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HIROSHIMA IN HISTORY AND MEMORY: A SYMPOSIUM

Japan's Delayed Surrender: A Reinterpretation

The saying goes that hindsight is always twenty/twenty, and when the look backward is of one's own life, and one tries to be honest, maybe twenty/twenty can be reached. But not always. Usually we see instead not quite what we really did, or why we really did it, or what the real consequences were.

When the retrospective view is wide, societal rather than personal, of events that for years have been disguised or covered over, when the view is of history and the eyes are those of the historian, the twenty/twenty truism can seem irrelevant. Past events, of course, are refracted through the mind of the person who records them, shaped by the values that person seeks to realize in the present and future. Inevitably, they are slippery and fogged. So it is with battles and wars, and the images and memories they leave behind. So it was with the events of 1945.

THE PROBLEM IN THE SOURCES

For the past half century, Western interpretations of the ending of the Pacific war usually have focused on the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, while slighting not only the military context in which American leaders operated but also the Japanese context. When we look at the Japanese context, we see the heavy responsibility of Japan's leaders in prolonging the war, and we also see that Emperor Hirohito played a pivotal role at every stage of the process that led to Japan's delayed surrender.

These interpretations reveal the strong influence of four sources: Joseph C. Grew and his views on "unconditional surrender"; Sakomizu Hisatsune's (and later Shimomura Kainan's) firsthand accounts of the emperor's actions in the days before the surrender; the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey study, entitled *Japan's Struggle To End The War*, which built on Sakomizu and the statements of the principal defendants at the Tokyo War Crimes Trials; and Robert J. C. Butow's classic work, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, which thoughtfully synthesized the available materials at the time he wrote. Many other excellent books and articles have since advanced the debate, identifying controversial issues and giving shape to

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later explanations of Japan's surrender, both orthodox and revisionist.[1] But these four specific works set the original interpretive parameters of the discussion.

Former Ambassador to Japan Joseph C. Grew, America's most famous official spokesman on Japan during the 1930s and early 1940s, criticized Truman's insistence on implementing Roosevelt's "unconditional surrender" goal. Grew saw Emperor Hirohito as the "queen bee in a hive . . . surrounded by the attentions of the hive" and the man who held the key to Japan's surrender.[2] At various times, before and during the war, he described the emperor as a "puppet" of the militarists, a constitutionalist, and a pacifist. Grew had enormous confidence in the influence upon policy of those whom he termed the "moderates" around the Japanese throne. At the very center of these moderates, Grew placed the emperor. As the final collapse of the Japanese empire approached in the spring of 1945, Grew was willing to allow these individuals "to determine for themselves the nature of their future political structure."[3]

In his memoirs, published in 1952, long after President Harry S. Truman and Secretary of State James M. Byrnes had rejected his efforts to include in the Potsdam draft declaration a clause guaranteeing the position of the imperial house, Grew wrote that

> The main point at issue historically is whether, if immediately following the terrific devastation of Tokyo by our B-29s in May, 1945, "the President had made a public categorical statement that surrender would not mean the elimination of the present dynasty if the Japanese people desired its retention, the surrender of Japan could have been hastened. . . . From statements made by a number of the moderate former Japanese leaders to responsible Americans after the American occupation, it is quite clear that the civilian advisers to the Emperor were working toward surrender long before the Potsdam Proclamation, even

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1. Noteworthy in this regard are the writings of Barton J. Bernstein, especially his "The Atomic Bomb and American Foreign Policy, 1941–1945: An Historiographical Controversy," *Peace and Change* 2 (Spring 1974): 1–16; idem, *The Atomic Bomb: The Critical Issues* (Boston, 1976); idem, "Roosevelt, Truman, and the Atomic Bomb, 1941–1945: A Reinterpretation," *Political Science Quarterly* 90 (Spring 1975): 23–69; idem, "The Perils and Politics of Surrender: Ending the War with Japan and Avoiding the Third Atomic Bomb," *Pacific Historical Review* 46 (February 1977): 1–27; and idem, "Marshall, Truman, and the Decision to Drop the Bomb," *International Security* 16 (Winter 1991/92): 214–21. Leon V. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945* (Ithaca, 1988), also contains useful suggestions for deepening the analysis of war termination.

2. The "queen bee" analogy comes from Grew's speech to a U.S. Senate committee hearing on 12 December 1944. See Nakamura Masanori, *The Japanese Monarchy: Ambassador Joseph Grew and the Making of the "Symbol Emperor System," 1931–1991* (Armonk, NY, 1992), 66.

3. Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era: A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945*, Vol. 2 (Boston, 1952), 1435. Grew endorsed the Truman administration's decision to retain the emperor for postwar purposes, but even he never imagined that Hirohito would be able to absolve himself of war guilt and not step down.

indeed before my talk with the President on May 28, for they knew then that Japan was a defeated nation. The stumbling block that they had to overcome was the complete dominance of the Japanese Army over the Government. . . . The Emperor needed all the support he could get, and . . . if such a categorical statement [by Truman] about the dynasty had been issued in May, 1945, the surrender-minded elements in the Government might well have been afforded . . . a valid reason and the necessary strength to come to an early clear-cut decision. . . . Prime Minister Suzuki [Kantarō] . . . was surrender-minded even before May, 1945, if only it were made clear that surrender would not involve the downfall of the dynasty."[4]

Grew was impressed by the views of the emperor's civilian advisers, their pro-Anglo-American stance in diplomacy at the start of the 1930s, and their professed support for party cabinets earlier. Yet Grew never understood the dynamics of Japanese politics during his tenure as ambassador (1932–1942), and thus could not grasp how such moderate gentlemen of high lineage, some of whom he likened to the Saltonstalls, the Sedgwicks, and the Peabodys he had known from his days in Boston, gradually narrowed their distance from the military during the course of Japan's protracted war in China. Nor did he perceive how one faction of the moderates, centered on Emperor Hirohito and his chief adviser, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi, had eventually entered into a loose alliance with the military that made Pearl Harbor possible. For Grew it was always the military acting on their own. Nonetheless, Grew was correct in identifying the moderates as central to the surrender process, and thereby in alerting us to the fact that how we define and understand the moderates around the throne largely determines how we evaluate wartime and early postwar Japanese history.[5]

Sakomizu Hisatsune was the chief cabinet secretary in the cabinet of Suzuki Kantarō (7 April–15 August 1945), and the son-in-law of the "senior statesman" Okada Keisuke. Sakomizu attended the 9–10 August imperial conference and drafted notes of that meeting that revealed how Japan's leaders were brought to accept the Potsdam Declaration, and the emperor's role in the process. Sakomizu argued that the key figures who had struggled all along to overcome the military and stop the fighting were Emperor Hirohito, Prime Minister Suzuki, and Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido.

In his testimony to American interrogators and in his later writings, however, Sakomizu obscured the emperor's responsibility for the long delay

4. Grew, *Turbulent Era*, 1425–26.

5. See Yoshida Yutaka, *Shōwa tennō no shūsenshi* [A history of the Shōwa emperor in the war termination process] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shinsho, 1992), 228–29. Yoshida notes that "without the tacit recognition and approval of the moderates after the fact, or without their support and cooperation, the line pushed by the military could not have become national policy."

in moving to accept the Potsdam terms.[6] He also exaggerated the hegemony of the military in policymaking, projecting the misleading image of an imperial court oppressed by its military.

It may further be observed that Sakomizu, in the spirit and pattern of faithful subordinates in all bureaucracies, made his superior, Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō, look more peace-minded and less flawed than he probably really was. He did this by presenting the distinctive Japanese cultural practice of *haragei*, whereby two parties to a negotiation advanced their respective goals by non-verbal, very subtle, mutual deception. Thus, Sakomizu rationalized and obscured the genuine opportunism, vacillation, and incompetence of Suzuki and other members of the wartime government as they shifted from a policy of war to one of surrender.[7]

Japan's Struggle To End The War was a short report issued in July 1946 by the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey to press the Army Air Force's "claim to credit for winning the war against Japan."[8] Centered about a simple chronology of events, from the fall of Tōjō Hideki to Japan's capitulation, it acknowledged the roles of the rival military services but concluded that air power had largely "determined the timing of Japan's surrender and obviated any need for invasion." For "in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated."[9]

Tucked into *Japan's Struggle* is the notion of a remote emperor finally brought into a delicately balanced decision-making process at the last moment. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima, it asserted, "contribut[ed] to a situation which permitted the Prime Minister to bring the Emperor overtly and directly into a position where his decision for immediate acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration could be used" to break a 3–3 split among the members of the Supreme War Leadership Council.

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6. Sakomizu published "Kōfukuji no shinsō" [The truth about the surrender], based on his deposition of December 1945, in *Jiyū kokumin* (February 1946). In his later account of the event–*Kikanjūka no shusō kantei: 2.26 jiken kara shūsen made* [The prime minister's official mansion under the gun: from the February 26, 1936, uprising to the end of the war] (Tokyo: Kōbunsha, 1964)–the emperor is portrayed as a deus ex machina, external to the action until the very last stage. The tone of Sakomizu's chapter on the 9–10 August imperial conference may be gathered from his opening words (253): "Writing this today, I fear that readers might think how foolish the Japanese government at that time was. Viewed providentially, however, Japan was groping in absurd directions with its eyes covered. Feelings of deep regret, of shame at our incompetence, and past credulous naivete–these inexpressible emotions almost bring tears to my eyes. But Japan's domestic situation was not so simple. . . . Prime Minister Suzuki's only wish was to maintain the unity of the race whether by continuing the war or ending it."

7. Tanaka Nobumasa, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan, haisen (ge)* (Tokyo: Ryokufū Shuppan, 1988), 476.

