

MISCALCULATIONS IN DETERRENT POLICY: JAPANESE-U. S. RELATIONS, 1938-1941*

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I. Foreword

It is well known that there is a group of scholars and critics in the United States referred to as "revisionist" who criticize the foreign policy of the Roosevelt administration from the viewpoint of Roosevelt's responsibility for bringing the United States into the Second World War. Charles C. Tansill, who represents this point of view, asserts in his book, *Back Door to War*, that Roosevelt managed to involve the United States in the European War by maneuvering Japan into attacking the United States. Although this thesis of the *Back Door to War* takes various forms depending on the particular writer, it is the common basis of the approach of the "revisionist" school.¹

In contrast, Paul W. Schroeder represents a different critical approach. Schroeder directs his criticism more against Secretary of State Cordell Hull than President Roosevelt and against the "inflexibility" and, in Kennan's terms, the "legalistic and moralistic approach" of Hull's Japanese policy.² Schroeder writes that "the American policy from the end of July to December in 1941 was a grave mistake." If the United States had taken a conciliatory attitude on its objective of "the liberation of China", Schroeder assumes, it could have realized its other two objectives of "splitting the Axis" and "stopping Japan's southward advance" and thus have avoided war. He maintains it was the "inflexibility" in Hull's handling of foreign policy that prevented the United States from achieving its objectives.³ In contrast to his criticism of Hull, Schroeder gives high praise to the conciliatory and realistic approach of the American Ambassador to Japan, Joseph C. Grew.⁴

This article makes some critical observations on United States policy towards Japan in the period preceding the Pacific War in a way differing from the two approaches above. Specifically, it attempts to analyze the miscalculations in the deterrent policy adopted by the hard line faction within the United States Government and to describe the ways in which this policy of deterrence, especially in regard to the imposition of economic sanctions, acted as a

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¹ For books on "revisionism" see especially, Charles A. Beard, *President Roosevelt and the Coming of the War*, 1941; Charles C. Tansill, *Back Door to War*, 1952; George E. Morgenstern, *Pearl Harbor: The Story of the Secret War*, 1947, Robert A. Theobald, *The Final Secret of Pearl Harbor*, 1954.

² Paul W. Schroeder, *The Axis Alliance and Japanese-American Relations, 1941, 1958*.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

crucial impetus for the intensification of tensions, stimulating all the more Japan's southward expansion and, in the end, producing the unintended result of a Japanese-U.S. armed conflict. This is not to deny that Japan's expansionist policies provided a direct impetus towards the Pacific War. Particular attention is given to a historical analysis of the period from the abrogation of the Japanese-U.S. Treaty of Commerce (July 26, 1939) to the imposition of the ban on the export of petroleum to Japan (August 1, 1941).

II. *The Abrogation of the Japanese-U.S. Treaty of Commerce and Navigation*

After the Marco Polo Bridge incident of July 7, 1937, Japan's military activities on the China mainland followed an increasingly expansionist course. Beginning with the Panay incident, infringements of United States economic interests in China became more and more frequent, and the U.S. attitude towards Japan gradually stiffened.⁵ Such incidents led the United States Government repeatedly to issue notes of protest. When confronted with the reality that these measures were having no appreciable deterrent effect on the Japanese military, however, the voices within the Government calling for the imposition of economic sanctions against Japan became steadily more clamorous in their assertions that, in view of the high degree of Japan's economic dependence on the United States, economic sanctions would be most efficacious in constraining the actions of the Japanese Government.

From the spring of 1938 through the summer of the same year, several studies were undertaken within the State Department on the question of economic sanctions against Japan.⁶ So far as forms of economic sanctions were concerned, measures ranging from the prohibition of importing and exporting certain selected goods to the total rupture of economic relations, measures calling for the suspension of the extending of credits, restrictions on monetary exchange, the imposition of a special duty on shipping, discriminatory tariffs on commodities and other restrictive measures were considered. The legal obstacle standing in the way of the adoption of most of these sanctions was the 1911 Japanese-U.S. Treaty of Commerce and Navigation. State Department expert on Far Eastern affairs, Stanley K. Hornbeck (Adviser on Political Affairs) came out as the first official to stress the desirability of removing this obstacle (memorandum to Cordell Hull, July 19, 1938).⁷

At this time prevailing opinion within the State Department was not sympathetic to Hornbeck's view. On November 3, the Japanese Government made public its program for a "New Order in East Asia" and, on November 18, the new Foreign Minister, Arita Hachirō, stated in a reply to the United States Government representation of October 6 that, because of the demands of large scale military action, some violations of United States economic interests in China were unavoidable despite Japan's intentions to respect such interests. He asserted, moreover, that it would be impossible to apply pre-war standards and principles

⁵ For American policy towards Japan in the period from the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War to 1938, see Dorothy Borg, *The United States and the Far Eastern Crisis of 1933-1938*, 1964.

⁶ State Department report titled "Narrative of Developments Leading to the Giving of Notice by the U.S. of an Intention to Terminate the Japanese-American Commercial Treaty of 1911" (April 30, 1940) *State Department File* (National Archives, Washington, D.C.), 711, 942/627.

⁷ See above report.

in unaltered form to present and future situations in Asia. This was taken to be an outright challenge to the Nine Power Treaty and greatly irritated the United States Government. As a result, majority opinion within the State Department became more favorable to the abrogation of the Japanese-U.S. Treaty of Commerce, and on December 5 the report of Francis Sayre, Assistant Secretary of State, which was a synthesis of this opinion, was submitted. This document argued that measures of full scale economic reprisals carried the serious danger of a military conflict and the likelihood of giving rise to widespread domestic economic confusion and, as such, should be avoided. At the same time it argued that notice should be made of the intention to abrogate the commercial treaty and that steps be taken to halt the granting of credits and loans.⁸

With the coming of 1939, the United States, so as not to violate the treaty agreement, instituted a "moral embargo" on airplanes and parts (January 14, 1939) and a cessation of credits (February 7, 1939). But, so far as notification of the abrogation of the commercial treaty was concerned, the United States Government was unable to arrive at a final decision. This was almost certainly related to the fact that opinion within the Japanese Government in regard to the question of strengthening the coalition with Germany was divided and that the Japanese course in foreign affairs was at a delicate stage. Particularly, there was a group within the State Department, represented by Joseph Grew, Ambassador to Japan, and Maxwell Hamilton, director of the Far Eastern Division, that was hopefully looking for a revival of the moderate faction ("Shidehara diplomacy") within the Japanese Government and that feared a strong United States policy would work to the advantage of the military.⁹ Thus, in April of 1939, the State Department, searching for "a policy of prudence and patience towards Japan," undertook a reappraisal of the question of the abrogation of the treaty of commerce. This resulted in drafting of an *aide-memoire* to be handed to Japan, proposing a new commercial treaty with Japan that would exclude articles five and fourteen from the then existing one. Its intention was to lessen the shock to Japan while having the practical effect of removing the legal restrictions on embargoes and discriminatory duties.¹⁰ Before making a formal decision, the Administration decided to send a draft of the *aide-memoire* and of the new treaty to Senate leaders Key Pittman, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and Hiram Johnson, and to Ambassador Grew in Japan.¹¹ In so doing, however, the State Department's plan for a partial abrogation of the commercial treaty suffered a setback.

