

Japan's Imperial Institution and the U.S. Strategy to End World War II

**A Monograph
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Will-to-Fight:

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Abstract

Will-to-Fight: Japan's Imperial Institution and the U.S. Strategy to End World War II by Major Eric S. Fowler, U.S. Army, 58 pages.

Sun Tzu asserts that success is not winning every battle fought, but subduing the enemy's will without fighting. Nevertheless, modern military thought fails to distinguish an enemy's will-to-fight from their means to do so, limiting the ways military leaders apply operational art, problem framing, and conflict termination in pursuit of strategic objectives. The author asserts that gaining and maintaining a position of relative advantage for favorable conflict resolution requires leaders to understand the enemy's will-to-fight with equal fidelity as their means. This study examines U.S. planning efforts for post-WWII Japan from 1942 to 1945, focusing on the options planners possessed to achieve their ends; their choice to safeguard the Japanese Emperor; their understanding of the Japanese will-to-fight; and the way planners developed that understanding. The record reveals that—despite more forceful options—planners favored safeguarding the Imperial Institution; planners considered the Japanese people's will-to-fight as inexorably linked to the condition of their Sovereign, increasing in response to threats against Japanese national identity; and planners developed this understanding through discourse among experts in diplomacy, military governance, political culture, anthropology, and military intelligence. The implication—an enemy's will-to-fight can be targeted separate from their means and doing so may not require fighting.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Background.....	1
The Problem	2
Purpose	2
Importance	2
Theoretical Framework	3
Research Questions	4
Hypotheses	5
Organization	6
Extant Literature.....	6
Introduction	6
Military Theory	6
Current U.S. Doctrine.....	8
Key Terms	9
Summary.....	10
Methodology	10
Introduction	10
Research Method.....	10
Selection of Case	11
Measurement Criteria	12
Data Sources.....	13
Scope	14
Summary.....	14
Case Study: The Imperial Decision.....	15
Introduction	15
Pre-Discourse Planning	16
The Foregone Harsh Peace	21
The Prospect of Soft Peace.....	29
The Return to Harsh Peace	42
Summary.....	50
Conclusions	51
Findings	51
Implications	53
Recommendations for Further Research	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY	55

Introduction

Background

Sun Tzu asserts that to succeed in war, one need not win every battle fought, but instead seek to subdue the enemy's will-to-fight without fighting.¹ Military thought since Sun Tzu's seminal work preserves many of his ideas about defeating an enemy's will; indeed, it is critical, it is targetable, and it can be subdued. Nevertheless, modern military doctrine fails to address fully how commanders may defeat an enemy's will without fighting. In fact, current U.S. military doctrine considers how to defeat an enemy's will-to-fight by focusing too narrowly on the use of force or threat. This perspective leaves operational planners with only violence as the means to achieve their ends and the threat of violence against the enemy's means-to-fight as their way. By Sun Tzu's interpretation of skill, such methods are already second best.

Current military thought fails to appreciate an enemy's will-to-fight as separate from the means-to-fight and thus fails to understand it within the broader strategic context. As such, the author asserts that in order to gain and maintain a position of relative advantage for favorable conflict resolution, operational planners must understand the enemy's will-to-fight with just as much fidelity as they understand the enemy's means-to-fight.² Only through such understanding can operational planners apply a full range of tactical actions to achieve often-nuanced strategic aims.

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. and trans. Roger T. Ames (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 85.

² U.S. Department of the Army, *Unified Land Operations*, Army Doctrinal Publication 3-0 (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, October 2011).

The Problem

This monograph seeks to address the problem of the apparent gap in military knowledge regarding the enemy's will-to-fight. Neither U.S. Army professional military education nor contemporary U.S. military doctrine provides guidance on how to understand an enemy's will-to-fight. Consequently, operational planners and commanders tend to favor defeating an enemy through the destruction of the easily identified means-to-fight instead of subduing the poorly defined will. As such, military planners likely possess unrecognized opportunities to achieve their objectives, making their plans inefficient at best and ineffective at worst. Thus, the gap in military knowledge regarding the enemy's will-to-fight represents an obstacle to the applications of operational art, problem framing, and conflict termination.

Purpose

The purpose this monograph seeks to achieve is first to add to the body of military knowledge regarding operational art, problem framing, and conflict termination. Next, it seeks to underscore the influence that understanding an enemy's will-to-fight has on those applications. Lastly, it intends to broaden the cognitive tools available to operational planners by examining a case where planners developed an understanding of their enemy's will-to-fight and set conditions favorable for conflict resolution by deliberately safeguarding the source of that will from force or threat.