8. John Ray Skates, *The Invasion of Japan: Alternative to the Bomb* (Columbia, SC, 1994), 251.

9. U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *Japan's Struggle To End The War* (Washington, July 1946), 12–13.

Japan's Struggle drew directly on the testimony of Sakomizu, Suzuki, and Kido, augmented by the impressions of the "senior statesmen" (*jūshin*) and other principal defendants in the Tokyo War Crimes Trials. Based on the views of men whose sole, overriding objective was to "preserve the national polity [*kokutai*]," defend the emperor, and obfuscate their own failures of leadership and judgment, *Japan's Struggle* translated the official Japanese version of the emperor's role in ending the war into the official American version.

Building on testimony about the emperor by Sakomizu and Shimomura Kainan, the Strategic Bombing Survey reports, unpublished interrogations compiled by the Military History Section of General Douglas MacArthur's headquarters, the records of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the diaries of Kido Kōichi, and many other primary sources, Robert J. C. Butow authored *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, a work of exceptionally clear focus that set the standard for all subsequent discussion.[10]

Unfortunately, however, Butow failed to scrutinize his Japanese sources for unintended suggestions that the emperor's role in events had been other than they asserted. As a consequence, Butow misdescribed Hirohito as "nothing more than a convenient emblem to be brandished at the proper moment—a mere symbol behind whom the civilian and military elite selfishly and independently gambled for the stakes of power."[11] In short, Butow accepted the myth of the emperor as a standard European-style monarch, constitutionally bound to obey the decisions of his advisers and unable to declare his own will except when his ministers deadlocked.

The notion that the emperor became a decision arbiter only at the very last moment of defeat is undermined by documented historical facts that have accumulated for the past forty years. Throughout the war, Hirohito's influence continued to grow. He settled interservice disputes over the allocation of scarce resources. He intervened frequently and directly in ongoing combat operations as well as in planning by the imperial general headquarters. If he was indeed strong enough to surrender his empire at the end, that was because he had been equally strong enough to have surrendered earlier. His loss of ability to judge the war situation coolly and objectively during the first half of 1945, and, above all, his (and Kido's) vacillation after having ordered the start of peace maneuvers in June 1945, has to figure prominently in any realistic reassessment of how the war ended.

In February 1945, before Japan's cities had been reduced to rubble, the emperor canvassed the opinions of his seven "senior statesmen" concerning

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10. Shimomura Kainan's account of the ending of the war was originally written at Suzuki Kantarō's request in 1947 and published the following year under the title *Shūsenki* [Notes on the termination of the war]. A revised and expanded version, entitled *Shūsen hisshi* [Secret history of the termination of the war] appeared three years later in 1950, and has since been reprinted.

11. Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford, 1954), 228–29.

the war outlook. They were Hiranuma Kiichirō, Hirota Kōki, Wakatsuki Reijirō, Makino Nobuaki, Okada Keisuke, Konoe Fumimaro, and Tōjō Hideki. The meetings, though interrupted by air raids, revealed a general consensus to go on with the struggle.

Prince Konoe Fumimaro, however, did not concur.[12] A descendant of the famous Fujiwara family of court nobles who for centuries had regularly intermarried with imperial princesses and during the Heian period (794–1185) had ruled Japan, he distinctly was not awed by the "emotional and reverent haze" that surrounded the emperor.[13] Konoe's memorial, presented on the 14th, pleaded with the emperor to sue quickly for peace before a Communist revolution occurred that would make preservation of the *kokutai* impossible.[14] Hirohito rejected Konoe's recommendation, saying that to conclude the war would be "very difficult unless we make one more military gain." Konoe allegedly replied, "is that possible? It must happen soon. If we have to wait much longer, . . . [a victory] will be meaningless."[15] Emperor Hirohito, however, stuck to his position, optimistically imagining that the war situation could be restored by fighting and winning one last decisive battle. He did not budge even after his military intelligence forecasters warned him, on 15 February, that the Soviet Union was likely to abrogate its neutrality pact with Japan by the spring and come into the war at any time thereafter if it judged Japan's power to have weakened.[16] Nor did

12. Yabe Teiji, a Tokyo Imperial University scholar and ideologue who served as Konoe's political adviser, observed after the war that Konoe's private audience with the emperor in February was the first he had been allowed to have in nearly three years. Yabe also noted that, "Until around the time of the fall of Saipan, Kido had absolute faith in Tōjō, and what anyone told Kido was immediately passed on to Tōjō." See Yabe Teiji, "Kōshitsu no chi nagareru Konoe Fumimaro" in *Bungei shunjū, tokushūgō: tennō hakusho* (October 1956), 190.

13. The words are those of the Strategic Bombing Survey report, *Japan's Struggle To End The War*, 2.

14. For a translation and insightful analysis of the entire Konoe Memorial see John W. Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1874–1954* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), 260–64.

15. Kōtetsu Fujita Hisanori, *Jijūchō no kaisō* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1987), 66–67; Yamada Akira and Kóketsu Atsushi, 180, citing from the 1978 Chūō Kōronsha version of *Hosokawa nikki*.

After the war, in an effort to give the emperor a pacifist image, MacArthur's personal secretary, Brigadier General Bonner Fellers, claimed in public addresses and in an article written for *Foreign Service* magazine, published by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, that "Emperor Hirohito's struggle to surrender" began in February 1945, when he resolved on a peace maneuver through the mediation of the Soviet Union. The article, reprinted in the Japanese edition of *Reader's Digest* (September 1947), concluded (23): "Was Hirohito always a pacifist who had been made a tool of the fanatic militarists without means of fighting back? I left Japan convinced that he was. As titular leader of Japan, of course, the Emperor cannot but share technically the war guilt of his leaders. Yet that does not lessen the high drama of a figurehead Emperor who dared face down his own fanatic militarists, usurp their power, and compel them by sheer strength of will to surrender a defeated country to a superior enemy." Like his superior, General MacArthur, Fellers probably had this view of the emperor before he even arrived in Japan.

16. See *Haisen no kiroku: sanbō honbu shozō, Meiji hyakunen-shi sōsho, dai 38 kan* [Records of the defeat: Archives of the General Staff, the Meiji Centennial History Collection, Vol. 38] (Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1967), 230–31.

he change his mind when Tōjō conceded, at his audience on 26 February, that there was a "fifty-fifty" chance of the Soviet Union rising against Japan militarily. The emperor's war-mindedness made the battle of Okinawa both inevitable and needlessly costly. Ultimately, he also shares with Japan's other war leaders responsibility for helping to doom Hiroshima and Nagasaki to destruction.

TOWARD A REINTERPRETATION

In March and April 1946, replying to questions arising in the course of American preparations for the Tokyo War Crimes Trials that were to convene in May, five imperial household officials presented questions to Hirohito, and the resulting text–his dictated answers–was then partially amended and circulated among higher echelons of General MacArthur's staff. Soon afterward, the "monologue" disappeared. A version finally reappeared and was published after Hirohito's death in 1989. It shows him strongly defending General Tōjō Hideki, who had served as both prime minister and war minister during the first thirty-two months of the Pacific war. It also reveals the emperor to have been an active commander-in-chief of the armed forces, yet a very human one who lays blame for Japan's failures on everyone but himself.[17]

Other recent important contributions to understanding the ending of the war include *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan, haisen ge* [A documented history of the Shōwa Emperor, Volume 5: defeat] (1989), which is part of an excellent eight-volume political history by journalist and historian Tanaka Nobumasa. It has shed new light on the emperor's activist role throughout the war, the surrender, and the occupation. Two other notable achievements of Japanese scholarship are Yamada Akira and Kōketsu Atsushi, *Ososugita seidan: Shōwa tennō no sensō shidō to sensō sekinin* [The imperial decision that came too late: The Shōwa Emperor's war leadership and war responsibility] (1991), and Yoshida Yutaka, *Shōwa tennō no shūsenshi* [A history of the Shōwa Emperor in the war termination process] (1992).

Drawing from these and other Japanese-language sources, the following discussion briefly interprets "unconditional surrender" as the wartime goal of the anti-fascist alliance. It then reexamines several key moments leading to "the imperial decision that came too late" to save Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These were: (a) the Tōjō cabinet's resignation (18 July 1944); (b) the Koiso cabinet's plan for eliciting Soviet assistance in closing the war and the emperor's involvement in preparations for staging one last decisive campaign; (c) the Suzuki cabinet's vague, futile efforts to negotiate an end to the war through the Soviet Union; (d) the period between the Suzuki cabinet's rejection of the Potsdam Declaration on 28 July 1945 and the bombing of

17. For discussion and analysis see Herbert P. Bix, "Emperor Hirohito's War," *History Today* 41 (December 1991): 12–19; and idem, "The Shōwa Emperor's 'Monologue' and the Problem of War Responsibility," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 18 (Summer 1992): 295–363.

Hiroshima on 6 August; and, finally, (e) the Japanese government's debates over surrendering with "one condition versus four conditions." Even the briefest review of these five topics will reveal many other reasons for the delayed surrender beyond American policymakers' desire to practice atomic diplomacy, or realize ulterior objectives vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER, THE POTSDAM DECLARATION, AND THE BOMB

In seeking to maintain a high degree of patriotic fervor and international cooperation in the fight against the Axis, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill relied, among other things, on abstract war slogans and the goal of unconditional surrender. Their policy of no negotiated termination of the war never aimed at just smashing the fascist states. Its true objective was the military occupation and postwar reform – always the two together – of those states so that the philosophies of fascism and militarism could be uprooted and their societies democratized.

