on the course of historical developments up to Pearl Harbor, and dealt with the issue as just an episode to be touched on briefly. The arguments on the issue have been,

⁶² Quoted from his unpublished essay entitled 'Aspects of Japanese-American Negotiations, November 1 – November 25, 1941, written in 1962 by Huddleston, Jackson Noyes Jr. See the details and sources in Komatsu, op. cit., p. 271.

therefore, fragmented until very recently. Consequently, the current issues over the Magic misinterpretation are to be recognised as follows:

Firstly, many historians have ignored or denied the existence of the serious mistranslations in Magic in the post-war period. Wohlstetter, for instance, ignores it in her publication of 1962 and persists 'how they [the Tokyo messages] differed in tone from the messages coming out of the Japanese embassy in Washington', and she goes further stating that 'To an interpreter of Magic the expressions of hope and earnest effort coming from Nomura and Kurusu would function primarily as "noise" ... it has been unnecessary to mention the actual content of the negotiations, and there are still some other ways of considering MAGIC that do not require exercising diplomatic or military judgment.'⁶³

Similarly, Richard Lewin ignores the problem of misconception and states in his publication as late as 1982 that 'If Magic did nothing else, it never ceased to warn about Japan's hard, incessant and (for all her cosmetic tricks of diplomacy) inflexible drive toward an act of aggression ... somewhere'⁶⁴. Even after the recent publication by this researcher in 1999, a writer on the Internet, as an example, inclines to deny any existence of the problem, referring to the publication in 1996 by David Kahn and insists that 'Only Kamatsu [sic], a Japanese, criticizes Allied cryptanalysts by attributing the breakdown of US-Japanese negotiations to incorrect translations of MAGIC' and 'Kahn maintains that the Navy Signal officers made no error in deciphering and relaying information, as opposed to Komatsu' (uploaded to the net in February 2000).⁶⁵

Secondly, some historians, amongst those who have recognised the occurrence of mistranslations in Magic, have still denied the significance of its influence to the outcome in the historical developments of the talks in Washington. For example, Professor Butow recognised the existence of Magic mistranslations in his publication in 1961, but he did not recognise them as having any importance, arguing that the US was guided by Japanese actions, not words.⁶⁶ Also, some analysts have argued that the US decision-makers had little opportunity to read Magic and thus having being influenced little by what Magic mistranslated.⁶⁷ Thus, in their eyes, it would not have changed the course of the developments prior to the Pacific War.

However, it might be clear enough for most of the readers to recognise the linkages between the Magic misinterpretation and the decision-making process when they read the following passage written by Secretary Cordell Hull in his memoirs: 'These intercepts, bearing our code name "Magic", played little part in our early negotiations, but were of great importance during the final phases'.⁶⁸

It is also worth noting that, although the Japanese did not have 'Magic', the American behaviour in the talks and their 'actions' influenced by Magic misled Japanese interpretation of the American position towards the talks significantly. This caused the Japanese

⁶³ Wohlstetter, op. cit., p. 365.

⁶⁴ Lewin, Ronald. *The American Magic – Codes, Ciphers and the Defeat of Japan*, Penguin Books, Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1983 (originally published in 1982), p. 60.

⁶⁵ Quoted from Aaron Suggs. *IB Extended Essay: Allied Codebreaking During World War II*, <http://ktheory.com/write/extendedessay.htm> (February 14, 2000).

⁶⁶ See the argument in Butow, op. cit., p. 335.

⁶⁷ The publication by Wohlstetter in 1962 has been seen as one of the most authoritative in this argument. See in detail in Wohlstetter, op. cit.

⁶⁸ Hull, Cordell. *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Vol. 2*, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd., Norwich, 1948, p. 998.

See more details on the subjects in Chapter 6 in Komatsu, op. cit.

Since it is not possible to discuss sufficiently enough on the subjects here, due to the limit of space, refer to the discussion in detail in Komatsu, op. cit.

misunderstanding of the American motivation in the peace talks. In this sense, the Japanese themselves were influenced by the Magic misconception, although indirectly rather than directly. Thus, it influenced the decision-making of both sides at that time.

Three major disputes between the sides

To understand such influence by the misconceptions in Magic to the outcome of the US-Japan talks in 1941, it is important to recognise that there were three major disputes between the sides at that time.

Non-discrimination principle with regard to China, (not Latin America).

Japan's membership in the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy.