Chairman Pittman stole the lead on the State Department by submitting to the Senate on April 27 a resolution that "the President should be given power to effect an embargo and limit credits against a country which infringes the Nine Power Treaty and injures American lives and interests." As a result, the State Department felt it would be inopportune to present its proposal for a revision of the commercial treaty to Japan at a time when a connection with this Senate bill might be assumed. It was feared that this might result in too strong an impression concerning United States policy towards Japan. Hamilton stressed this point and, based on his advice (April 28 memorandum to Sayre),¹² the State Department decided

⁸ United States, *Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter abbreviated as *Foreign Relations*), 1938, Vol. III, 1954, pp. 406-409.

⁹ For example, telegram of Grew to Hull, December 1, 1939, *State Department File*, 711.94/1396; *Foreign Relations*, 1939, Vol. III, pp. 604-613.

¹⁰ State Department Report, *op. cit.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² State Department File, 711. 942/170¹/₂.

in May to postpone offering its proposal to Japan.¹³

In contrast to the moderate wing of Grew, Hamilton and Sayre, there was a hard line faction in the State Department led by Stanley Hornbeck. These two groups disagreed strongly on the appropriateness, timing, scope, and probable effectiveness of economic sanctions against Japan. Hornbeck, for example, in a memorandum to Sayre on December 20, 1938, asserted that a strong United States stand of comprehensive retaliatory measures could possibly prevent the development of a military conflict and, moreover, might well lead to revisions in the Japanese program as recently made public (viz. the proclamation of a New Order in East Asia). He asserted, "I consider it highly desirable that a plan be made at this time for a comprehensive and thorough-going program of measures of material pressure which might be applied..."¹⁴ In the State Department at that time, however, the balance of power between the two factions favored the moderate group. Its stand, furthermore, was basically supported by army and navy authorities who did not feel the country was sufficiently prepared to engage in an armed conflict with Japan.¹⁵ In contrast to this, the general populace (as demonstrated in the Gallup poll surveys which showed 66% in favor of a boycott on Japanese goods and 72% in favor of an embargo on weapons and munitions to Japan) as well as the atmosphere in the Senate, as expressed in Pittman's resolution, seemed to support the hard line faction's stand towards Japan.¹⁶

The strained relations between England and Japan due to the blockade of the Tientsin settlement in June, and the news of the Japanese intention to eliminate forcefully English interests in China, served to arouse the emotions of the United States public and worked to the advantage of the hard line faction's stand on Japanese policy. On June 16 a top level conference of the State Department and the Army was convened to examine the general Far Eastern situation. It resulted in general agreement that the United States Government should continue to avoid measures which risked the danger of war with Japan, and that the United States should do no more than dispatch a declaration of protest (issued on June 19).¹⁷ But the Arita-Craigie agreement concluded on July 22 by means of unilateral concessions on the part of Great Britain seemed to have strongly influenced the United States policy makers. In addition, the submission of a bill on July 18 by Republican party member of the Senate, Arthur Vandenberg, calling for the abrogation of the Japanese-U.S. commercial treaty,¹⁸ caused President Roosevelt out of considerations of domestic politics to decide to abrogate the treaty. Thus on July 26, the United States Government issued formal notification to the Japanese Government of the abrogation of the treaty of commerce.

There is a detailed memo by Hull concerning this decision which makes clear that the aim was to restrain Japanese conduct in China by strongly warning that when the termination of the treaty would become effective on January 26, 1940, the United States Government could, if it found it necessary, institute economic sanctions at any time. In so doing, it was

¹³ State Department Report, *op. cit.*; memorandum of Sayre to Hull, May 2, 1939, *Foreign Relations*, 1939, Vol. III, 1955, pp. 535-537.

¹⁴ *Foreign Relations*, 1938, Vol. III, pp. 425-427.

¹⁵ William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940*, 1952, p. 150.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-153.

¹⁸ In this connection Langer and Gleason remark that Roosevelt was perhaps eager to "pay back the snub" he had recently suffered from the Senate in regard to neutrality legislation. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

expected that Japan would realize even more its economic dependence on the United States.¹⁹ In other words, to use Sayre's expression, it was expected that the notification would probably have a "sobering effect" on Japan.²⁰

In response to this new U.S. measure, Foreign Minister Arita seemed to take a calm attitude, explaining in a cabinet meeting on August 1 that the "American move was largely political, first in order to settle the question of its rights and interests in China, and second as a gesture in connection with the coming election this fall." The shock felt among many circles of Japanese society, however, was difficult to conceal.²¹ Dismay was especially severe in economic circles engaged in trade with the United States, and among pro-Anglo-American political groups apprehension for the future of Japanese-U.S. relations was quickly heightened.

However, it is quite doubtful that the Japanese Government fully grasped the true import of this U.S. "warning." For example, the view prevailing in the Foreign Office, as expressed in the Arita statement, was a generally optimistic one that this measure was for Roosevelt's domestic purposes and that "a modus vivendi could be arranged."²² Moreover, a document entitled "A Brief Analysis of Policy Towards the United States," which was drafted on August 1, partly reflecting the attitude of the middle grade official in the Foreign Office, urged that the Japanese Government should not just remain content with a passive "wait and see policy" in the face of this U.S. measure. Rather, to "effectively counter" this measure, Japan should "denounce the unfriendly attitude of the United States Government," appeal to American public, and provide a "pretext" for the isolationist faction and the opposition party to "commence an attack on the President."²³

The shock of the signing of the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, however, precipitated the fall of the Hiranuma cabinet towards the end of August. The new cabinet of Abe Nobuyuki had as one of its most important tasks the improvement of Japanese-U.S. relations. The appointment of Admiral Nomura Kichisaburō as Foreign Minister was indicative of the direction towards which the new cabinet intended to move.²⁴

On October 4, shortly after Nomura took office as Foreign Minister, a document entitled "A Current Foreign Policy in Keeping With the European War" was drawn up in the Foreign Office with an Army plan as the basis. It devoted great deal of attention to the question of policy towards the United States, expressing the intention to treat in a friendly manner United States interests in China, to protect United States citizens residing in China, to moderate restrictions on commercial travel, to bring outstanding questions to a rapid settlement, and to avoid applying unnecessary pressure on United States economic activities in China. It further expressed the intention to expedite the concluding of a new commercial treaty and to implement the plan to dispatch an influential economic delegation to the United States for this

¹⁹ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Vol. I, 1948, pp. 636-639. For a summary of the developments leading to the nullification, see Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai, *Taiheiyō Sensō Gen-in Kenkyū-bu, Taiheiyō Sensō e no Michi*, [*The Road to the Pacific War*], Vol. VI, 1963, pp. 301-309.