Roosevelt did say, at Casablanca in January 1943, that the Allies would punish the leaders of the fascist regimes but not destroy their peoples. But until they had won total victory over the Axis, he and Churchill steadfastly resisted pressures to clarify the meaning of their formula. Needing Soviet military power, yet keenly aware of Stalin's distrust of them for not having opened a second front in Europe to relieve the hard-pressed Red Army, Roosevelt and Churchill had ample reason for displaying an uncompromising attitude toward the enemy states.[18] Alliance imperatives, in short, strengthened their resolve to eschew any formal contractual offers made by the aggressor states of Germany, Japan, and Italy and to retain a free hand to occupy and reform them after toppling their governments and destroying their military power. Thus, the unconditional surrender formula, which aimed at exercising state power and carrying out reforms in the post-surrender period, was a precondition for building a new world order.[19]

After the German army signed unconditional surrender documents with the Allied forces on 7 May 1945, and the Third Reich, in the words of William L. Shirer, "simply ceased to exist," Japan alone remained in the war.[20] At that point, with the battle of Okinawa still raging, newly in-

18. Yui Daizaburō, "Beikoku no sengo sekai kōsō to Ajia" [The American conception of the postwar world and Asia] in *Senryō kaikaku no kokusaid hikaku: Nihon, Ajia, Yōroppa*, ed. Yui Daizaburō, Nakamura Masanori, and Toyoshita Narahiko (Tokyo: Sanseidō, 1994), 12–13.

19. Awaya Kentarō, "Nihon haisen wa jōkentsuki kōfuku ka" [Was Japan's defeat surrender with conditions attached to it?], in *Nihon kindaishi no kyozō to jitsuzō 4: kōfuku- 'Shōwa' no shūen*, ed. Fujiwara Akira, Imai Seiichi, Uno Shinichi, and Awaya Kentarō (Tokyo: Ōtsuki Shoten, 1989), 14–20.

20. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York, 1990), 1139. Italian partisans summarily executed Mussolini on 28 April and the war in Italy ended on 2 May. Hitler committed suicide on 30 April.

stalled President Truman declared on 8 May that Japan's surrender would not mean the "extermination or enslavement of the Japanese people." Because his remark left the unconditional surrender goal unaltered, Joseph Grew, leader of the "Japan faction" within the State Department, pressed the president to make public a clear definition of the term so as to persuade the Japanese to surrender. Immediately, Grew met fierce opposition from his colleagues in the State Department–the "China crowd"–who argued that to keep the emperor was to compromise on the very essence of Japanese fascism.[21] They–Dean Acheson, Archibald MacLeish, and James Byrnes–certainly did not want to interpret the supreme war goal more leniently for Japan than had been the case with Germany and, by so doing, leave an unwanted impression, at home and abroad, of "appeasement." These disagreements clearly highlighted the interrelationship, during the spring and summer of 1945, between wartime goals and postwar policies.

The Potsdam Declaration was issued on 26 July 1945 in the form of an ultimatum aimed at hastening Japan's surrender.[22] The Japanese government was informed that if it fulfilled certain unilateral obligations ("our terms"), which the victorious powers would impose *after* the Japanese government had proclaimed "the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces" and furnished "proper and adequate assurance of their good faith in such action," Japan would *then* be allowed to retain its peace industries and resume participation in world trade on the basis of the principle of equal access to raw materials. "The alternative for Japan," the declaration concluded, "is prompt and utter destruction." Article 12 stated, "The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government." Deleted from this article was the phrase that Grew advised was necessary: "this may include a constitutional monarchy under the present dynasty." Consequently, the status of the emperor was not guaranteed, and the policy of unconditional surrender remained intact.

The rest of the story can be even more briefly summarized. The Japanese government received the declaration on 27 July and showed no intention of immediately accepting it. On the contrary, the Suzuki cabinet first ordered the tightly controlled press to publish the Dōmei News Service's edited version (with surrender terms 1 through 4 deleted) and to minimize the significance of the declaration by not commenting on it.[23] Next, on 28 July,

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21. See Nakamura, *The Japanese Monarchy*, 70–77.

22. The declaration was largely the work of Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and his aides, but Secretary of State James Byrnes polished it and influenced the timing of its release.

23. The deleted surrender terms were as follows: (1) "WE . . . agree that Japan shall be given an opportunity to end this war. (2) The prodigious land, sea and air forces of the United

at the urging of Army Minister Anami Korechika, Chief of the Naval General Staff Toyoda Soemu, and others, Prime Minister Suzuki made Japan's rejection explicit by formally declaring, at an afternoon press conference, that the Potsdam Declaration was no more than a "rehash" (*yakinaoshi*) of the Cairo Declaration and that he intended to "ignore" it (*mokusatsu*). If Hirohito, who read the newspapers daily, was displeased or even very concerned about the impression of intransigence that Suzuki and his cabinet were conveying to the world, we have no record of it. Kido probably would have mentioned any conversation he had with the emperor on the subject in his detailed diary, but did not.[24]

Also on 28 July, when an allegedly moderate "senior statesman," Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa, was asked by his secretary, Rear Admiral Takagi Sōkichi, why the prime minister had been allowed to make such an absurd statement, Yonai replied: "If one is first to issue a statement, he is always at a disadvantage. Churchill has fallen, America is beginning to be isolated. The government therefore will ignore it. There is no need to rush."[25]

"No need to rush" directly contravened Article 5 of the Potsdam Declaration ("We shall brook no delay") and was a position that further strengthened the contemporary Western analysis that, as of 28 July, the Japanese, following the leadership of their emperor, had neither reversed their decision, nor loosened their will to fight to the finish, while making vague overtures for peace on a separate track.[26] Suzuki's intention was not misunderstood.

The Americans now accelerated their preparations for the use of atomic bombs and for an invasion of southern Kyūshū (Operation Olympic), scheduled to begin on 1 November. On 6 August a single B-29 destroyed much of the undefended city of Hiroshima, immediately killing an estimated 100,000 to 140,000 people and taking the lives (over the next five

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States, the British Empire and of China . . . are poised to strike the final blows upon Japan. . . . (3) The result of the futile and senseless German resistance . . . stands forth in awful clarity as an example to the people of Japan. . . . The full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, *will* mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese armed forces and . . . the devastation of the Japanese homeland. (4) The time has come for Japan to decide whether she will continue to be controlled by those self-willed militaristic advisers whose unintelligent calculations have brought the Empire of Japan to the threshold of annihilation, or whether she will follow the path of reason."

24. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 430–32.

25. Minomatsu Jō, ed., Takagi Sōkichi copy, *Kaigun taishō Yonai Mitsumasa oboegaki* [Memoirs of Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa] (Tokyo: Kōjinsha, 1978), 143–44, as cited in Tanaka *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 434. Churchill did indeed lose the British general election of 5 July 1945. A Labour party cabinet headed by Clement Attlee replaced his Conservative-dominated coalition government on the 27th.

26. Truman notes in his memoirs, "On July 28 Radio Tokyo announced that the Japanese government would continue to fight. There was no formal reply to the joint ultimatum of the United States, the United Kingdom, and China. There was no alternative now. The bomb was scheduled to be dropped after August 3 unless Japan surrendered before that day." Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, Vol. 1, *Year of Decisions* (Garden City, NY, 1955), 421.

years) of perhaps another one hundred thousand.[27] Two days later, citing as a pretext Japan's rejection of the Potsdam Declaration, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan.[28] On 9 August, the United States dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, immediately killing approximately thirty-five to forty thousand people and injuring more than sixty thousand.[29] That same day, in a nationwide radio report on the Potsdam Conference, President Truman gave full expression to the vengeful mood of most Americans:

> Having found the bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.[30]

Meanwhile in Tokyo, during the interval between the Potsdam Declaration and the 6 August atomic bombing of Hiroshima, the emperor himself said and did nothing about accepting the Potsdam terms, though he did make clear to Kido (on 31 July) that the imperial regalia had to be defended at all costs.[31] Kido also did nothing because (as he said later at Sugamo Prison on 17 April 1950) he thought "it would be best if we could unite the country by negotiations which would save our honor . . . [and] maybe we could do that through the good offices of the Soviet Union."[32] Prime Minister Suzuki, after his initial rejection of the Potsdam ultimatum, also saw no

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27. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 449.

28. The Soviet declaration of war stated: "Japan remains the only great power after the defeat and surrender of Hitlerian Germany which still insists on continuing the war, and has rejected the demand for the unconditional surrender of its armed forces, put forth on July 26 by the three nations: the United States of America, Britain, and China." Source: Nihon Jyānarizumu Kenkyūkai, ed., *Shōwa "hatsugen" no kiroku* [A record of public statements of the Shōwa era] (Tokyo: Tokyū Ējenshi Shuppan Jigyōbu, 1989), 94. Needless to say, Stalin did not need Suzuki's *mokusatsu* statement or the Yalta agreement to enter the war against defeated Japan. He would have done so in any case.

29. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 475. Also see for higher figures, The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings*, trans. Eisei Ishikawa and David L. Swain (New York, 1981), 114. The entire picture of the human damage wrought by the atomic bombs is difficult to grasp even today.

30. Cyril Clemens, ed., *Truman Speaks* (1946; reprint, New York, 1969), 69.

31. Kido Kōichi, *Kido Kōichi nikki, gekan* [Kido Kōichi diary, vol. 2] (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1966), 1221. Earlier, on 25 July, Hirohito told Kido that the three regalia had to be protected in order to maintain the imperial house and the *kokutai*. The imperial regalia consisted of three sacred objects – a mirror, curved jewel, and sword – symbolizing the legitimacy of the emperor's rule. Here we see the emperor acting in accordance with his commitment to his imperial ancestors and his imperial "house" (*ie*) rather than in a way appropriate to saving the lives of the Japanese people.

32. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 440–41, citing Kido Kōichi, *Kido nikki, Tokyo saiban-ki* [Kido Kōichi diary: The Tokyo trials period] (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 1980).

need to do anything further. When his Cabinet Advisory Council, reflecting the views of the nation's leading businessmen, on 30 July recommended acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration terms, Suzuki told the head of the Cabinet Intelligence Bureau and Advisory Council member, Shimomura Kainan, that

> For the enemy to say something like that means circumstances have arisen that force them also to end the war. That is why they are talking about unconditional surrender. Precisely at a time like this, if we hold firm, then they will yield before we do. Just because they broadcast their Declaration, it is not necessary to stop fighting. You advisers may ask me to reconsider, but I don't think there is any need to stop [the war].[33]

So for ten days the Potsdam Declaration was "ignored." The bombs were dropped, and Soviet forces invaded along a wide front from northern Manchuria to Korea. Then, Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori (no dove) persuaded the emperor that the declaration in itself really signified *conditional* surrender, not unconditional, though he probably had his own doubts about that interpretation. With that sticking point out of the way, Hirohito, strongly assisted by Kido, took the gamble and authorized Tōgō to notify the world that Japan would accept the Allied terms with only one condition, "that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler." The next day, 11 August, Secretary of State Byrnes replied ambiguously to this first surrender communication by alluding to the subordination of the emperor's authority to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers. He did not clearly answer the Japanese on the emperor's future status, but he did hint at the possibility that the emperor's position might be guaranteed after surrender.

At that point, another dispute erupted among the leaders in Tokyo, forcing the emperor to rule once again, on 14 August, in favor of acceptance. Afterward, he went before a microphone and recorded his capitulation announcement, which was broadcast to the Japanese nation at noon on 15 August. By then, the main concern of the moderates had already shifted to divorcing the emperor from both his actual conduct of the war and the unrealistic thinking and failed policies that had brought Japan to defeat.

Why did Japan's top leaders delay for ten days before finally "bowing to the inevitable" and surrendering without negotation? If Grew and the critics of unconditional surrender had had their way in May, June, or even July and had cut a deal on the issue of guaranteeing the dynasty, would Japan's leaders then have surrendered immediately? Or was there not more to this issue than meets the eye? What, in other words, did the Suzuki government and the "moderates" around the throne (the court group) really mean by

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33. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 443, citing Suzuki Kantarō denki hensan iinkai ed., *Suzuki Kantarō den* [The life of Suzuki Kantarō] (1960), 372.

their insistence on preserving "the prerogatives of the emperor to rule the state"? A short review of turning points and episodes leading directly to the capitulation will help to answer these questions.

(A) TŌJŌ'S RESIGNATION

From early 1943 until 18 July 1944, a small group of court officials and "senior statesmen" worked covertly to force Tōjō out of office. These men never doubted that the emperor, who had allowed Tōjō to build up dictatorial power, could dismiss his prime ministers with support from his immediate staff. Indeed, they regarded the emperor as the main obstacle in their path to peace.[34]

Kido Kōichi, the quintessential backstage man, was once as great an admirer of Tōjō as the emperor. Kido played the key role in Tōjō's downfall, yet during the tenure of Tōjō's successor, General Koiso Kuniaki (July 1944–April 1945), Kido continued to support the prowar faction of the army, as did the emperor. Tōjō's dismissal, in other words, did not connote an intention on the part of either the emperor or Kido to end the war. The emperor's view of the war situation certainly became less sanguine after Tōjō's fall, but both he and Kido remained unwilling to consider an early peace effort. The same was true of many senior statesmen who participated in "peace maneuvers" around Prince Konoe.[35]

Politically, however, Hirohito's dismissal of Tōjō signaled a profound shift. In the autumn of 1941, at the time of the decision to broaden the war by attacking Pearl Harbor, the emperor's chief political adviser, Kido Kōichi, was instrumental in forming a loose alliance between the court group and some senior statesmen, on the one hand, and the prowar forces composed of the military elite, "renovationist bureaucrats," and top leaders of the business world, on the other.[36] Ambassador Grew had never even imagined such a grouping. As for Prince Konoe, who had headed the previous cabinet, he stepped down from office, becoming an opponent of war with the United States and Britain (though not, of course, publicly so).[37] Now, almost three years later, Tōjō's 1944 resignation brought Konoe and the men around him, representing elites from all the key areas

34. Hosokawa Morisada, Konoe's secretary, was deeply involved in discussions to overthrow the Tōjō cabinet. His diary entry of 15 February 1944, reported on a meeting he had just attended, called at the request of some middle-echelon navy officers to consider the worsening crisis. "I told them that I thought the only way to break the deadlock was a coup d'etat. However, I hesitate to do it–and it is hard for me to say this–because Tōjō is so trusted at Court that if a coup were to be carried out, it would bring about an even worse result. This is why I hesitate to carry it out. The Emperor trusts Tōjō because no one tells him the truth about anything. The newspapers, Marquis Kido, and the cabinet ministers only tell him about government reports." These lines suggest that the main obstacle to the Tōjō cabinet's removal was Emperor Hirohito's trust in Tōjō.

35. Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 132–33; Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, 31.

36. Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 148.

37. Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsenshi*, 14.

of Japanese life, back to the political stage. Unenchanted by the mystique of the throne, and possessed of a realistic insight into Japan's military predicament, Konoe took the initiative in trying to break out of the hopeless war situation.

(B) THE FAILURE OF THE KOISO CABINET'S POLICIES AND THE EMPEROR'S PARTICIPATION IN PREPARATIONS FOR THE FINAL BATTLE ON THE HOMELAND

The cabinet of Tōjō's successor, Prime Minister Koiso Kuniaki—a virtual unknown when the emperor chose him—lasted for only eight months (July 1944–April 1945). During that time the war situation grew increasingly desperate. The Supreme War Leadership Council, established on 5 August 1944, thereupon launched new diplomatic initiatives aimed at getting the Nationalist government in Chungking to perceive Japan's "sincerity" and also plotted its first vague overtures to the Soviet Union. The latter plan, sponsored by the Foreign Ministry, ostensibly sought Soviet help in bringing about reconciliation between the Chinese Communists and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists. Japan could then conclude peace with the new regime in China and be in a better position to wage the "War of Greater East Asia." In return, Japan would endeavor to promote restoration of relations (that is, peace) between its Nazi ally, the Third German Reich, and the Soviet Union.[38] And why? So that Japan's crumbling hegemony in East Asia might be stabilized. This first Soviet-centered peace plan amounted to little and ended in nothing.

During the first half of 1945, American armed forces sank most of the Japanese navy, cut through the Japanese inner defense perimeter, reconquered the Philippines, and moved steadily closer to the Japanese heartland. Until the very end of this period, the emperor was not thinking of shifting policy and abandoning the war. He was preoccupied with the conduct of reckless defensive battles being fought in order to set the stage for eventually seeking an honorable way out of the war. From January through July, he attended numerous flag bestowal ceremonies at court for regiments being reorganized or newly activated for the homeland defense, reviewed plans for battles being waged on various Pacific fronts, and involved himself fully in planning for the repulse of the expected American invasion of the home islands.

The emperor's military aide, Yoshihashi Kaizō, reports in his memoir (published in 1965) that on New Year's Day, 1945, with the capital under enemy air attack, the emperor and empress were pleased to check out the special last-meal rations being provided to the departing members of the suicide units. Thereafter the emperor continued to show gratitude for these

38. Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 167–68.

"special attack forces."[39] The suicidal sacrifice of loyal subjects in battles that they had no hope of winning was rapidly becoming Japan's short-cut way of preserving the *kokutai*.

On 9 January 1945, the United States began retaking Luzon and by 3 March had occupied Manila, though the fighting in the Philippines continued until virtually the end of the war. Six days later, B-29s launched the first night incendiary air-raid over Tokyo, turning large portions of the capital into ash and burning to death an estimated eighty thousand people. Nine days later, on 18 March, the emperor inspected the capital by car. Military aide Yoshihashi, who accompanied him in a separate vehicle, later commented that,

> The victims, who had been digging through the rubble with empty expressions on their faces, watched the imperial motorcade pass by with reproachful expressions. Although we did not make the usual prior announcement, I felt that they should have known that his was a "blessed visitation" (*gyōkō*), because three to four maroon automobiles bearing the chrysanthemum crest were going by. Were they grudgeful to the emperor because they had lost their relatives, their houses and belongings? Or were they in a state of utter exhaustion and bewilderment (*kyodatsu jōtai*)? I sympathized with how His Majesty must have felt upon approaching these unfortunate victims.[40]

Yoshihashi's observation of "exhaustion and bewilderment" on the part of the people is worth noting. By March, factory production had started to fall; absenteeism was on the increase; so too were instances of lese majesty – always of keen concern for the Imperial Household Ministry. Over the next five months, from April to August, members of the militarized imperial family as well as the senior statesmen would speak of a crisis of the *kokutai*. The threat from within that Konoe had warned the emperor of in February seemed more and more palpable. Yet until the very end, most Japanese people, especially those living in rural areas, remained steadfast in their

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39. Yoshihashi Kaizō, "Jijū bukan toshite mita shūsen no toshi no kiroku" [Record of the last year of the war as seen by a military aide] in *Gunji shigaku*, No. 2 (August 1965), 96–97. Yoshihashi notes (97) that, "around that time [January 1945], because of the ferocity of the war, we asked the emperor to receive formal reports on important military affairs even on Saturday and Sunday. On that particular day I reported on the battle situation in the Philippines in the vicinity of Lingayen Gulf. When I was reporting on the commander's expression of gratitude to the suicide attack of one of the special pilots, the emperor suddenly stood up and silently made a deep bow. I was pointing at the map and His Majesty's hair touched my head, causing me to feel as though an electric current had run through my body. On a later occasion, I reported about a corporal who had made a suicide attack on a B-29 in the sky over Nagoya, and the emperor did the same thing: stood up and bowed deeply. Both times only the emperor and I were in the room. For each individual who died for the country, but especially for the special attack forces, he showed sympathy and gratitude from the bottom of his heart."