Withdrawal from China, establishing a cease-fire in the Sino-Japanese War (the China Incident).

In fact, there are a number of examples of mistranslations and misinterpretation contained in the work by this researcher published in 1999. However, due to the constraints of length, it is inevitable to choose only one example for each item here, as the essence of the event. The details of misconception in Magic and the source to refer to can be found in Chapter 10 in this researcher's publication of 1999.⁶⁹

Non-discrimination principle with regard to China, (not Latin America)

In the original telegram Japan interpreted the US's position to the effect that 'it would not be wise for either Japan or the United States to adopt one policy in a particular region while adopting an opposing policy in another region.' In fact, the American authorities proposed to promote the 'non-discrimination principle' or 'Open Door' on China by opening the Chinese market to all countries. The US emphasised it because Japan, Britain, France and Russia had already secured a special position in China while the US had not at that time, and the US wished to promote the importance of the Free Trade in modern terms.

On this point, the Japanese believed that this 'principle' should be applied to China at the same time to any region in the world, and 'understood' that the US's position was the same. In other words, in Japanese terms Tokyo thought that to adopt 'one policy' respecting the Open Door 'in a particular region', i.e. China, while adopting 'an opposing policy' to the Open Door in another region, i.e. Latin America under the American dominant influence 'would not be wise' and assumed that the US agreed with it.

The Magic interpreter, however, mistranslated this as 'it might be feasible for either country within a certain specified area to adopt a given policy and for the other party within another specified area to adopt a complementary policy.' Thus, the US mistranslated it in its virtually reversed meaning and 'understood' that the Japanese accepted it as a 'feasible' policy to keep Latin America under the American special influence and at the same time apply the Open Door to China.

Therefore, both sides 'understood' that their counterparts in the talks were amenable to reaching an agreement on this point. However, the reality was different, and both of them were deeply confused by this misconception caused by Magic. In fact, Foreign Minister Togo wrote in his memoirs after the end of the War: 'it was hard to understand why, while Hull insisted that "equality of commercial opportunity" would soon be applied to the whole world, China's "equality of commercial opportunity" should not be applied at the same

⁶⁹ Ibid.

time.’ This is because the idea of China’s application at the same time as for the rest of the world was a Japanese concept and it was thought that the US agreed with it, but in actuality it was rejected by the US when the American authorities insisted on the early application of the Open Door for China.

On the other hand, the Americans thought that Japan accepted the American terms, but in actuality that also proved to be not the case. Indeed, Togo’s statement made after the end of the War, ‘it was hard to understand’, symbolises the deep confusion created by Magic on both sides, and therefore this is one of the serious mistranslations.

Japan’s membership in the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy

Japan repeatedly tried to emphasise that she would act ‘independently (jishu-teki ni)’ from Germany, and not participate ‘automatically (jido-teki ni)’ in the European War, in the event of the US entering it against Germany.

The Anglo-Japanese Alliance against Russia had, as already discussed, already been terminated long ago, and therefore Japan established the alliance with Germany in order to create a potential second front against Russia. It was therefore not easy for Japan to immediately terminate the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, unless the US guaranteed the security of Japan in the northern front with Russia. An idea, however, such as an establishment of a ‘US-Japan Security Pact’ was an unlikely expectation in the period prior to Pearl Harbor.

Furthermore, it was obvious that Japan did not have any surplus resources to open hostilities against the US. The Japanese Army had already been exhausted in the war in China, and had lost confidence in its ability to face the threat posed by the Russians. Under the circumstances, Japan worried seriously about the possibility of being involved in a war with the US which could be caused on the basis of the Tripartite Pact. This was the reason why Japan tried to emphasise repeatedly to the American government that the Japanese decision as to whether Japan had to join a war against the US would not be made ‘automatically’ in the event of the US starting to fight against Nazi Germany, and the decision would be made ‘independently’ from Germany. In other words, Japan in reality would not join the war against the US.

Japan’s intention to act ‘independently’ was therefore mentioned in two telegrams in Japanese sent from Tokyo to the Japanese Embassy in Washington in November and they were intercepted by Magic immediately. However, the term ‘independently’ was mistranslated by Magic as ‘automatically’ (Telegram #773) or was abbreviated (Telegram #800). The American decision-makers thus never actually saw the term ‘independently’ sent in Japanese.