²⁰ Report of Sayre, December 5, 1938, *Foreign Relations*, 1938, Vol. III, pp. 406-409.

²¹ Telegram of Doorman, August 4, 1939, *Foreign Relations*, 1939, Vol. III, p. 565.

²² Morishima Morito, *Shinjuwan, Lisbon, Tokyo (Pearl Harbor, Lisbon, Tokyo)*, 1950, p. 1.

²³ The document is found in *Konoye Documents*.

²⁴ In forming the cabinet General Abe was given orders from the Emperor that his "foreign policy should cooperate with England and America." Nihon Kokusai Seiji Gakkai, *Taiheiyō Sensō e no Michi*, Vol. V, 1963, pp. 161-163.

purpose.²⁵ This document reflected the new Foreign Minister's intention of instituting new steps for the respect of United States interests in China with a view to lessening United States discontent and bettering Japanese-U.S. relations. In this regard, it could be argued, the anticipated restraining effect of United States hard line policy was to some degree realized.

The Navy's interest in the government plan for a betterment of Japanese-U.S. relations was reflected in a document entitled "Proposed Policy Measures towards the United States" prepared by the Naval General Staff on the 20th of October. It stressed the necessity of immediately holding a Japanese-U.S. conference in Tokyo for a "general readjustment of Japanese-U.S. relations," and emphasized that the most important problem for the proposed conference was the conclusion of a new commercial treaty. "If the Government finds itself unable to fulfill its desire of concluding a new treaty on the basis of the principle of reciprocity," the document asserted, "Japan has no choice but to accept a generalized, temporary agreement even if it fails to specifically affirm the principle of non-discriminatory treatment." In treating the "Nine Power Treaty Problem," the document asserted that no mention of the problem was the best policy for the present, and it argued that, in principle, Japan should agree to the opening of the Yangtze and Canton Rivers. In regard to the problem of the handling of the settlements, the question of compensation for United States interests in China, the problem of United States business and commerce in China, and the moderation of restrictions on United States cultural work, the document offered an extremely flexible plan.

However, while in the sections referred to above the document reflected a moderate policy, another section warned that developments in United States attitude might necessitate measures of a non-diplomatic nature and thus called attention to the problems of a southward advance and rapid war preparations. In this regard the document asserted: 1. To be able to oppose United States economic pressure, Japan must make arrangements with countries other than the United States for the acquisition of raw materials from a specific third country; 2. In view of the tendency of United States foreign policy to change rapidly, Japan must accelerate her war preparations so as to be in a position to meet all contingencies. The document, therefore, indicated that the Naval General Staff had under consideration both a moderate and hard line policy.²⁶

Having thus obtained the support of the Army and Navy for the basic plan for the readjustment of relations with the United States, Foreign Minister Nomura, upon Grew's return to Tokyo, opened the first session of the Tokyo Conference on November 4. At the third session of the conference on December 18, Nomura, in accord with the pre-arranged plan, promised that in dealing with the question of compensation for damages to United States citizens in China arising out of the bombings concerning which the U.S. had already protested as well as in regard to the settlement problem, taxes, and currency problems, Japan would consider the problems in a manner that would prove satisfactory to the United States. Furthermore, in addition to assuring the opening of the Yangtze and Canton Rivers in two months, he stated that the "abrogation of the Japanese-U.S. commercial treaty is throwing a dark shadow across Japanese-U.S. relations" and expressed his desire that the United States, in response to Japan's concessions, also acknowledge the need for mutual concessions and

²⁵ *Konoye Documents.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

agree to begin negotiations for the concluding of a new treaty or to arrange a *modus vivendi*.²⁷ The details of this *modus vivendi* were made clear when on December 22 the Japanese Ambassador to the United States, Horinouchi Kensuke, presented the Japanese proposal to Hull. According to this proposal the following points were to be agreed upon in a formal exchange of notes: 1. In regard to commerce, navigation and tariffs, the principle of the most favored nation treatment; 2. Freedom of entry, travel, and residence where the object is to engage in trade; 3. The handling of taxes, duties, and commissions, direct or indirect, on the basis of non-discrimination or the most favored nation principle.²⁸

What reaction did the United States Government show to the Abe cabinet's willingness to concede with the view of improving Japanese-U.S. relations? Within the State Department at that time there existed two diametrically opposed ways of thinking in regard to the way the United States should respond to Japan's conciliatory attitude. One was represented by Ambassador Grew, the other by Hornbeck.

After Grew returned to Japan in October, he repeatedly sent telegrams to his home government reporting that Japanese-U.S. relations were at a crucial brink and that, in order to prevent their collapse, it was necessary for the United States to adopt a conciliatory policy. On December 18, Foreign Minister Nomura presented Grew with a formal proposal for the concluding of a *modus vivendi* setting forth Japan's conciliatory attitude. Grew reacted favorably and immediately sent a strongly worded telegram to Washington.

The simple fact is that we are here dealing not with a unified Japan but with a Japanese Government which is endeavoring courageously, even with only gradual success, to fight against a recalcitrant Japanese Army, a battle which happens to be our own battle. The Government needs support in that fight. If we now rebuff the Government we shall not be serving to discredit the Japanese Army but rather to furnish the Army with powerful arguments to be used in its own support.... Whatever reply I am to be instructed to return to the Foreign Minister in answer to his initiative I earnestly recommend that it not close the door and that it be of such a character as to encourage the Minister in continuing his patient efforts to meet our position. Such a reply will be far more likely to bring in its train further Japanese steps towards ameliorating the situation of our interests in China than would result from a rebuff. I am convinced that at this juncture we are in a position either to direct American-Japanese relations into a progressively healthy channel or to accelerate their movement straight down hill.²⁹

In direct conflict with Grew's thinking was the view of Hornbeck. In a memorandum of December 19 he opposed Grew, by expressing a very skeptical view of the power and objectives of the moderate faction in Japan and with his assessment that a *modus vivendi* would probably have no effect in restraining the actions of the Japanese military in China.

"...In my opinion adoption as a major premise of the thought that the 'civilian' element in the Japanese nation may gain an ascendancy over the 'military' element and, having done so, would alter the objectives of Japanese policy can lead to nothing but confusion and error in reasoning.... Practically the whole of the Japanese population believes in

²⁷ *Foreign Relations*, 1939, Vol. III, pp. 620-621; *Ibid.*, Japan, 1931-1941, Vol. II, 1943, pp. 48-51.

²⁸ Memorandum of Hull, December 22, 1939, *ibid.*, 1939, Vol. III, pp. 626-627; Telegram of Hull to Grew, December 27, 1939, *ibid.*, p. 631.