40. Ibid., 97–98.

resolve to obey their leaders and to work and sacrifice for the victory that they were constantly told was coming.

(c) "KETSU-GO" AND THE POTSDAM DECLARATION

On 1 April 1945, the battle of Okinawa began, and lasted until mid-June, by which time an estimated 94,000 to 120,000 Japanese combatants and 150,000 to 170,000 non-combatants had died. American losses were put at approximately 12,500 killed and over 33,000 wounded.[41] Five days into the battle, on 5 April, the emperor chose his former grand chamberlain and trusted adviser, retired Admiral Suzuki Kantarō, to lead a new government that would carry out the emperor's will. Neither the emperor nor Suzuki was then thinking of making any sort of policy change that might lead to the conclusion of the war.[42] It was only *after* the battle of Okinawa had been fought and horribly lost, and large portions of Japan's largest and medium-sized cities had been leveled by American incendiary air attacks, that the emperor indicated his desire for peace and official maneuvers looking to end the war got under way.

In the diary of Kido Kōichi, the first clear indication that the emperor would be asked to think seriously of peace appears on 8 June 1945, when Kido prepared his own "Draft Plan for Controlling the Crisis Situation" (*Jikyoku shūshū no taisaku shian*). That moment was a true turning point in the surrender process. It occurred after the imperial palace had been inadvertently bombed (25 May), all hope of saving Okinawa had been lost, and on the day that the Supreme War Leadership Council adopted the "Basic Policy for the Future Direction of the War."[43] Kido's "plan," a nebulous one, called for seeking the Soviet Union's assistance as a go-between so that Japan could obtain more leverage in negotiating with its enemies. By drafting it, Kido indicted that he had ended his long honeymoon relationship with the military hard-liners. A few weeks later, on 22 June, the emperor himself finally informed the Supreme War Leadership Council directly of his desire to commence maneuvers to end the war.

In early July, after Soviet Ambassador Jacob Malik had broken off his inconclusive talks in Japan with former prime minister Hirota Kōki, Hirohito, for the first time, showed a keen interest in expediting direct negotiations with the Soviet Union by dispatching a special envoy to Moscow. But neither the emperor nor the Suzuki government ever devised a concrete plan on the basis of which the Soviets could mediate an end to hostilities, assuming the Soviets were ever interested in doing so, which

41. Eguchi Keiichi, *Jūgonen sensō shōshi* [A short history of the fifteen-year war] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1991), 237; Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 183–84.

42. Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 193.

43. See *Kido Kōichi nikki, gekan*, 1208–9; Ōe Shinobu, *Gozen kaigi: Shōwa tennō jūgokai no seidan* [Imperial conferences: The Shōwa emperor's fifteen sacred decisions] (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1991), 235.

they were not. Negotiation with the Soviets to guarantee the emperor's position and the future of the monarchy, and the search for peace to end the killing and suffering never came together in the Japanese approach to war termination.[44]

American unwillingness to compromise on the policy of unconditional surrender also needs to be assessed in light of the tremendous sacrifices that the emperor kept imposing on his people, at home and abroad, in preparation for turning the home islands into a battlefield. From 8 April 1945 until its capitulation, the Suzuki government's chief war policy was "Ketsu-Go," a plan for the defense of the homeland.[45] Its defining characteristic was heavy reliance on suicide tactics. This involved using massive numbers of kamikaze "special attack" planes, human torpedoes (*kaiten*), "crash-boats" (*renraku-tei*), and suicide charges by specially trained ground units. While preparations for operation "Ketsu" went forward, a special session of the Imperial Diet passed, on 9 June, a "Wartime Emergency Measures Law" and five other measures designed to mobilize the entire nation for that last battle.

The same day, the emperor issued another imperial rescript in connection with his convocation of the Diet, ordering the nation to "smash the inordinate ambitions of the enemy nations" and "achieve the goals of the war." If any possibility had ever existed of enlisting public opinion in support of ending the war, the emperor's rescript ordering total resistance to the enemy helped put an end to it.[46] Concurrently, the controlled press waged a daily Die-for-the-Emperor campaign, a campaign to promote gratitude for the Imperial Benevolence, and, from about mid-July onward, a campaign to "protect the *kokutai*."[47]

Pressed by imperial edicts to continue their preparations for the final homeland battle and to think only of victory, the Japanese people complied as best they could. During late July and August, when the nation's prefectural governors, police chiefs, and officers of the "special higher police" submitted to the Home Ministry reports on the rapidly deteriorating spirit of the nation, there was not (according to historian Awaya Kentarō) a single reference in their nearly two thousand pages of reports (entitled *Chian jōhō*) to any popular intention to accept the terms of the Potsdam Declaration.[48] Even immedi-

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44. Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 204–6.

45. Skates, *The Invasion of Japan*, 102. An English translation of the Ketsu-Go plan can be found in *Reports of General MacArthur: Japanese operations in the Southwest Pacific Area, Volume II, Part II* (Washington, 1966), 601–7.

46. Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 196. For the text of the 9 June 1945 rescript see Senda Kakō, *Tennō to chokugo to Shōwashi* [The emperor, imperial rescripts, and Shōwa history] (Tokyo: Sekibunsha, 1983), 389.

47. For discussion of these press campaigns see Matsuura Sōzō, *Tennō to masu komi* [The emperor and the mass media] (Tokyo: Aoki Shoten, 1975), 3–14.

48. Awaya Kentarō and Kawashima Takamine, "Gyokuon hōsō wa teki no Bōryaku da" [The broadcast of the emperor's voice is an enemy trick] in *This Is Yomiuri* (November 1994), 47. The *Chian jōhō*, published in seven volumes by Nihon Tosho Centā in Tokyo in late 1994, is an invaluable source for understanding Japanese opinion at the time of the ending of the war.

ately after the dropping of the atomic bombs and the Soviet declaration of war, people generally clung to the hope of a final victory, and thus the belief that their "divine land" was indestructable. Mobilized in the service of death, the collective memory of the "divine winds" (kamikaze) that would save Japan helped to maintain the will to fight on.[49]

American intelligence analysts, meanwhile, watched all these main island preparations and saw how the Japanese people had fought and died on Okinawa. When political leaders in Washington said that the Japanese were likely to fight to the death rather than surrender unconditionally, they were not exaggerating what the Japanese government itself was saying.

(D) OVERTURES TO MOSCOW AND THE ROLE OF PRINCE KONOE

The conventional treatment of Emperor Hirohito's role in ending the war presents Japan's request for Soviet mediation (the Hirota Kōki-Jacob Malik talks) and the secret messages that Foreign Minister Tōgō Shigenori sent (in June, July, and early August) to Ambassador Satō Naotake in Moscow as serious attempts to quit the war and surrender. Yet the participants in these peace overtures perceived them as a tactic that would merely delay the inevitable capitulation.

In his "monologue," the emperor said of these Soviet negotiations that,

> We chose the Soviet Union to mediate peace for two reasons. All other countries had little power. Therefore, even if we had asked those countries to mediate, we feared they would be pressured by the British and Americans, and we would have to surrender unconditionally. By comparison, the Soviet Union had both the power and the obligation that came from having concluded a neutrality treaty.
>
> Since we did not think the Soviet Union was a trustworthy country, it was first necessary to sound them out. Consequently, we decided to go ahead with the Hirota-Malik talks [3–4, 24, and 29 June], in which we said that if they allowed us to import oil, we would not mind giving them both southern Karafuto and Manchuria.
>
> However, even when it came to the beginning of July, there was no answer from the Soviet Union. For our part, we had to decide this matter prior to the Potsdam Conference. . . . For that reason, I consulted Suzuki and decided to cancel the Hirota-Malik talks and negotiate directly with the Soviets.[50]

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49. Twice in the late thirteenth century, the "winds of the gods" decimated invading Mongul armadas off the shores of Kyūshū. By taking the name "kamikaze," the pilots who attacked Allied ships came to incarnate one of the most powerful memories in Japanese history.

50. Terasaki Hidenari and Mariko Terasaki Miller, eds., *Shōwa tennō dokuhakuroku – Terasaki Hidenari, goyōgakkari nikki* [The Shōwa emperor's monologue and the diary of Terasaki Hidenari] (Tokyo: Bungei Shunjūsha, 1991), 120–21.

Leaving aside the fact that it was Malik, not the emperor, who effectively ended the talks, Hirohito, in early July, did indeed become more concerned about negotiating an end to the war. Around that time, he and Kido pushed for secret direct negotiations with the Soviets by sending Prince Konoe to Moscow as the emperor's special envoy. Concurrently, former foreign minister Arita Hachirō, in a memorial to the throne of 9 July, pointed out to the emperor, "There is almost no chance of our bringing Chungking, Yenan, and the Soviets to our side, or of using them to improve our position. . . . [I]f we try to do this, we will merely be wasting precious time in a situation where every minute counts." Judge the big picture coolly and rationally, pleaded Arita in his audience with the emperor, for "merely to call for absolute victory will produce nothing." In order to make "the divine land . . . imperishable," we must "bear the unbearable."[51]

More important, ever since 8 June the Japanese ambassador in Moscow, Satō Naotake, had been telling Tōgō that it was unimaginable that the Soviets would ever help Japan.[52] On 13 July, Satō warned Tōgō that just because "we are overawed by the fact that the dispatch of a special envoy is the Imperial wish," it would not mean anything to the Soviets, and would only cause trouble for the Imperial Household, "if the Japanese Government's proposal brought by him is limited to an enumeration of previous abstractions, lacking in concreteness."[53] On 20 July – one day after Satō had notified Tokyo that the Soviets had indeed refused to accept the special envoy "on the grounds that the mission is not specific" – (just as he had been saying they would do all along), the ambassador sent his most emotional telegram yet to Tōgō, summing up his feelings about the whole situation. Satō (like Arita on 9 July, and Prince Konoe ever since February) urged immediate surrender because the state was on the verge of being destroyed. "[T]his matter of protecting the national polity [*kokutai*]," Satō emphasized, could be considered as "one of a domestic nature and therefore excluded from the terms of a peace treaty."[54] In other words, there was no need for Japan to insist on securing a foreign guarantee of its monarchy: The *kokutai* could be saved without delaying surrender and rehabilitated later when Japan once again became independent.