The Japanese also sent three telegrams prepared in English, containing the terms ‘independently’ (Telegram #529) and ‘entirely independently’ (Telegram #595) both in September, and ‘entirely independently’ (Telegram #780) in November again. However, they supposedly did not attract the attention of the US decision-makers. It is of course understandable since they believed that the messages prepared in English by Tokyo concealed the ‘real intention’ of the Japanese, whatever the meaning of the terms contained in English. They believed that the Japanese ‘real intention’ could only be found in the telegrams prepared in Japanese and translated by Magic.

Of course, Secretary Hull could not know from the intercepts about these serious mistranslations, which completely reversed the meaning of the original texts. Although

Ambassador Kurusu met Hull and offered his proposal under the instruction given in Telegram #800 from Tokyo to clarify that Japan would act ‘independently’ from Germany, and not participate ‘automatically’ in the war in Europe, Hull thought ‘This merely recited Kurusu’s personal interpretations, given from his viewpoint’, and therefore he wrote in his memoirs later that ‘I said I did not think the paper he had handed me would be of any particular help, and so dismissed.’⁷⁰

Even in the post-war period, Professor John Blum of Yale University, for instance, stated in 1965: ‘In the event of American participation in the European war, Japan would “automatically carry out what she understands to be the obligations” of the Axis Pact’, while Japan’s Proposal B ‘obligated the United States to unfreeze Japanese assets, to lift the embargo on oil.’⁷¹ Thus, such a misconception has persisted for a long time after the War was over. The following post-war statements alone, amongst many others, might be enough for one to confirm this phenomenon:

‘The President and I could only conclude that ... no responsible American official could ever have dreamed of accepting them [the conditions of Proposal B].’ (Cordell Hull, 1948)⁷² ‘MAGIC’s window on that development confirmed the distaste of Roosevelt and Hull for any consideration of Plan B.’ (Professor Blum, 1965).⁷³

Withdrawal from China

The Magic misconception seen in the third disputed point to be discussed here is the question of Japan’s withdrawal from China. The researcher wishes to introduce an example of a distortion of the meaning made by Magic rather than an example of a simple mistranslation.

Tokyo offered to start to withdraw from the rest of China, except North China, Inner Mongolia and Hainan 海南 Island ‘simultaneously with the establishment of peace in accordance with arrangements to be made between Japan and China, and the withdrawal will be completed within two years’. Regarding these specific areas, Tokyo stated that the troops ‘will remain for a necessary period of time after the establishment of peace between Japan and China.’ The important question was, however, how long would ‘a necessary period’ mean?

Tokyo added a note to Telegram #726, explaining the position of Tokyo on the subject that ‘in case the United States asks what the “necessary period of time” will be, we will respond that we have in mind 25 years’ although ‘at this time to negotiate strictly on the abstract term “necessary time” ... [because] if we were to state clearly the necessary period for stationing troops, rather clarifying the matter, we fear it would confuse the situation’. Of course, Togo was fully aware that ‘25 years’ of occupation was too extreme to be accepted by the US, but he judged that the domestic situation was yet far from reaching a consensus or a ‘unanimous agreement’ at this stage, although he thought that Japan should ‘satisfy the desire of the United States by making the evacuation of troops a fundamental principle’ and ‘delineate the area and duration’ to ‘dispel their doubt’. In fact, Togo’s goal was ‘five years’, and therefore ‘25 years’ was in his mind a tentative idea. Togo therefore confirmed with Prime Minister Tojo on 2 November that ‘should the US Government respond positively to

⁷⁰ Hull, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 1071.

⁷¹ Blum, John Morton. *From the Morgenthau Diaries (Vol. 2) Years of Urgency 1938-1941*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1965, p. 383.

⁷² Hull, Vol. 2, op. cit., pp. 1068-70.

⁷³ Blum, Vol. 2, op. cit., p. 383.

either Proposal A or Proposal B, Japan would have to make a further compromise.⁷⁴ This was the background to which Togo wished to maintain as an ‘abstract’ expression until he could find a domestic agreement.

On this point, however, the Magic interpreter ‘created’ a very different version of expression by adding a number of words which cannot be seen in the original text: ‘On the matter of duration of occupation, whenever pressed to give a clear statement we have hitherto couched our answers in vague terms. I want you [Ambassador Nomura] in as indecisive yet as pleasant language as possible to euphemise.’ In fact, none of these terms such as ‘whenever’, ‘pressed’, ‘hitherto’, ‘vague’, ‘indecisive’, ‘yet’, ‘as pleasant language as possible’ or ‘euphemise’ can be seen in the original message.⁷⁵ Thus, it is obvious that the Magic interpreters tried to ‘explain’ their own opinion of what ‘must’ have been the meaning of the Japanese messages by adding these terms arbitrarily. This attitude in translation of course produced a number of mistranslations and distortions in the Magic versions.