²⁹ Report of Grew to Hull, December 18, 1939, *ibid.*, p. 622.

and is enthusiastic over the policy of expansion and aggrandizement of the Japanese empire.... Unless and until the Japanese military meet with reverses, the chances of the Japanese civilian element gaining the ascendancy are infinitely slender if existent at all.... Whether we do or do not conclude at this time a *modus vivendi* with Japan will have very little effect as regards that question.... Military and economic factors will influence the course of the Japanese military machine. Diplomatic moves may slightly accelerate or slightly retard the movements of that machine, but they will not determine its direction or its effectiveness.³⁰

Hornbeck used every opportunity to stress to the policy makers his conviction that the changes the Abe cabinet was trying to effect in its policy towards the United States were designed "to improve the situation as regards petty harassing," and "there is no indication.... of reorienting their policy in regard to major matters."³¹ He further asserted that "the only change is a slightly perceptible change in strategy and tactics" and "there is a change neither of attitude nor of heart."³²

The opinions of Grew and Hornbeck reflected two contrasting views within the United States Government concerning, on the one hand, perception of the Japanese political situation and, on the other, basic conceptions of policy towards Japan. Furthermore, Grew's belief in the efficacy of a gradual reduction in tensions or "de-escalation" strategy³³ and Hornbeck's radical position that without the other side's submission (to be obtained by powerful military and economic blows), there was no "complete solution" to problems, reflected an important difference in the two men's conception of the international political system.

While not entirely agreeing with Hornbeck's hard line policy towards Japan, Secretary of State Hull did have a similar conception of the relationship between the Japanese Government and the military.³⁴ In his decision that the United States should not immediately impose duties on Japanese commerce or shipping upon the termination of the commercial treaty, he did not follow the arguments of the hard line faction (December 11, 1939 memorandum to Roosevelt).³⁵ He refused, however, to follow Grew's advice concerning negotiations for concluding a new treaty or a *modus vivendi* (December 20).³⁶

Failure of the Tokyo Conference dealt the final blow to the Abe cabinet, already on the verge of collapse with internal economic problems. On January 16, 1940, the Abe cabinet gave way to a cabinet formed by Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa. Foreign Minister Arita, faced with the termination of the Japanese-U.S. commercial treaty, immediately upon taking office made a proposal to the United States Government calling for a *modus vivendi* to regulate relations

³⁰ Memorandum of Hornbeck, December 19, 1939, *State Department File*, 711. 924/454.

³¹ Memorandum of Hornbeck, August 2, 1939, *State Department File*, 711. 941/1302.

³² For example, memorandum of Hornbeck to Hull, September 21, 1939, *Foreign Relations*, 1939, Vol. III, pp. 547-548.

³³ On this problem the proposition of so-called GRIT (Graduated Reciprocation in Tension Reduction) in Charles E. Osgood, *An Alternative to War or Surrender*, 1962, and, the "Gradualism" approach of Amitai Etzioni, *After Containment: Winning without War*, 1964 are suggestive.

³⁴ Hull, *op. cit.*, pp. 727-728.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 726. For Roosevelt's approving reply (December 14), see *State Department File*, 711. 942/413.

³⁶ Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 728; Telegram of Hull to Grew, December 21, 1939, *Foreign Relations*, 1939, Vol. III, pp. 625-626.

following the treaty's abrogation. But the proposal contained no new elements to stimulate a reconsideration of the policy already decided upon by the United States Government.³⁷ Consequently, on January 26, the treaty which had regulated Japanese-U.S. commercial relations for nearly thirty years lapsed, and the non-treaty period commenced.

III. *The Commencement of Economic Sanctions*

As had been assured to the Japanese by State Department officials, the United States abrogation of the commercial treaty had no immediate substantial effect on Japanese-U.S. commercial relations. No discriminatory tariffs were levied and no new restrictions placed on entering the country or on residence.³⁸ The commencement of a non-treaty relationship was significant, however, in that it gave the United States the freedom to impose economic sanctions against Japan at any time. Due to Japan's economic dependence on the U.S., this had a strong psychological effect.

While there naturally grew in influence the view that "Japan must end as quickly as possible the present high level of economic dependence on the United States and press on for a policy to establish an economic system which would not be endangered by United States attitude" (Foreign Office memorandum),³⁹ attention had to be given to the problems of immediately importing from the United States a large quantity of essential products and of finding other areas for obtaining those materials. As a consequence, the region of natural resources to the south came to loom ever larger in the eyes of Japan's political leaders. Because of Japan's inability to produce even 10% of its petroleum needs and its importation of about 70% of such needs from the United States, the possibility existed that an oil embargo would paralyze its military and economic activity.

Thus, interest rapidly came to be directed to the oil resources of the Netherlands East Indies as a substitute for United States oil. For example, on February 2, the Japanese Government presented a demand to the Dutch Indies authorities for the abolition of restrictions on Japanese commercial activity and the elimination of export restrictions.

The new developments on the European scene, however, were without question the decisive factor in provoking Japan's southern advance. Following upon the Norwegian campaign in the early part of April, the German army, on May 10, began its invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxemburg and, on the 15th, brought about Holland's surrender. It then inflicted an annihilating attack on the British and French armies ending, in the late part of May, in the "Tragedy at Dunkirk" and, on June 17, in France's surrender.

These developments in the European war had a profound repercussion on the situation in Asia, especially in causing a sudden increase in Japanese interest in the Dutch East Indies and French Indo-China, whose metropolitan areas were now under the control of the German army.

On April 15, Foreign Minister Arita stated that "the Japanese Government cannot but be deeply concerned over any developments accompanying an aggravation of the war in Europe

³⁷ Grew to Hull, January 18, 1940, *Foreign Relations*, 1940, Vol. IV, 1955, p. 627; Hull to Grew, January 19, 1940, Hull, *op. cit.*, p. 628; Ballantine to Hull, January 20, State Department File, 711. 942/554.

³⁸ Morishima Morito, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-17.

³⁹ *Taiheiyo Sensō e no Michi*, Vol. VII, p. 43.

that may affect the status quo of the Netherlands East Indies." On June 18, he filed a representation with the Dutch Indies' Authorities demanding that they make a "firm promise concerning the export to Japan [of thirteen important materials as well as a million tons of oil] regardless what conditions might arise in the future." Further, immediately following upon France's surrender to Germany, the Japanese Government, on June 19, protested to the French Ambassador the sending of war materials by the French Indies to Chiang Kai-shek and proposed the dispatch of a military group to superintend the blockade of the border with China. Furthermore, in the fevered atmosphere for a southern advance which found fitting expression in the phrase "don't miss the bus," a plan was being worked out among the Army and Navy authorities for a drive to the south.

The United States Government was united in regard to the basic objectives of preventing a Japanese southern advance and thwarting Japan's going deep into a military alliance with Germany, but when it came to deciding on measures with which to achieve these goals, opinion was once again split along the two lines of the hard and moderate factions.