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51. Arita concluded his memorial with the words: "Your Majesty confronts this crisis with his inherent wisdom. I humbly ask Your Majesty to view the trend of the war and resolutely act to save the imperial nation at its critical moment. I am respectfully reporting this with utter trepidation and awe." Source: Gaimushō, hen, *Shūsen shiroku 3* [Historical records of the ending of the war, volume 3], 208.

52. Satō to Tōgō, 8 June 1945, in Gaimushō, hen, *Shūsen shiroku 3*, 191.

53. Satō to Tōgō, Moscow, 13 July 1945, in U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, The Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), 1945* (Washington, 1960), 1:881.

54. Satō to Tōgō, no. 1227, Moscow, 19 July, and no. 1228, Moscow, 20 July 1945, in ibid. 2:1251 and 1256. For the Japanese original see Gaimushō, hen, *Shūsen shiroku 3* (Tokyo: Hokuyōsha, 1977), 199.

Nevertheless, because the emperor was adamant on precisely this point, Tōgō persisted, telling Satō that Japan could not indicate its peace plan in advance and that he should concentrate on learning Soviet intentions and getting them to accept Prince Konoe as the emperor's special peace envoy. On 2 August, a week after the Potsdam Declaration was issued, Tōgō sent another message to Satō responding to the ambassador's earlier criticism of sending Konoe to Moscow. In the telegram, Tōgō stated,

> Right now the urgent matter for us is to have the Soviet Union agree to receive our envoy. The emperor too is deeply concerned with the development of this issue. The prime minister and the military leaders are also placing their hopes on this one matter. Consequently, although you might have your own opinion, understand this situation and somehow stimulate the Soviet side to accept our special envoy.[55]

After receiving Tōgō's message, Satō cabled the Foreign Ministry on 4 August again urging acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration.[56]

Neither Satō nor retired foreign ministers Shigemitsu Mamoru or Arita Hachirō ever believed the war could be ended through the good offices of the Soviet Union. Foreign Minister Tōgō himself doubted it. But in compliance with the emperor's wishes, Tōgō persisted even after 4 August. As Tanaka Nobumasa noted, Tōgō would not agree to direct negotiations with the Allied powers even when the president of the Cabinet Intelligence Bureau, Shimomura Kainan, visited his private residence on 4 August and pleaded with him that, "It is not enough to have dealings only with the Soviet Union. There is no hope if we continue like this. Somehow, by backdoor channels, we must negotiate with the United States, Britain, and China."[57]

Tōgō sent his last message to Satō, still asking him to discover the attitude of the Soviet side, on 7 August. But by then Stalin already knew about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. (Caught off guard by the news of the American destruction of an entire Japanese city, he decided to enter the war on 9 August, a week earlier than previously scheduled, or a week earlier than President Truman had anticipated.[58] By dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Truman inadvertently deepened the Soviet dictator's suspicion of the United States and contributed to the later onset of the Cold War.)

Since the Foreign Ministry's messages to Moscow were intercepted and decoded by U.S. intelligence and probably read, at least in part, by Tru-

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55. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 439, citing Gaimushō, hen, *Shūsen shiroku* (Tokyo: Shinbun Gekkansha, 1952), 524–25.

56. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 440.

57. Ibid., 444.

58. Ibid., 461–62. In his memoirs, Truman claims not to have been surprised by the Soviet decision. On the initial Soviet reaction to Hiroshima see David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939–1956* (New Haven, 1994), 127–29; and the review of Holloway by Vladislav Zubok in *Science*, 266 (21 October 1994): 466–68.

man, it has been argued that the president could–and should–have backed away at least somewhat from the unconditional surrender formula. But these messages clearly were always too tentative and vague to constitute a serious attempt at negotiating an end to the war.[59]

Even the letter that the Foreign Ministry had already prepared for Konoe's projected (but unrealized) secret mission as the emperor's special envoy is reported to have aimed mainly at obtaining a Soviet guarantee of the future of the throne and its current occupant.[60] Preservation of the *kokutai* was the single condition for peace. Furthermore, the "emperor's letter" reportedly implied that the war had been generated spontaneously, and that insofar as the United States and Britain insisted on unconditional surrender, they, not Japan, were the main obstacles to peace.[61]

Unable to decide to end the war unless the future of the throne and its occupant were absolutely guaranteed, the Suzuki cabinet and the Supreme War Leadership Council never framed a peace maneuver from the viewpoint of saving the Japanese people from further destruction.[62] They waited, instead, until their foreign enemies had created a situation that gave them a face-saving excuse to surrender in order to prevent the *kokutai* from being destroyed by antiwar, antimilitary pressure originating from the Japanese people themselves. The bomb, followed by the Soviet declaration of war, gave them the signs they needed. This is why (as Tanaka Nobumasa pointed out) Yonai Mitsumasa could say to Takagi Sōkichi, on 12 August, that

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59. Historians of the A-bomb decision generally conclude that Truman knew of the contents of the intercepted and decoded Japanese "peace feelers," and that Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal and Army chief of staff General George C. Marshall were also informed of the cables. But it is equally important to understand that these cables were not evidence of the Japanese government's commitment to surrender unconditionally, because there was no such commitment prior to Hiroshima and the Soviet entry into the war. Elliptical statements in Truman's diaries that the emperor was "asking for peace" should not be misunderstood. What the emperor and Kido were promoting up to that time was the preservation of the emperor's power and his imperial "house," both matters of profound political and cultural significance to all the ruling elites. On U.S. knowledge see, for example, Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York, 1951), 74–77; Robert Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York, 1980), 53–54; and Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 396.

60. Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 212–13. The "emperor's letter" that Konoe was to have carried to Moscow was apparently quite short. The full text of it seems not to have been printed, though a precis of it can be found in Gaimushō, hen, *Shūsen shiroku 3*, 160–61.

61. Yamada and Kōketsu, *Ososugita seidan*, 212.

62. The "Essentials of Peace Negotiations" (*wahei kōshō no yōryō*), a document that Konoe and his advisers drafted after Konoe had accepted his mission to Moscow, is another example of ruling elite thinking about surrender terms. Yoshida Yutaka points out that the "Essentials" stipulated the preservation of the emperor system as the absolute minimum condition for peace, but showed a willingness to concede, for a fixed period of time, all overseas territories and complete disarmament. More significant, a detailed "interpretation" attached to the "Essentials" noted, with respect to the "interpretation of the *kokutai*," that "the main aim is to secure the imperial line and carry out politics by the emperor. In the worst case scenario, however, the transfer of the throne to a successor might be unavoidable." "Some revision of regulations means that, in an unavoidable situation, it will extend to the revision of the constitution and undemocratic laws." Significantly, even Konoe did not dare to seek the emperor's approval of his attached "Interpretation." Source: Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsenshi*, 23–24.

> I think the term is perhaps inappropriate, but the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war are, in a sense, gifts from the gods [*tenyu*, also "heaven sent blessings"]. This way we don't have to say that we have quit the war because of domestic circumstances. Why I have long been advocating control of the crisis of the country is neither for fear of an enemy attack nor because of the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war. The main reason is my anxiety over the domestic situation. So, it is rather fortunate that now we can control matters without revealing the domestic situation.[63]

Similar reasons of political expediency also account for why Konoe called Soviet participation in the war "a godsend for controlling the army." An internal power struggle was going on, making it immaterial to the players if one hundred thousand or two hundred thousand people died as long as they could get their desired outcome: an end to the war that left the monarchy intact, available to control the forces of discontent that defeat would inevitably unleash. In the final scene of the war drama, as in earlier ones, the Japanese "moderates" found it easier to bow to outside forces than to act positively on their own to end the war.

(E) ONE CONDITION VS. FOUR CONDITIONS

The twin psychological shocks of the first atomic bomb and the Soviet entry into the war, coupled with Kido's and the emperor's concern over growing popular criticism of the throne and its occupant, and the possibility that, sooner or later, the people would react violently against their leaders if they allowed the war to go on much longer—these factors finally caused Hirohito to accept, in principle, the terms of the Potsdam Declaration.[64]

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63. On Yonai and Takagi see Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsenshi*, 27. For the full statement quoted here see Takagi Sōkichi, *Takagi kaigun shōshō oboegaki* [Memoirs of Rear Admiral Takagi] (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1979), 351, cited in Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 475.

In this essay, I have not addressed the question of the second bomb, whose use seems so gratuitous. The evidence suggests, howeveer, that the atomic bomb and the Soviet invasion made the emperor, Kido, and other members of the court group feel that any further continuation of the war would lead to the destruction of the *kokutai* from within. They knew that the people were war weary and despondent, and that popular hostility toward the military and the government was increasing rapidly, along with popular criticism of the emperor himself. More particularly, Kido and Hirohito were privy to Home Ministry reports, based on reports by governors and police chiefs from all over the country, showing that people were starting to say that the emperor was an incompetent leader, responsible for the worsening war situation. The court group's very strong sense of internal crisis must be taken account of when assessing whether alternatives to the bomb would have ended the war prior to the invasion scheduled for 1 November. My own estimate is that massive conventional bombing alone, or in combination with a Soviet declaration of war, would have forced Japan's leaders to surrender before the start of Operation Olympic.