It is worth noting that over 40 serious mistranslations and distortions can be easily seen in the Magic version of the messages which were obtained from the original telegrams sent from Tokyo within the period as short as only one month, from early November up to the time immediately before Pearl Harbor in December 1941. It means that such misinterpretations were created more than once per day on average. One does not need to think deeply before realising that no capable diplomats from the US and Japan could have ever reached an agreement successfully, since they did not know what was going on and how it was happening at the time.

⁷⁴ See the details on the subject and references in Komatsu, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Why did it happen?

Regarding the major question as to why such a number of dangerous mistranslations and distortions were made by Magic at that time, the researcher wishes to list, at least, the following factors:

Interrupted by technical factors in Magic translation

Misled by linguistic factors lying between Japanese and English

Influenced by the Magic interpreters' preconceived 'images' of their counterparts

Strong belief maintained by Magic interpreters that a US-Japan war would be 'inevitable'

Interrupted by technical factors

According to the research by Wohlstetter, the technical problems which caused certain confusion in the processes of producing the Magic texts and using them by the decision-makers were as follows:

Not well coordinated – The US intelligence offices of the Navy and the Army were divided, and both of them worked more or less independently. Mostly, the Army took messages arriving in their office on even days and the Navy on odd days, and therefore it was not efficiently coordinated. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was established only after the Second World War.

Shortage of man power – The Navy's translation unit consisted of only six translators, three of them actually training on the job. The number of those in the Army's translation unit is not known but is likely to be similar in number.

An enormous volume of works under heavy time pressure – Indeed, the researcher himself has obtained over 10 kilograms of the Magic version of the messages sent between Tokyo and overseas posts (including the Embassy of Japan in Washington) dated within eight months prior to Pearl Harbor. The Magic interpreters were under pressure to translate a large quantity of texts very quickly, mostly within 24 hours or so while the negotiations continued.

The interpreters were not qualified for the work – The low numbers of interpreters were due to the fact that most of the linguistically able personnel were on active duty (restricted by the rule called the 'Manchu Laws').

Confusion possibly caused by the 'selection' process of which materials were to be distributed to the very small number of leaders – Documents which were considered relevant or important were 'selected' by the head of the translating unit for distribution to a very small number of approved military and political leaders, which, at one point, did not even include the President. This was for reasons of security. The leaders who were distributed the materials often did not know each other or who else had read them.

Misled by linguistic factors

The technical linguistic problems encountered in translating Manchu into Japanese can also be applied to the case of Magic, since the Japanese radio operators had to convert all ideographic kanji into phonetic kana letters to wire them in Morse code.

This is because the Japanese language contains a lot of homonyms, i.e. terms which have exactly the same pronunciation but different kanji and meanings. This happens because of the grammatical structure in the language. In the case of English there are at least 30,000

syllables, and some experts count 86,165 syllables,⁷⁶ while in Japanese there are only 112 syllables (calculated by Professor Haruhiko Kindaichi).⁷⁷ On the other hand, there are only 26 letters in the Roman alphabet, but in order to read a newspaper in Japanese a knowledge of around 2000 basic kanji characters is needed. This means that there must be an enormous number of homonyms.

The kana letters have to be recognised and grouped into separate words (words are not separated by spaces in Japanese writing). Punctuation also has to be guessed at from the sense of the words, as punctuation marks are entirely optional, particularly in the short style used in telegrams. Based on the parts of speech, some of the kana letters must be converted to the appropriate kanji ideograph for the meaning of the text to become clear, and this is where the problem of homonyms occurs. The Magic interpreters were often confused and failed to choose the appropriate kanji ideograph.

For example, in late November both the United States and Japan coincidentally began to consider the same idea of exchanging telegrams between the two heads of state, the American President and the Emperor, to avert the war. The Japanese ambassadors had considered it independently from their American counterparts and sent it to Tokyo (Telegram #1180), and then Tokyo had begun to consider the idea in a serious manner before they eventually gave up when they received the Hull Note. Therefore, the US was in a precious opportunity in finding that the same idea was being simultaneously considered by their counterparts in the talks, but they failed to be aware of it because of the mistranslations by Magic.