On May 1, Sayre, en route to his new post as High Commissioner for the Philippines, called on Foreign Minister Arita in Tokyo. His holding of a conference, divided into four sessions, with Arita gave rise to speculation of a new approach in American foreign policy. At these meetings, Sayre proposed that representatives from Japan and China hold a secret preparatory meeting at some neutral place (for instance, Hong Kong) to pave the way for a formal peace conference, and he suggested the possibility of the United States Government's good offices.⁴⁰ Even though Sayre later formally denied any intention on the part of the United States to offer its good offices⁴¹ and though, in instructions to Tokyo, the State Department asserted that Sayre had no authority to enter into such talks,⁴² it can be said that his action reflected a conciliatory approach within the United States Government for the purpose of bettering relations with Japan.

Once again it was Ambassador Grew who was most concerned about the deterioration in relations with Japan, and who most strongly asserted the need for concessions on the United States side for the purpose of bettering relations and preventing a Japanese military alliance with Germany. He advised that in order to break the deadlock in Japanese-U.S. relations "the United States could make known its willingness to discuss the conclusion of a new commercial treaty, and possibly express willingness to extend credits covering shipments of raw cotton and other non-military supplies to Japan."⁴³

Within the State Department a meeting was held on May 24 between Hull, Hornbeck, and Hamilton concerning "the possible desirability of taking diplomatic steps towards discouraging Japan from closer association with Germany and encouraging Japan towards a closer association with the United States." At this meeting Hornbeck questioned whether a new diplomatic approach to Japan would not be received by the Japanese Government as proof of United States weakness, be interpreted as giving a "green light" for Japan's actions and, thus, serve to incite new aggressions. He argued that present conditions were working to Japan's disadvantage and, expressing his belief that the United States should stick fast to its previous policy, he opposed any new moves.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Telegram of Grew to Hull, May 3, 1940, *Foreign Relations*, 1940, Vol. IV, pp. 322-325.

⁴¹ Report of Grew, May 6, *ibid.*, pp. 328-330.

⁴² Telegram of Hull to Grew, May 8, *ibid.*, p. 330.

⁴³ Report of Grew, June 4, *ibid.*, pp. 342-344.

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Hornbeck to Hull, May 24, *ibid.*, pp. 334-336.

In contrast, Hull showed considerable interest in talking with the Japanese. While emphasizing to Grew that the impression should not be given to the Japanese that the United States Government was leaning towards a policy of compromise that would mean an abandonment of principle, he did instruct the Ambassador to search for ways to restore friendly relations with Japan.⁴⁵ Most of Hull's messages to Grew from May through June, in comparison with his past memoranda, are striking in the cautious softening of the critical tone in regard to Japan's actions, and the persuasive tone which tried to impress on Japan that it was in her own interest to expand the trade of both countries on the basis of the principle of free trade and promote a "strengthening of Japanese-American relations" by various methods of economic cooperation in numerous spheres.⁴⁶

It is not clear to what extent Hull expected any concrete results from this new diplomatic measure. He may have acted out of his concern, as Hornbeck said, that "we should at this time speak gently to Japan and we should not give any pretext to be used by Japanese jingoists to prompt the Japanese Navy to move towards the south."⁴⁷ In any event, Hull's instructions resulted in opening the Grew-Arita conference on June 10.

Despite Grew's zeal, the basic position of both sides at this conference remained unaltered, separate lines. Grew asserted that the prior conditions for the betterment of Japanese-U.S. relations were the halting of the use of force in effecting national policy and non-interference with United States interests. To this, Arita retorted, the lack of a commercial treaty was the greatest hindrance to the betterment of relations. To break this deadlock, Grew cabled Washington on the necessity of talks for a *modus vivendi*,⁴⁸ but, with the coming of July, Hull's desire for negotiations with Japan had already dwindled. The fall of the Yonai cabinet, as well, was right at hand.

On July 16, while the Grew-Arita conference was failing to produce any agreement, the Yonai cabinet finally resigned. The new cabinet of Konoye Fumimaro with Matsuoka Yōsuke as Foreign Minister, was seen as taking a much more positive stance in regard to the problem of the southern advance and the question of a coalition with the Axis powers; as a consequence, the position of the hard line faction within the United States Government was greatly strengthened. Hornbeck, who had advocated restrictive measures on imports from Japan,⁴⁹ in response to Japan's closing of the Burma Road, asserted on July 19 that the United States should immediately impose export restrictions on aviation gasoline to Japan or implement a full scale embargo on exports, when news of Japan's large order for aviation gasoline came to light, in his conviction that this might "retard or prevent new adventuring."⁵⁰

The United States Government at this time had already devised various measures to parallel its diplomatic approach towards Japan. One was the order of May 4 to continue the stationing of the fleet at Hawaii. Chief of Naval Operations, Harold Stark, explained to the Commander of the Pacific Fleet that the Government took the view that "the presence of the Fleet at Hawaii...would serve as a deterrent, even if the United States were not in fact prepared to take action if the Japanese attacked the Dutch Indies. The mere uncertainty as

⁴⁵ Telegram of Hull, May 30, *ibid.*, pp. 336-338; Telegram of Hull, June 4, *ibid.*, pp. 345-346.

⁴⁶ For example, telegram of Hull, June 15, *ibid.*, pp. 353-356.

⁴⁷ Memorandum of Hornbeck, June 12, *ibid.*, pp. 351-352.

⁴⁸ Report of Grew, July 11, *ibid.*, pp. 398-400.

⁴⁹ Memorandum of Hornbeck, July 13, *ibid.*, pp. 583-585.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 586-587.

to American intentions would hold them back."⁵¹ On June 4, the export of special machine tools was put under license control and, on July 2, the National Defense Act was passed which gave the President the authority to place under license the export of arms, munitions, raw materials, airplane parts, optical instruments and other items. Petroleum and scrap iron were, however, prudently omitted from the list of articles. This omission was due to the State Department's concern as to how the Japanese would react if the two items which were of the utmost importance to Japan's wartime economy and military activity were subjected to licensing. Hamilton stated on June 7, "I believe that such restriction or prohibition would tend to impel Japan towards moving into the Dutch East Indies and I therefore recommend that, if at all practicable, no restrictions be placed at this time on exportation of petroleum products."⁵²

The appointment of Henry Stimson as Secretary of War in the first part of July meant an increase in the relative strength of the hard line faction within the United States Government. Stimson, who as Secretary of State at the time of the Manchurian incident had supported economic sanctions against Japan,⁵³ had repeatedly advocated from outside the Government the necessity for a strong policy towards Japan since the Sino-Japanese War broke out. For instance, in a letter to the New York Times on January 11, 1940, he denounced United States merchants for supplying iron ore, steel, scrap iron, and aviation gasoline to Japan in spite of its atrocities in China. He also criticized the isolationist politicians who "tried to frighten our Government from doing anything to prevent wrong by warning that to do so would surely throw them into war with Japan." He professed that war with Japan would never occur, as the Japanese were anxious to avoid war with the United States at all costs. Accordingly, the United States should, in addition to abrogating the commercial treaty, prohibit the export to Japan of munitions and war materials.⁵⁴ Stimson was also in frequent contact with the hard line faction of Hornbeck and others in the State Department and expounded on the necessity of suspending exports to as well as imports from Japan.⁵⁵