Importance

This study demonstrates its importance in three fundamental ways. First, it identifies a critical gap in contemporary military thought regarding an enemy's will-to-fight. Second, it reveals the influence this gap has on the applications of operational art, problem framing, and conflict termination. Third, it fills that gap with a historical example of an operation where

planners deliberately considered the consequences of their strategy in light of the enemy's will-to-fight.

Theoretical Framework

A singular theoretical framework provides the logical context for this monograph and understanding that logic will greatly assist readers. From a cognitive perspective, Peter Senge's *Learning Organization* provides insight into how organizations improve performance over time through integrating knowledge into their collective thinking more efficiently and effectively. In his 1990 work, *The Fifth Discipline*, Senge asserts that organizations, through the cultivation of Personal Mastery, Shared Vision, Mental Models, Team Learning, and Systems Thinking, tend to achieve a state of improved collective learning.³

These five *disciplines* represent conditions within an organization, at the individual and collective level, which promote the free flow of information, the critical consideration of ideas, and the synthesis of information into corporate knowledge. The first discipline of Personal Mastery is an individual-level condition, representing organizational members with professional quality education and expertise in a required field.⁴ The second discipline of Shared Vision is a collective-level condition, representing a group dynamic whereby organizational members share common understanding of the future they seek to create.⁵ The third discipline of Mental Models

³ For a comprehensive explanation of Senge's "Five Disciplines," their consequence, their application, and their impediment see Peter Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (New York: Random House, 2006), 5-26.

⁴ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 7-8; U.S. Department of the Army, *The Operations Process*, Field Manual 5-0, Change 1, 3-6.

⁵ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 9; Department of the Army, *The Operations Process*, 3-1.

may occur at both the individual and collective level simultaneously.⁶ Individual Mental Models or *gestalt* represent those deep-seated, personal, perhaps unconscious assumptions about the way the world works based upon an individual's experience. Collective Mental Models represent similar, but shared assumptions based upon organizational culture, procedure, or doctrine. The fourth discipline of Team Learning is a collective-level condition, representing the process of "dialogue" or the developing of shared meaning.⁷ The fifth discipline of Systems Thinking is also a collective-level condition, representing the synthesis of the previous four.⁸ In System's Thinking, organizations combine the detailed information from Personal Mastery with the desired end state of the Shared Vision, analyzing these ideas with the organizing principles of Mental Models in order to develop a common meaning or Team Learning.

These five organizational conditions or disciplines provide a theoretical framework for understanding the interplay of expert knowledge, goals, personal *gestalt*, contemporary thought, and professional discourse on both the planning process and the plan. Although each discipline is an integral part of the Senge learning organization, this monograph focuses on the effects of Mental Models (both individual and collective) and Team Learning on the operational planning process.

Research Questions

As the end of WWII drew near and a costly invasion of the Japanese home islands loomed on the horizon, the U.S. post-WWII Japan planners pursued a strategy to safeguard the

⁶ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 8-9; Bryan Lawson, *How Designers Think: The Design Process Demystified* (Boston, MA: Elsevier Publishing, 2007), 12; Department of the Army, *The Operations Process*, 2-10.

⁷ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 9-10; Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 6; Department of the Army, *The Operations Process*, 1-10.

⁸ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, 6-7; Department of the Army, *The Operations Process*, 3-9.

Japanese Imperial Institution from harm. This strategy stood in stark contrast to the harsh treatment planned for the German *Fuehrer* and his associated Nazi Party. This choice of strategy begs the questions—*what options did U.S. post-WWII Japan planners have in terms of strategy at the end of WWII and why did they choose to safeguard the Japanese Imperial Institution?*

These two basic questions lead to supplemental questions regarding the planner's understanding of the Japanese people's will-to fight. These questions include—*what did U.S. post-WWII Japan planners understand about the enemy's will-to-fight, how did their understanding of the Japanese will-to-fight inform the strategy they pursued, and how did they develop that understanding?*

Hypotheses

As a starting point for further investigation and based upon only cursory knowledge of the situation, the author offers the following suppositions for the proposed research questions. Based upon the influence of military thought at the time, it is reasonable to expect that U.S. post-WWII Japan planners considered two primary options—to invade the Japanese home islands, or compel Japanese surrender through continued threat of military force. Considering popular public sentiment of the day, planners likely considered that safeguarding the Emperor retained an enemy national figure to endorse surrender and ultimately hold responsible after the war.