As pointed out by Professor Shinji Sudo, the Japanese key term *tenn* (the Emperor) was called *shison* in the telegram. In the case of the term *shison* with the stress on the second syllable, it means ‘Majesty’ which is sometimes used in written style, but *shison* with the stress on the first syllable means ‘posterity’ or ‘descendants’. The Magic translators failed to choose the correct kanji and mistranslated it as ‘posterity’, and therefore this passage incorrectly read: ‘for the sake of posterity he [Roosevelt] hopes that Japan and the United States will cooperate for the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.’ So, the question arisen by Magic on the grammatical subject is *who* in Japan should exchange this telegram with Roosevelt. This is, of course, because Magic already failed to recognise the correct subject ‘the Emperor’ which was mistranslated as ‘posterity’. The Magic translators defined it arbitrarily as Foreign Minister Togo, just one of the cabinet members, while Roosevelt was the head of state.

The Magic interpreters’ preconceived ‘images’ of their counterparts

The Magic interpreters had certain preconceived images of ‘Japan’, not only of the people from Japan, but also of the language itself. For instance, Lieutenant Commander Alwin D. Kramer, chief of the section of Naval Intelligence in charge of decoding Japanese messages prior to Pearl Harbor, testified later that ‘the Japanese tended to describe desperate situations in a milder way than they were really thinking.’ On the basis of this image of the language, a sentence in Telegram #725, for instance, was translated by Magic: ‘Well, relations between Japan and the United States have reached the edge, and our people [Japanese] are losing confidence in the possibility of ever adjusting them.’ It has been understood by many

⁷⁶ Kindaichi, Haruhiko. *Nihon-go (Shinpan) Ge* (The Japanese Language (New Edition) Vol. 2), Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1988, p. 21.

⁷⁷ Kindaichi, Haruhiko. *Nihon-go (Shinpan) Jo* (The Japanese Language (New Edition) Vol. 1), Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1988, p. 104.

observers in the post-war period that ‘There is no doubt about the meaning of this cable’ (Wohlstetter). However, ‘Such pessimism was not in the original’ (John Toland). The original phrase should read correctly: ‘Strenuous efforts are being made day and night to adjust Japanese-American relations, which are on the verge of rupture.’

One can easily find it not justifiable to create such an overly pessimistic and harsh ‘tone’ in a translation, which is so extremely different from the original text. It is also not appropriate for observers to persist some twenty years later that ‘our own MAGIC translation was milder than the original’ (Wohlstetter). As noted by Professor Jay Rubin, ‘It is true that medieval aesthetic concepts in Japan favoured the unspoken, the subtly suggested ... But the medieval period ended a long time ago.’ Indeed, a basic knowledge must be shared by observers who try to write on this subject that ‘Japanese is not the language of the infinite. Japanese is not vague ... The Japanese speak and write to each other as other literate peoples do’ (Professor Rubin)⁷⁸

Strong belief that a US-Japan war would be ‘inevitable’ by Magic interpreters

Considering the question as to what the real motives of the Magic interpreters in making such mistakes so repeatedly at that time were, the researcher through his analysis has not been given any impression at all that the Magic interpreters did so to intentionally cause the war between the sides. Judging from the pattern of mistakes, it can be said that their knowledge of the Japanese language was insufficient to try to give any specific images of Japan to the American decision-makers in any deliberate manner, even if they wished to do so.

However, their strong belief, ‘a war with Japan would be inevitable’, could have influenced the way of mistranslating the intercepted messages, directing the ‘images’ of the counterparts to be more fearsome than they really were. Such a belief could likely be the result of a persistence of the preconceived ‘images’ of their counterparts as maintained by the Magic interpreters.

As noted by Jackson Huddleston, ‘When one is selecting telegrams to be translated, and then from among those the ones to be distributed, it is not reasonable to say that evaluation is not at issue. That mere selection is not such an uncomplicated affair can be seen clearly when one considers the preconceived notions that the men who were concerned with MAGIC had about Japanese-American relations.’⁷⁹ In fact, one can see this problem when one finds, for example, the following post-war statements testified by the personnel who had been involved in managing the Magic team prior to Pearl Harbor.