The addition of Stimson to the U.S. decision-makers greatly strengthened the position of Hornbeck and Secretary of the Treasury, H. Morgenthau, who had heretofore been most representative of the hard line faction within the cabinet. Invited to a dinner party at the British Embassy on July 18 together with Morgenthau and Secretary of the Navy, F. Knox, Stimson stated; "The only way to treat Japan is not to give in to her on anything." He also expressed the strong conviction that Japan's southern advance would become more and more unlikely as she dug herself deeper into the China quagmire.⁵⁶

Everyone within this hard line faction was united in the view that the most effective method for deterring Japan's military actions was a complete embargo on petroleum and scrap iron. Morgenthau's plan for an embargo on petroleum seemed to arouse the interest of President Roosevelt and, as a result, a conference was opened at the President's request, with Morgenthau, the Secretaries of the Army and Navy, and Acting Secretary of State Sumner

⁵¹ Langer and Gleason, *op. cit.*, p. 588.

⁵² *Foreign Relations*, 1940, Vol. IV, p. 576.

⁵³ For the most detailed research on this point see Armin Rappaport, *Henry L. Stimson and Japan, 1931-33*, 1963.

⁵⁴ Langer and Gleason, *op. cit.*, p. 578.

⁵⁵ *Stimson Diary*, entry for May 3, 1940 (The Yale University Library).

⁵⁶ Langer and Gleason, *op. cit.*, p. 721.

Welles participating, at which the question of the regulation of exports to Japan was debated for several days. Welles, acting for Hull, adamantly opposed the licensing of oil exports to Japan on the basis that this measure might provoke a southern advance. In spite of his opposition, however, Roosevelt, who perhaps was strongly impressed by the news of Japan's large order for petroleum, put his signature on July 25 to an order expanding the export license system to include petroleum and scrap iron.⁵⁷

When the State Department was informed of the new order it was filled with apprehension lest this measure produce a crisis situation with Japan. Particularly pronounced was the excitement among those in the Far Eastern Division.⁵⁸ At the following cabinet meeting on the 26th, Welles reiterated his position and exchanged sharp words with Morgenthau. Due to Welles' stubborn opposition, Morgenthau and Stimson finally retreated a step, and the cabinet decision was, in the end, a compromise in which petroleum to be subjected to export restrictions was limited to aviation motor fuel and lubricants, and scrap iron restrictions limited to No. 1 heavy melting iron and steel scrap.⁵⁹ Although the strength of the economic sanctions was weakened as a result of the State Department opposition, that the Government had moved a big step forward in imposing an embargo on petroleum to Japan constituted a cause of rejoicing for Stimson. On August 1 Stimson wrote in his diary that "we have won at a long battle, which we have been waging against Japan for about four years."⁶⁰

The imposition by the United States of economic sanctions in a decisive form produced a deep shock in all quarters of Japan.⁶¹ The secret war diary of the Army General Staff remarked that there was a proposal within the staff on August 2 regarding "Steps to Be Taken Against the United States Embargo on Petroleum and Scrap Iron to Japan," and a strong argument in favor of the strengthening of the southern policy. At the same time the First Section of the Naval General Staff drew up on August 1 a "Study Relating to Policy Towards French Indo-China." These documents clearly indicated that the Army and Navy intended to "strengthen" the southern policy as a response to the pressure of economic sanctions.

Further, the Navy document made it clear that the middle echelon officers in the Naval General Staff estimated that, if the Japanese military advanced into the whole of French Indo-China, the United States Government would probably impose an embargo on all petroleum and scrap iron. In that case, Japan, as "a matter of life and death," would have to face "a situation in which it would have no choice but to stiffen its determination to invade the Dutch Indies in order to obtain oil fields."⁶² The conviction that in case of "United States imposition of a complete embargo" the "use of military force towards the south" would become inevitable, was confirmed by the Naval General Staff towards the end of August⁶³ and, at about the same time, received unanimous support at a roundtable conference of the middle

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 721-722.

⁵⁸ Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor*, 1940, p. 92.

⁵⁹ *Stimson Diary*, entry for July 26, 1940.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, entry for August 1, 1940.

⁶¹ Morishima, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁶² *Gendai Shi Shiryō (Documents on Contemporary History)* (Misuzu Shobō), Nitchū Sensō (Sino-Japanese War), Vol. III, 1965, pp. 369-371.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 497-501.

echelon officers of the Army General Staff and Naval General Staff.⁶⁴

Two crucial miscalculations of the United States hard line faction concerning Japan's reaction to economic sanctions are reflected in these developments. First, the economic sanctions, rather than serving as a "deterrent to a southern advance," produced precisely the opposite effect. Second, a complete embargo, rather than resulting in Japan's submission, carried with it the danger of driving Japan to a military advance into the south in spite of the resulting possibility of a war with the United States. On these points the observations of the 'soft line faction' in the State Department were indeed more correct. True, as represented by the Minister for Naval Affairs, Yoshida Zengo, there existed a negative opinion on the use of force even in the event of a complete embargo;⁶⁵ however, one must take note that in this period the middle echelon officers of the Japanese Army and Navy had a strong voice in the process of determining Japanese foreign policy.⁶⁶ The psychological reaction of these officers to a complete embargo is, therefore, significant enough to be more considered.

Needless to say, the best southern policy for Japan was the one in which Japan could establish its control over Indo-China and the Dutch Indies so firmly as to insure the obtaining of essential products, without resorting to the use of force and thereby minimizing United States opposition. With this in mind, Foreign Minister Matsuoka began negotiations with the French Ambassador to Japan, Charles Arsène-Henry on August 1, making Japanese economic demands and asking for permission for Japanese troops to pass through the Tonkin region and to use airport facilities in Indo-China. In addition, Kobayashi Ichizō was appointed Special Ambassador to the Dutch Indies on August 27 to conduct negotiations there for the insuring of petroleum imports of more than 3,000,000 tons a year for a five year period.⁶⁷ The negotiations in regard to Indo-China resulted in a tentative agreement between Matsuoka and Henry on August 30, but subsequent negotiations concerning practical details of the agreement ran into difficulties, causing a delay in the entry of the Japanese army.⁶⁸ The Army and Navy authorities, out of impatience, then submitted their demand for the setting of a definite time limit. The argument that, in case of a failure to reach an agreement, an advance should be made even if it had to be by the use of military force gradually gained strength. Consideration, of course, had to be given to United States reaction to an "advance by force." At this juncture there was evidently a negative opinion among the Navy on a "forceful advance" which might produce an "intensification of United States export restrictions" (Navy Department),⁶⁹ but the middle echelon officers in the Army and Navy, took a firm stand in response to United States economic pressure by maintaining that a delay in the advance would "appear as Japan being tricked by Indo-China's delay tactics and, as well, as submitting to United States pressure. The root of evil left uneradicated in the future would be great" (September 9, Naval General Staff).⁷⁰ Finally, on September 10, with the concession of the Minister of the Navy, the Army and Navy came to an agreement on a

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 504-507.