64. Kido's diary around the time of capitulation shows him meeting frequently with the chief of the Home Ministry's Police Bureau and the superintendent-general of the Metropolitan Police, while also collecting the latest information about the worsening domestic situation directly from the commander of the Military Police. In addition, Rear Admiral Takagi

At meetings of the Supreme War Leadership Council on 9 August, War Minister Anami Korechika and Chief of Staff Umezu Yoshijirō, representing the army, Yonai, representing the navy, and Tōgō, representing the Foreign Ministry, debated not whether to surrender but whether to try to surrender with conditions–one condition (preservation of the *kokutai*), or four.

The army (and in some accounts, initially the navy, represented by Yonai) insisted on four.[65] These were preservation of the *kokutai*, assumption by the imperial headquarters of responsibility for disarmament and demobilization, no occupation, and the delegation to the Japanese government of the punishment of war criminals.[66] The self-serving desire of the army to have autonomous war crimes trials was predicated on their belief that the Allies would use such trials to indict the military on political grounds. Hence, they wanted to preempt the work of any international tribunal by conducting their own trials–exactly as the Germans had done after World War I.[67]

Supporting the military's views were three civilian members of the Suzuki cabinet: Justice Minister Matsuzaka Hiromasa, Home Minister Yasui Tōji,

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Sōkichi recalled after the war that on 12 July 1945, when Prince Konoe told Hirohito, "The situation today has reached the point where people hold a grudge against the imperial house," the emperor "agreed completely." Sources: Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsenshi*, 29–30, citing Takagi, *Takagi kaigun shōshō oboegaki*. Also see Hayashi Shigeru, Andō Yoshio, et al., eds., *Nihon shūsenshi jōkan, hachi gatsu jūgonichi no kūdetā hoka* [History of the termination of the war] (Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbunsha, 1962), 196–210; Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 460; and John W. Dower, "Sensational Rumors, Seditious Graffiti, and the Nightmares of the Thought Police," in John W. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New York, 1993), 101–54.

65. In his dictated statement to Ōi Atsushi of GHQ's Historical Section on 28 November 1949, Tōgō said, "I cannot recall that Minister of the Navy Yonai introduced all the four conditions" and went on to accuse Anami, Umezu, and Toyoda of adding three conditions to the single one that he, Tōgō, had proposed. But other officials interrogated in the follow-up interviews stated otherwise.

66. According to Tanaka Nobumasa's reconstruction, based on the memoirs of Toyoda Soemu and Tōgō Shigenori, General Umezu stated the case for self-disarmament as follows: "Up to now the Japanese military has not permitted open surrender. The word 'surrender' is not in the Japanese military lexicon. In military education, if you lose your weapons, you fight with your bare hands. When your hands are no longer any good, you fight with your legs. When you can no longer use your hands and legs, you bite with your teeth. Finally, when you can no longer fight, you bite off your tongue and commit suicide. That is what we have been teaching. I do not think that it will go smoothly to order such an army to abandon its weapons and surrender. Our army and the allied army will designate the place and time in each theater of operations. We ourselves will collect the weapons in those designated places and the units also will gather there to hand over their weapons. Only afterwards will we act according to their instructions. That is what we should request of them." Source: Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 479–80. In fact, the Japanese military had already begun to disintegrate from within when Anami made his statement.

67. Awaya Kentarō, "Tokyo saiban ni miru sengo shori" [Postwar management as seen in the Tokyo trials] in Awaya Kentarō, et al., *Sensō sekinin, sengo sekinin: Nihon to Doitsu wa dō chigau ka* [War responsibility, postwar responsibility: How Germany and Japan differ] (Tokyo: Asahi Shinbunsha, 1994), 79–80.

and Minister of Health Okada Tadahiko.[68] Foreign Minister Tōgō alone held that the sole condition to be insisted on was preservation of the *kokutai*.

Tanaka Nobumasa believes there is no evidence to show that the emperor and Kido initially sided with Tōgō and opposed the four conditions of the senior military leaders. The more likely inference is that they still sympathized with the military die-hards, who preferred to continue the suicidal war rather than surrender unconditionally. This may account for why Konoe had Hosokawa Morisada urge Prince Takamatsu to press Hirohito (his elder brother) to accept the Potsdam terms, and why Konoe also enlisted the help of Shigemitsu Mamoru in persuading Kido to change his stand. At the urging of Takamatsu and Shigemitsu, Kido did indeed shift to the Foreign Ministry's position.

As Yoshida Yutaka pointed out, however, credit for ending the war must also be given to the younger generation of bureaucrats who assisted the court leaders: Kido's secretary, Matsudaira Yasumasa; Suzuki's secretary, Sakomizu Hisatsune; Tōgō's and Shigemitsu's secretary, Kase Toshikazu; and the assistant to Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa, Rear Admiral Takagi Sōkichi. Not only were these men instrumental in pressing the emperor's top aides to accept the Potsdam terms. They also played a major role behind the scenes, after the surrender, in shielding the emperor from the terrible consequences of defeat.[69] The desire to protect the emperor would thereafter limit and distort how the surrender process was depicted. Matsudaira Yasumasa even managed to get the false official version of the emperor's role in the war inserted into *The Reports of General MacArthur*. His essay ("The Japanese Emperor and the War") appears as the "Appendix" to "Volume II-Part 2" of the *Reports*, which MacArthur's staff group printed in Tokyo in 1950, under the general editorship of Major General Charles A. Willoughby.[70]

The crafting of historical memory of how the war ended began in Tokyo in the early morning hours of 9–10 August, when the emperor, who had joined the "peace camp" belatedly in June, and thereafter vacillated, formally accepted the Potsdam Declaration, in a speech to his ministers scripted for him by Kido and delivered in his characteristic high-pitched voice. Sakomizu, who knew beforehand that the forty-four-year-old emperor was going to give a speech that night, had come to the meeting

68. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 493–94. Also see Tōgō's dictated statements to investigators from the Historical Section of GHQ in the follow-up interviews of 17 May 1949 and 17 August 1950. In *U.S. Army Statements of Japanese Officials on World War II* (n.p. 1949–50), Volume 4, Microfilm Shelf No. 51256, National Archives, Washington, DC.

69. Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsenshi*, 31.

70. See *Reports of General MacArthur: Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area, Volume II-Part 2* (Washington: GPO, 1966), 763–71. According to General Harold K. Johnson's "Foreword" to this four-volume history, "While he lived, General MacArthur was unwilling to approve the reproduction and dissemination of the *Reports*, because he believed they needed further editing and correction of some inaccuracies." One of the more conspicuous inaccuracies is Matsudaira's essay. For Matsudaira's role in the Japanese campaign to protect the emperor see Bix, "The Shōwa Emperor's 'Monologue,' " 322–34, 358.

prepared to document it. He wrote up the emperor's words in smooth, businesslike language. A brief precis of the speech may also be found in Kido's diary entry of 10 August. Many months later, in his "monologue," the emperor himself recounted what was most relevant to understanding the motivation for his *seidan* on the night of 9–10 August.

> The [Supreme War Leadership] Council continued meeting until after 2 AM on August 10, but failed to reach agreement. Suzuki made his decision and expressed his wish that I should decide between the two opinions.
>
> Six people, apart from Prime Minister Suzuki, were present at the meeting: Hiranuma, Yonai, Anami, Tōgō, Umezu and Toyoda.
>
> Although everybody agreed to attach the condition of preserving the *kokutai*, three–Anami, Toyoda and Umezu–insisted on adding three further conditions: not to carry out an occupation with the aim of securing specific surrender terms, and to leave disarmament and the punishment of war criminals to us. Not only that, they insisted that negotiation on these matters was still possible at the present stage of the war. But four people–Suzuki, Hiranuma, Yonai and Tōgō–argued against them, saying there was no room to negotiate.
>
> I thought, then, that it was impossible to continue the war. From the Chief of the Army General Staff I had heard that the defenses of Cape Inubō and the Kujūkuri coastal plain were still not ready. Also, according to the Army Minister, the materials needed to complete the armaments for the divisions which would fight the final battle in the Kantō region could not be delivered until September.
>
> How could the capital be defended under such conditions?
>
> How was a battle even possible? It was beyond my comprehension.
>
> I told them that I supported the Foreign Ministry's proposal. . . . The main motive behind my decision at that time was that if we let matters stand and did not act, the Japanese race would perish and I would be unable to protect my subjects [*sekishi*=literally, infants, children]. Second, Kido agreed with me on the matter of defending the *kokutai*. If the enemy landed near Ise Bay, both Ise and Atsuta shrines would immediately come under their control. There would be no time to transfer the sacred treasures [regalia] of the imperial family and no hope of protecting them. Under these circumstances, protection of the *kokutai* would be difficult. For these reasons, I thought at the time that I must make peace even at the sacrifice of myself.[71]

Four features of this speech deserve comment. First, the emperor says that he had been told by his army minister that the capital could not be

71. Terasaki and Miller, eds., *Shōwa tennō dokubakuroku–Terasaki Hidenari, goyōgakkari nikki*, 125–26.

defended. But ever since June he had known that continuation of the war was impossible. Why had he waited so long before making a policy decision to surrender? Second, the emperor already knew, before Hiroshima was bombed (6 August), that his cabinet was divided on accepting the Potsdam terms; he also knew that only he could unify government affairs and military command. Why, then, had he waited until the evening of the 9th – that is, until after yet another act of tremendous outside pressure had been applied – to call the Supreme War Leadership Council into session?[72] Third, the emperor expresses his fear of the extinction of the Japanese race, thereby laying the greatest weight of all on his duty as an individual to his imperial ancestors. If the people ("my loyal subjects") are all wiped out, he will not be able to fulfill the main mission of his life, which was to bequeath the throne to his imperial descendants.[73] Fourth, the emperor uses the phrase "even at the sacrifice of myself" – and repeats it on several occasions thereafter – in order to convey the impression of a sacrificial spirit. But what, one might ask, did those words mean when measured against the scores of millions who, by that time, had died in his war?