Colonel Bratton ‘had felt for some time ... that is over a period of several years ... that war between Japan and the United States was inevitable’ (testified by Colonel Rufus S. Bratton, Head of G-2, Far Eastern Intelligence of the Army)

Captain Safford regarded, for three months prior to Pearl Harbor, a war with Japan as certain within some reasonably early time (testified by Captain Laurence F. Safford, Head of OP-20-G, the US Navy’s codebreaking operation)

To quote Huddleston again: ‘It would be understandable and even expected that such views might make themselves apparent in the process of selection and translation.’⁸⁰ Thus, as a consequence of the cumulative effect of mutual misconception and preconceived ‘images’ of

⁷⁸ See the details on the subjects and refer to the source texts in Komatsu, op. cit., pp. 10-11, pp. 254-5.

⁷⁹ Quoted from his unpublished essay, op. cit. See the details and sources in Komatsu, op. cit., p. 271.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

counterparts, which had already developed in the longer period between the sides prior to the contemporary crisis, people tended to believe that a war between the sides would be 'inevitable'.

This despite the fact, as we have already seen in this research, that there could hardly be seen a disputing point worth fighting such a large scale war in the Pacific. Such a belief, which was kept in Magic, itself resulted in giving the Magic mistranslations a direction and force to create, again, more fearsome images of the counterparts than they really were in the peace talks. After the decision-makers from both sides had been seriously misled, whether directly or indirectly, by such misconception and had failed to reach an agreement, the war eventually broke out in the Pacific.

Then, those who had 'predicted' the 'inevitability' of war between the sides could see their 'predictions' validated in the post-war period. Thus, various theories arguing that the war 'was bound to happen' have been the major stream of historical 'understanding' on the causes of the Pacific War. Many observers therefore have failed to see the possibility that the outbreak of the War could have been avoided, or at least, delayed.

Conclusion of the arguments

Considering the seriousness of the cumulative effect which have widened perception gaps amongst different states and nations, and thus makes the settlement so difficult in each conflict, one should now realise it necessary to find how such a problem has developed up to the present, and how one can prevent it from happening in the future. It is more important than a 'which came first' argument on the causes of many, if not all, crises and wars fought throughout history.

This researcher wishes to emphasise that it is understandable, though tragic, that the contemporary participants in the talks in the early 1940s were in a position that inevitably led to failure, because they had no means to find these problems in their communications between the sides. In a sense, it was like an examination where the pupils were trying to answer the given question, but they did not know the 'proper' answer to find.

It is therefore our responsibility to recognise this crucial factor at present since the original texts of both the Japanese diplomatic messages and the American decoded and translated Magic materials have become available to the public in the post-war period. We are in a position to be able to know a certain answer at the examination. It is not justifiable for us to try to avoid seeing the truth, and thus repeating similar mistakes.

On the basis of this analysis, it is inevitable for one to face a number of significant questions. Could the Pacific War have really been averted? This researcher does not yet know any conclusive answer to this question on the basis of firm evidence. If it could have been averted, then what would have been the outcome? Again, he does not know.

The argument here is, however, that efforts made by the participants on both sides to achieve a successful outcome and avert the conflict, or at least to delay the outbreak of the war until the following March of 1942, might have been much closer to achieving success than is generally believed up to now.

The term 'participants' here includes both the military and civilians who were involved, whether directly or indirectly, in the events in addition to those negotiators in Washington and Tokyo. In general, it is understandable that, when one tries to fine out how the war happened and which parties were responsible for it, one has tended to see the aggressive attitudes of – and statements by – the people who were responsible for the developments of

the events. However, when one tries to find out how the efforts to avert the war failed,⁸¹ some different pictures can also be seen. It might be enough for one to realise the significance of this point when one finds the following records, among many other similar ones, which were left in the US and Japan immediately before Pearl Harbor:

‘The principal objective in the Far East is to keep Japan out of the war’ (The US Chief of War Plans Division, 3 November 1941).⁸²

‘The United States should avoid war with Japan if possible’ (The Joint statement to the US President from Chief of Staff of the Army George C. Marshall (General) and Chief of Naval Operations Harold R. Stark (Admiral), 5 November 1941).⁸³

‘Japan should try hard to avert a war with the United States, retiring from its alliance with Germany’ (A statement in front of the Emperor by Chief of Staff of the Navy Osami Nagano (Admiral), 31 July 1941).⁸⁴

A War against the United States should be avoided since victory would be virtually impossible, based on the result of the simulation exercise held at the Japanese Navy College from the 11th to 17th September (Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet Isoroku Yamamoto (Admiral), 26 September 1941).⁸⁵

The researcher wishes to emphasise one point that there might have been a possibility of success in delaying the attack on Pearl Harbor as the US had actually considered proposing the ‘three-month truce’, the *modus vivendi*, to be attached to the Hull Note until one night before presenting the Note to Japan. If the attack had been postponed for the next three months, then it would have been less likely that the Japanese would or could have attacked the United States.