⁶⁵ *Taiheiyō Sensō e no Michi*, Vol. VII, p. 47.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 201-211.

⁶⁷ On negotiations with the Dutch Indies see Itagaki Yoichi "Taiheiyō Sensō to Sekiyū Mondai" ["The Pacific War and the Question of Petroleum"], Nihon Gaikō Gakkai, ed., *Taiheiyō Sensō Gen-in Ron*, (The Causes of the Pacific War), 1953, pp. 613-648 and *Taiheiyō Sensō e no Michi*, Vol. VI, pp. 71-98.

⁶⁸ On negotiations with the French in Indo China, see *ibid.*, pp. 43-71, 189-212.

⁶⁹ *Gendai Shi Shiryō*, *op. cit.*, pp. 386-387.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

plan to issue an ultimatum and, regardless of the result of the negotiations, to advance into Indo-China after September 22. This received final approval at the Four Ministers Conference of September 13.⁷¹

The enforcement of United States economic sanctions thus turned out to stiffen the attitude of the middle echelon officers and provoked them to execute the plan for a southern advance. The information of this "acceleration of policy towards the south" by Japan in turn had a "feedback" effect on the United States Government and reinforced the position of the hard line faction.

The information of Japan's new demands towards Indo-China and the Dutch Indies reached the United States Government one after another during the first two weeks of August.⁷² On August 15 Morgenthau again stressed to Hornbeck the need for a full embargo on oil to Japan. Both were convinced that, in the event of such an embargo, it was unlikely that Japan would defy the United States with resolute action or would set out to forcefully occupy the Dutch Indies.⁷³ On the following day, Hornbeck met with representatives of the Dutch Indies oil companies and urged them not to submit to Japanese pressure, especially in regard to the Japanese demand for a large quantity of aviation gasoline.⁷⁴

On September 6, when the Japanese troops caused an incident at the Indo-China border, the United States cabinet meeting witnessed a sharp exchange of words between Morgenthau and Stimson on the one hand and Hull on the other concerning the question of an embargo on petroleum.⁷⁵ Hornbeck, in a visit to Stimson on September 11, stressed the necessity of adopting a more active policy in the Far East in order to restrain Japanese actions. He particularly emphasized that it would be in the interest of the United States to promote friendly relations with the Soviet Union even if concessions on commercial questions were necessary to do so.⁷⁶

On September 19, after having heard about the latest Japanese ultimatum to Indo-China, the cabinet met to examine the question of a complete embargo on aviation gasoline. Opinion within the Government was as divided as before. Hull was not as adamant in his opposition as he had earlier been, but his arguments still reflected the view existing within the State Department that an oil embargo would incite Japan to attack the Dutch Indies.⁷⁷

Though Stimson and Morgenthau demanded a complete embargo on oil, the State Department continued to oppose such a move. As a result, the economic sanctions decided upon by the United States Government in response to Japan's latest action in northern Indo-China were limited to a prohibition on the export of all grades of scrap iron. The United States Government waited for Japan to move into Indo-China and, after granting another loan to the Chinese Government on September 25, officially announced the embargo measure.⁷⁸

On October 5 Foreign Minister Matsuoka invited Ambassador Grew to express his displeasure at the United States action and state that "such embargoes would not seriously

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 386-387; *Taiheiyō Sensō e no Michi*, Vol. VI, pp. 216-217.

⁷² Feis, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁷³ Memorandum of Hornbeck, August 15, *Foreign Relations*, 1940, Vol. IV, pp. 597-598.

⁷⁴ Feis, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁷⁶ *Stimson Diary*, entry for September 11, 1940.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, entry for September 19, 1940.

⁷⁸ Feis, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

handicap us but would intensely anger the Japanese people.”⁷⁹ On October 8, Ambassador Horinouchi presented Hull with a note which protested against the scrap iron embargo in strong language that could be interpreted as a threat: “the restrictions effected by the regulations constitute a ‘virtual embargo’ and they cannot fail to be regarded as directed against Japan and, as such, to be an unfriendly act...the progressive application of restrictions against Japanese trade may cause future relations between the United States and Japan to become ‘unpredictable.’”⁸⁰

On September 27 the Tripartite Pact between Japan, Germany and Italy was signed. Matsuoka expected that the strengthening of the Axis would enhance Japan’s position vis-à-vis the United States and would result in a moderation of the United States hard line attitude towards Japan. The “resolute attitude” which was demonstrated by the Tripartite Pact would in itself, according to the logic of Matsuoka and Konoye as well, frustrate United States intention to intervene in a Japanese southern advance and would lessen the possibility of the outbreak of war with the United States.⁸¹

America’s reaction, however, was contrary to Matsuoka’s expectations. According to a public opinion survey conducted at the end of September, the attitude of the American public towards Japan, in comparison even with the unfavorable attitude at the inauguration of the Konoye cabinet, had changed for the worse. The number of people favoring strong action against Japan had greatly increased.⁸² Furthermore, at the cabinet meeting of October 4, there was a consensus that the United States should clearly indicate its determination not to yield one inch in the face of Japan’s intimidation.⁸³ Thus, the hard line faction argued for the coming of the period of a “bold and positive policy in the Far East” and came up with a proposal for sending a Navy squadron to the Dutch Indies or to Singapore.⁸⁴ In a speech on October 12, Roosevelt emphasized that the U.S. was resolute in its determination not to submit to threats and intimidation or to follow the road laid out by dictators. It was now clear to the Japanese that the Tripartite Pact had failed to produce the expected effect on their relations with the U.S..

It was evident that the hard line policies of both the U.S. and Japan not only failed to have an anticipated deterrent effect but, on the contrary, served further to rigidify their respective positions. From the fall of 1940, the movement among the middle echelon officers in the Japanese Army for an “acceleration of the southern policy” became more intense. Finally, on July 14, 1941, Japan demanded permission to move troops into southern Indo-China, and implemented it on July 28.

Against this, the United States Government had, on July 25, issued an order freezing Japanese assets in the United States. And on August 1, in what could be called the playing of its trump card, the United States put into effect an oil embargo against Japan. Now the final stage was set before the two countries plunged into the catastrophe. On August 2, Hull, who had given up his last stronghold in his battle with the hard line faction, wrote his opinion: “Nothing will stop them except force.... The point is how long we can maneuver the situation until the military matter in Europe is brought to a conclusion.”⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Joseph C. Grew, *Ten Years in Japan*, 1944, p. 345.

⁸⁰ Telegram of Hull to Grew, October 8, *Foreign Relations*, 1940, Vol. IV, p. 608.