In terms of their understanding of the Japanese will-to-fight, planners likely considered the Japanese will-to-fight in terms of their military, economic, and political means to do so. This understanding would naturally produce a strategy that continued to force or threaten force against military, economic, and political institutions—especially the Imperial Institution. Based upon the Joint and Inter-Agency nature of the U.S. post-WWII Japan planning effort, planners likely developed their understanding of enemy's will-to-fight by engaging the expertise of military and civilian individuals with relevant cultural knowledge.

Organization

This study contains five parts. Part 1 consists of administrative material, including an abstract and introduction. Part 2 comprises a review of extant military literature on the will-to-fight. Part 3 contains methodological material, including an explanation of case study selection, measurement criteria, and data sources. Part 4 conveys the case study of the U.S. post-WWII Japan planning effort as planners developed their understanding of enemy's will-to-fight. Part 5 concludes the study with analysis of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Extant Literature

Introduction

This chapter presents the reasoning and organization behind this study, highlighting extant military thought regarding the enemy's will-to-fight. This review demonstrates that while many influential military authors extol the importance of the enemy's will-to-fight, they tend to provide no practical analysis on its source. Furthermore, although earlier theorists explicitly distinguished between the enemy's will-to-fight and their means to do so, subsequent theorists tend to conflate these concepts into one idea. It this lack of distinction between the enemy's will and their means that forms the gap in current military thought and action.

Military Theory

As mentioned previously, Sun Tzu's classic military treatise, *The Art of War*, sets the stage for the concept of defeating an enemy's will-to-fight. Initially, Sun Tzu notes that defeating an enemy's will-to-fight without fighting is the highest mark of a leader.⁹ Later in the work, he

⁹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 111.

notes that an enemy's will-to-fight grows when he perceives his condition as dire and inescapable.¹⁰ This last point reflects a nuanced relationship between force and the enemy's will—too much force applied to the means-to-fight may actually be counterproductive to defeating the will.

Centuries later, in Carl von Clausewitz's classic military discourse, *On War*, Clausewitz describes the enemy's capacity for war in terms of the means to wage war and the will to do so. He concedes that identifying and measuring the enemy's means to wage war is the more simple of the two—an act of reconnaissance and tallying of martial resources. On the other hand, identifying and measuring the enemy's will to wage war is more difficult, relating to the internal machinations of decision and motive.¹¹ Although Clausewitz admits that targeting the enemy's means to wage war is the preponderant objective—usually the destruction of his fielded army—Clausewitz considers the means-to-fight and the will-to-fight as two distinct objects.¹²

In the decades after Clausewitz' wife published her husband's work, many influential military theorists attempted to incorporate his ideas concerning land warfare into the air and sea domains. Despite their efforts, these subsequent authors appeared to have lost the distinction between the enemy's will-to-fight and means-to-fight. For example, in Alfred Mahan's 1890 exposition on naval strategy, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, Mahan draws no distinction between the capability of the enemy's fleet and the condition of their will-to-fight.¹³

¹⁰ Ibid., 137.

¹¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 77.

¹² von Clausewitz, *On War*, 227.

¹³ Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660–1783* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1890), 87.

Similarly, Julian Corbett's 1911 book, *Some Principles on Maritime Strategy*, explicitly links the enemy's will-to-fight with his means to do so.¹⁴

This trend only amplified with the introduction of airpower during the First World War and the concept of strategic bombing in the Interwar Period. For example, in his 1921 book, *Command of the Air*, Giulio Douhet redefines the enemy's means-to-fight to include civilian infrastructure, but continues to equate destroying the means with defeating the will.¹⁵ Similarly, in his 1925 airpower peace, *Winged Defense*, Billy Mitchell claims that strategic bombing of the enemy's means of production and the threatening of daily life discourage the enemy's desire to renew combat in the future.¹⁶

Current U.S. Doctrine

Reflecting the theoretical roots of the military thinkers mentioned previously, current U.S. doctrine conveys a respect for the importance of the enemy's will-to-fight, but also an ignorance of that how to identify and measure that will. Despite the integral role that will-to-fight/means-to-fight play in other military definitions, current U.S. military doctrine does not formally define them. Instead, U.S. military doctrine tends to subsume many of Clausewitz' ideas within its other definitions. For example, U.S. Joint doctrine makes a distinction between an enemy's will-to-fight and their means to do so in its definition of *vulnerability*, but stops there.¹⁷ Likewise, U.S. Army doctrine mentions the enemy's will-to-fight in the definitions of

¹⁴ Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles on Maritime Strategy* (London: Longmans, Green, & Company, 1911), 44.