This was because, firstly, the Japanese stock of oil for military use was left only for the next six months in late 1941, and therefore a significantly large quantity of the stock of oil would have been consumed within the next three months. Secondly, the German forces were going to be heavily defeated by the Red Army near Moscow and Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) during the coming winter. So, the Japanese pro-German groups in the military and civilians would have realised that it would not be wise to over-expect German capacity of winning against the Allies in the event of Japan entering a war against the Americans and their allies.

Thirdly, it was likely that Germany was going to declare war on the US regardless of whether Japan attacked Pearl Harbor or not. As noted by Lord Alan Bullock (former vice chancellor of Oxford University), Hitler was increasingly impatient with American support for Britain even before Pearl Harbor and ‘was coming to the conclusion that a virtual state of war already existed with the USA.’⁸⁶ Indeed, Germany was not informed about Japan’s plan for Pearl Harbor itself until the attack began. Thus, ‘Pearl Harbor came as a surprise to Hitler’ (Lord Bullock).⁸⁷ Even if one accepts that there was certain motives on the side of the Roosevelt Administration and/or other leaders of the Allies to wish to see Japan’s participation into the war with the US, and thus involving the US entering the war in Europe

⁸¹ This is a point of view to analyse the events which has been proposed by, for example, Professor Ryoichi Tobe.

⁸² Komatsu, op. cit., p. 295.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 226.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 235.

⁸⁶ Bullock, Alan. *Hitler – A Study in Tyranny*, Penguin, London, 1990, p. 662.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 661.

to defeat Nazi Germany, it was eventually unnecessary to 'use' Japan in that way in the Pacific in the event of a German declaration of war against the United States.

'Crisis Management' has recently become a popular area of debate, in both the press and academic circles, where its consideration has been applied to the history of international relations. It is clear that in the kind of negotiating situation examined here, where effective 'crisis management' is essential, at least three distinct procedural steps need to be taken: collecting relevant information, determining its accuracy, and assessing its relative importance in the decision-making process. In the case of Magic information, none of these steps has been fully attempted, even to this day.

Few of the events which form the subject matter of this analysis are unknown to historians; all have been studied in one way or another. The claim made for this analysis is that, by making a comprehensive, systematic study of both American and Japanese decision-making in close detail, the researcher has been able to demonstrate how misunderstanding was a contributory factor in the causation of a war which neither side wanted.

Considering that only a very small number of the scholarly works in Japanese have been translated into English,⁸⁸ one should recognise that the factor of linguistic barriers and deep-rooted misperceptions still exists between the US and Japan. This is a good moment to take advantage, in a critical manner, of the opportunity to combine the Western works and the new Japanese research.

To close this small paper, the researcher wishes to introduce Mr James Nicholson (holding the rank of Major at that time) who provided a clear perspective and precious insights gained through his participation in the Burma Campaign in the Pacific War, and thus contributed greatly to the concept, planning and preparation of this research. He stated in his speech in Japanese in front of Japanese war veterans when he and his colleagues were invited to visit Japan five decades after the end of the War: 'Together, by positively working together, we can direct our best efforts to solving the problems which will inevitably arise ... We must tackle them together as friends and not in isolation as potential or actual enemies. That could and should be the ultimate benefit to be gained from the tragedy of the war in Burma' (10 November 1995).

In a psychological sense, it is understandable that some observers have wished to believe that the Pacific War was bound to happen, since it is painful to face the question of whether the War was avoidable and therefore whether such a huge number of lives was wasted. In fact, the researcher himself shares this unwillingness to consider this possibility. The sources examined in his research, however, do not support the theory that it was 'bound to happen'.

⁸⁸ For instance, only 4 out of 260 Japanese records and essays on the subject of the origins of the Pacific War of 1941-5 were available in English in 1990, according to the list of the relevant records and scholarly works published in 1991 by the Military History Society of Japan (Gunjishi Gakkai), Tokyo.

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This short version is now available on the Burma Campaign Society website. It was originally published by the Japan Society after giving his presentation for them.

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