⁸¹ *Taiheiyo Sensō e no Michi*, Vol. V, pp. 211-214, 225-226.

⁸² Feis, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

⁸³ *Stimson Diary*, entry for October 4, 1940.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, entries for October 8, October 12, and December 6.

⁸⁵ Feis, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-249.

At the same time, on the Japanese side, the middle echelon officers in the Navy had already practically resolved themselves to war with the United States in the event of an oil embargo. Most crucial in the eyes of these men was that the exhaustion of the existing stock of a year and half's supply of oil would reduce the navy to a "scarecrow navy." The oil embargo also caused the middle echelon officers in the Army to move towards favoring going quickly to war with the United States. The secret war diary of the Army General Staff noted on August 1 that "the atmosphere of the inevitability of war with England and the United States has gradually deepened" and on August 2 that "the Military Affairs Section (Ministry of War) proposed an Imperial Conference to determine to go to war with England and the United States."

At about this time, Ambassador Grew, making his last diplomatic effort to stem the tide of falling fortunes, laid bare his state of despair with the oil embargo: "The vicious circle of reprisals and counter reprisals is on. *Facilis descensus averni est*. Unless radical surprises occur in the world, it is difficult to see how the momentum of the down-grade movement can be arrested, or how far it will go. The obvious conclusion is eventual war."⁸⁶

IV. Conclusion

As the above observations show, the United States Government's warnings concerning, and imposition of, economic sanctions did not serve the intended function of acting as a deterrence on Japanese external activity, but had an adverse escalating effect resulting in Japan's southern advance and war. To explain how United States deterrent policy produced this opposite effect of escalation, it is necessary to consider the question of the miscalculations made by the hard line faction of the United States Government. First of all, behind all their arguments lay two important assumptions concerning the reaction of the Japanese. One was that in spite of an outward appearance of toughness, Japan would almost certainly, because of its military and economic predicament, seek to avoid war with the United States at all costs. The other assumption was that in dealing with the Japanese, a conciliatory attitude was to be avoided and power was the only thing that made any impression. If the United States showed an unbending resolution, Japan would without fail tamely submit.

The hard line faction erred in their calculations in regard to both of these points. Economic pressure, rather than restraining Japan and forcing a retreat in its movement for a southern advance, did in fact produce an "acceleration of the southern policy" and even stiffened the Japanese Government's decision to go to war with the United States. What were the factors that produced these miscalculations? First, the point is to be made that in their predicting of Japan's reactions they thought chiefly in terms of the reactions of the political leadership or the policy decision-makers. They had an exceedingly inadequate understanding of the important role played by the middle echelon military officers in the course of Japanese foreign policy decision making at this time. They thereby overlooked the fact that in the way of thinking and behaving the middle echelon group somewhat differed from the upper echelon, and they were more adventurist, contemptible of compromise, and militarily-minded.

Secondly, the hard line faction, in interpreting Japan's intentions and in anticipating the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

effect of deterrent policies, was particularly prone to draw analogies with past experiences. For example, Hornbeck, in a memorandum of January 28, 1941, stated that when the Japanese Government made a decision to go to war in the past, it tended not to express that intention publicly with exaggerated gestures. The posture of overplay was rather indicative of a lack of resolve to go to war. His conclusion, therefore, was that Foreign Minister Matsuoka was doing no more than trying to intimidate the United States.⁸⁷ Stimson's attitude is also of considerable interest in regard to this point. Shortly after Japan's signing of the Tripartite Pact, he drew up a "Historical Memorandum as to Japan's Relations with the United States Which May Have a Bearing upon the Present Situation," and explained to other decision-makers how, through history, the methods of dealing with Japan should be studied.⁸⁸ He referred in particular to the state of Japanese-U.S. relations at the time of the Siberian expedition and, at a cabinet meeting of October 4, explained it as an "historical lesson" in the following way: "in 1919 President Wilson got his dander up and put on an embargo on all cotton going to Japan and a boycott on her silk, with the result that she crawled down within two months and brought all of her troops out from Siberia like whipped puppies."⁸⁹ This account was related to the United States response to Japan's action when the latter increased the number of the expeditionary forces in Siberia in 1918 in disregard of the "agreement" between the two countries. Stimson had stored this story in his memory as a good precedent demonstrating the effectiveness of economic sanctions against Japan, and this "historical lesson" can be said to have been an important factor in the formation of the argument of the hard line faction.

There is often a serious danger of miscalculation when one uses historical analogies as standards of judgment because such analogies frequently overlook differences in actual conditions between the past and the present. In regard to Stimson's reasoning in his "historical lesson," for example, it is certainly true that at the time of the Siberian expedition the "threat" of United States economic sanctions produced in "1918" the effect of a "partial evacuation" of the Japanese Army.⁹⁰ However, he either overlooked or ignored the fact that Japanese domestic conditions in 1918 were greatly different from those in 1940 in regard both to the power relationship between the civilian leaders and the military leaders, and the leadership within the military.

Thirdly, the hard line faction concluded that, in light of the disparity in strength between Japan and the United States, Japanese decision-makers, having made rational calculations as to whether to go to war with the United States, could not conceivably decide on war. In this regard they made the mistake of applying to the Japanese in unaltered form the western model of the decision-making process and conception of rationalistic behavior. Lack of knowledge about the psychology of the Japanese people and especially of the middle echelon officers in the military in the period immediately preceding the war led the hard line faction to miscalculate Japanese reactions. This psychology was marked by a predisposition to make crucial decisions in the face of taking extremely great risks,⁹¹ as was expressed in

⁸⁷ *State Department File*, 894.00/1008.

⁸⁸ *Stimson Diary*, entries for October 2 and October 4, 1940.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, entry for October 4.

⁹⁰ Hosoya Chihiro, "Shiberia Shuppei o meguru Nichibei Kankei" ["Japanese-American Relations and the Siberian Expedition"], *Kokusai Seiji*, 1961, No. 1, pp. 73-90.

⁹¹ On the question of risk taking, see Nathan Kogan and Michael A. Wallach, *Risk Taking*, 1964.

Tōjō Hideki's often quoted statement that "sometimes man has to jump, with his eyes closed, from the temple of Kiyomizu into the ravine below", as well as by an absolute abhorrence of submission and choosing "death rather than humiliation." Grew, in stressing the importance of the "psychological factors" in predicting Japanese actions, wrote that "Japan is a nation of hard warriors, still [sic] inculcated with the samurai do-or-die spirit which has by tradition and inheritance become ingrained in the race" (December 1, 1939).⁹² It can be said that Grew was correct when he warned the decision-makers in his country not to miscalculate the peculiarities in the Japanese mode of action.

This case is not exceptional as an historical example of a hard line group's deterrent policies giving rise to miscalculations that resulted in escalation of hostilities in international politics.

⁹² *Foreign Relations*, 1939, Vol. III, pp. 606-607.