Once the emperor had made his "sacred decision" (*seidan*), a cabinet conference deliberated on Tōgō's one condition. At the suggestion of Privy Council President Hiranuma Kiichirō, they agreed to reformulate their acceptance to read: "with the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler [*tennō no kokka tōji no taiken*]."

This was an affirmation that the emperor's rights of sovereignty antedated the constitution and were determined by the gods in antiquity, just as the preamble to the Meiji Constitution stated.[74] The Japanese government, in other words, was still fighting to maintain the *kokutai;* and despite all that had happened, it was asking the Allies to guarantee the emperor's political power to rule the state on the theocratic premises of state Shinto.[75] It was not constitutional monarchy that the Suzuki cabinet was seeking to have the Allies assure, but monarchy based on the principle of oracular sovereignty. In the final analysis, the *kokutai* meant to them, in their extreme moment of crisis, the orthodox Shinto-National Learning view of the state and the retention of real, substantial political power in the hands of the emperor, so that he and the "moderates" might go on using it to control the people.[76]

If Grew and the Japan crowd had gotten their way, and the principle of unconditional surrender had been contravened, it is highly unlikely that Japan's post-surrender leaders, now the "moderates" around the throne,

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72. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 472.

73. Ibid., 504. In Sakomizu's memorandum, the emperor's words are: "My duty is to bequeath to posterity Japan, the country I inherited from my ancestors."

74. Tanaka, *Dokyumento Shōwa tennō, dai go kan*, 506.

75. Ibid., 507.

76. Yokota Kisaburō, *Tennōsei* [The emperor system] (Tokyo: Rōdō Bunkasha, 1949), 183–84.

would ever have discarded the Meiji Constitution and democratized their political institutions.

CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis of war termination in Japan during 1945 shows that never at any time did the Japanese military exercise complete dominance over the political process. As the losing war dragged on after the fall of the Tōjō cabinet, the senior leaders of the army and navy became increasingly beholden for their positions of power to the court and the moderates around the throne.

More important, the analysis underscores the active role of the Shōwa Emperor Hirohito in supporting the actions carried out in his name. When he is properly restored in the overall picture as supreme generalissimo, it becomes possible to draw the following conclusions: neither (a) American unwillingness to make a firm, timely statement assuring continuation of the throne, as Grew had argued for, nor (b) the last-minute anti-Soviet strategic stance of Truman and Byrnes, who probably wanted use of the atomic bomb rather than diplomatic negotiation, are sufficient, in and of themselves, to account for use of the bomb, or for Japan's delay in ending the suicidal conflict. Rather, Emperor Hirohito's reluctance to face the fait accompli of defeat, and then to act, positively and energetically, to end hostilities, plus certain official acts and policies of his government, are what mainly prolonged the war, though they were not sufficient cause for use of the bomb. In the last analysis, what counted, on the one hand, was not only the transcendent influence of the throne, but the power, authority, and unique personality of its occupant, and on the other, the power, determination, and unique character of Harry Truman.

From the very start of the war, the emperor was a major protagonist of the events going on around him. Before the battle of Okinawa he had constantly pressed for *a* decisive victory. Afterward, he accepted the need for an early peace, but vacillated, steering Japan toward continued warfare rather than toward direct negotiations with the Allies. When the final crisis was fully upon him, the only option left was surrender without negotiation. Again, it was not so much the Allied policy of unconditional surrender that prolonged the Pacific war, as it was the unrealistic and incompetent actions of Japan's highest leaders.

Blinded by their preoccupation with the fate of the imperial house, those leaders let pass every opportunity to end the lost war until it was too late. Hirohito and his inner war cabinet – the Supreme War Leadership Council – could have looked reality in the face and acted, decisively, to sue for peace during February, when Prince Konoe made his report and military intelligence officers alerted them to the likelihood of the Soviet Union entering the war against Japan by mid-summer.

Their second opportunity missed came in June, when the showdown-battle of Okinawa had been lost, when government analyses indicated that

the war could soon no longer be waged, and when General Umezu unveiled for the emperor the bleak results of his personal survey of the situation in China.[77] Considering that Foreign Minister Molotov had earlier notified Tokyo (on 5 April) that the Japan-Soviet Neutrality Pact would not be extended, and that the Germans had surrendered unconditionally (on 7 May), this certainly would have been an opportune moment for them to have opened direct negotiations with the United States and Britain.

Their third opportunity missed was 27–28 July, when the Potsdam Declaration arrived and the Suzuki cabinet, after careful deliberation, twice publicly rejected it.

Last was the interval between their receipt of the declaration and the bombing of Hiroshima, when the emperor and Kido waited for a response from Moscow–a response that Satō and many others repeatedly stated would never come.

The Japanese "peace" overtures to the Soviets, which followed Germany's capitulation to the Allies, were vague, feeble, and counterproductive, in effect of no importance at all. Those maneuvers certainly did not constitute a serious attempt to negotiate an end to the war. Tōgō himself conceded as much when he said, on 17 August 1950, that "although I asked the Soviet Union to act as peace mediator, I was unable to advise her of our peace conditions in any concrete form."[78]

Would Japan's leaders have surrendered promptly if the Truman administration had clarified the status of the emperor prior to the cataclysmic double shocks of the atomic bomb and Soviet entry into the war? Probably not, though they were likely to have surrendered in order to prevent the *kokutai* from being destroyed from within.

The emperor's staging of the *seidan* on the night of 9–10 August, his repeat performance of it on the morning of the 14th, and finally, the dramatic radio reenactment of the *seidan* on a national scale (with the whole nation participating) at noon on the 15th–these events reinforced the emperor's charisma while preparing him for his public role in the new drama that was about to begin in the postwar period. The emperor's rescript ending the war was a shocking act, a bolt from the blue, which caught the Japanese people totally unprepared and literally staggered them. To ensure popular understanding of his message, the radio announcer Wada Shinken reread the entire rescript in ordinary language. A cabinet announcement followed, condemning the United States for use of the atomic bombs in

77. In his "monologue" the emperor says, "Umezu returned from Manchuria the day after the [imperial] conference [of 8 June]. According to his report, even with all our forces in China we could only resist eight American divisions. If, therefore, the United States landed ten divisions in China, there was absolutely no chance of winning. It was the first time that Umezu ever complained like this." Source: *Shōwa tennō dokubakuroku, Terasaki Hidenari, goyōgakari nikki*, 116–17.

78. Tōgō statement of 17 August 1950, p. 4, in U.S. Army Statements of Japanese Officials on World War II, Vol. IV, microfilm shelf no. 51256.

violation of international law, and the Soviet Union for declaring war against Japan. Thereupon, Wada made this commentary on the news:

> We people who invited a situation where we had no choice but to lay down our arms, were unable to live up to the great benevolence of the emperor, but he did not even scold us. On the contrary, he said that whatever might happen to himself, "I can no longer bear to see the people die in war." In the face of such great benevolence and love, who could not reflect on his own disloyalty.[79]

Wada ended by reiterating the imperial message, "Since the situation has developed this way, the nation will unite and, believing in the indestructability of the divine land, put all of its energies into rebuilding for the future."

In the weeks and months that followed, while vast amounts of secret materials pertaining to Japanese war crimes and the war responsibility of the nation's highest leaders went up in smoke, the media and the cabinet of Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko, which succeeded Suzuki's on 17 August, represented the emperor to the nation as the benevolent sage who had ended the war. The surrender broadcast "ritual" confirmed his inherent power to create a radically new situation in which the Japanese people could return to peaceful economic pursuits, ever mindful that their emperor had saved them, and the rest of the world, from further destruction by atomic bombs.[80]

Meanwhile, the very naming of this event has impeded a deeper understanding of it. For Hirohito's *seidan*, or "sacred decision," denoted not only his act of ending the war, but the preexisting (post-1868) imperial narrative into which it was fitted. In short, the events of 9–10, 14, and 15 August automatically partook of a framework of meaning that protected the emperor's actions from criticism. Yet seldom have writers in English commented on the multiple (political and memorializing) functions that the last *seidan*(s) have served.

Ironically, when Emperor Hirohito first toured Hiroshima after the war, over seventy thousand well-wishing citizens cheered, and the brass band of the Hiroshima Railway Bureau played the national anthem as his motorcade crossed Aioi Bridge at the epicenter of the atomic explosion.[81] His tour planners had chosen for his entrance into the city 7 December 1947, the sixth anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. As he stood on the roof of the city hall and looked out over the rapid reconstruction that had taken place since the bomb was dropped, there was no *visible* expression of popular resentment against him.

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79. Yoshida, *Shōwa tennō no shūsenshi*, 33, citing Takeyama Akiko, *Gyokuon hōsō* [The broadcast of the emperor's voice] (Tokyo: Banseisha, 1989), 128.

80. The notion of the surrender as a broadcast "ritual" comes from Takeyama, *Gyokuon hōsō*, 71.

81. On the Hiroshima visit see Suzuki Masao, *Shōwa tennō no gojunkō* [The Shōwa Emperor's local tours] (Tokyo: Tentensha, 1992), 210–13.