¹⁵ Giulio Douhet, *The Command of the Air*. trans. Dino Ferrari. (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1927), 45.

¹⁶ William Mitchell, *Winged Defense: the Development and Possibilities of Modern Airpower* (New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1925), 414.

¹⁷ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, Joint Publication 1-02 (Washington D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 2011), 363.

vulnerability, *Center of Gravity*, and *defeat*; each reflecting the same separate but equal nature between military means and martial will. The consequence of this conflation of the will-to-fight with the means-to-fight rings loudest in the U.S. Army doctrinal definition of *defeat*—“Defeat can result from the use of force or the threat of its use.”¹⁸ Thus, according to U.S. Army doctrine—if the enemy’s means is their will—then to destroy or to threaten the means-to-fight must be *the way* to defeat the will-to-fight.

Key Terms

This study employs terms from the disparate academic and practical disciplines of military history, foreign policy, and the behavioral science. As such, the author provides the following uncommon or context-specific terms and their associated meaning in this text:

Will-to-Fight—In this study, the term *Will-to-Fight* describes the condition where an individual or group exhibits a preference for aggression or violent resistance, as opposed to a preference for acquiescence or submission.¹⁹ This stands in contrast to the *Means-to-Fight*, which reflects only those physical resources employed in combat or their means of production.

Imperial Institution—In this study, the term *Imperial Institution* describes the Japanese monarchic system of governance, characterized by the purportedly unbroken and divine imperial lineage from Emperor Jimmu (660 B.C.) and the sun goddess Amaratsu to the present.²⁰ This stands in contrast to the *Emperor*, which reflects only the person who occupies the throne. Historically, though individual emperors wielded formal political power of disparate quantity and

¹⁸ U.S. Department of the Army, *Operational Terms and Graphics*, Field Manual 1–02 (Washington D.C.: Department of the Army, September 2004), 1–28, 1–54, 1–197.

¹⁹ Martin Van Creveld, *The Transformation of War* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 158.

²⁰ Carol Gluck, *Japan’s Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 139.

quality, the Japanese people believed the Institution was divine, inviolable, and the object of absolute reverence and obedience.²¹

Summary

The conceptual distinction between an enemy's means-to-fight and their desire to do so is pervasive throughout military thought. Additionally, military theorists regard defeating an enemy by subduing the will without fighting as a nearly universal mark of excellence. A disturbing gap in the literature remains how poorly defined and measured is this concept of the will-to-fight. More so, that current military thought and U.S. military doctrine appear to conflate the concepts of an enemy's means-to-fight and their will to do so. This monograph seeks to fill that gap.

Methodology

Introduction

The following section explains the rationale for selecting the historical case of the U.S. planning effort for post-WWII Japan as a means of filling the gap in military understanding of the will-to-fight. Additionally, it addresses important concepts unique to this case study in order to draw attention to points that will appear in the Conclusion. Lastly, this section includes a brief description of the data sources considered, specifically informative secondary sources and important primary source archives.

Research Method

The primary research method in this monograph is "structured, focused comparison." This method helps analyze the concept of the will-to-fight "in ways that would draw the

²¹ Ibid., 73.

explanations of each case of a particular phenomenon into a broader, more complex theory.”²²

Alexander George and Andrew Bennett explained this method in *Case Studies and Theory*

Development in the Social Science:

The method and logic of structured, focused comparison is simple and straightforward. The method is “structured” in that the researcher writes general questions that reflect the research objective and that these questions are asked of each case under study to guide and standardize data collection, thereby making systematic comparison and cumulation of the findings of the cases possible.

The method is “focused” in that it deals only with certain aspects of the historical cases examined. The requirements for structure and focus apply equally to individual cases since they may later be joined by additional cases.²³

Selection of Case

There are five main motivations for selecting this case. First, the case of the U.S. planning effort for post-WWII Japan provides a good example of operational art, or “the pursuit of strategic objectives, in whole or in part, through the arrangement of tactical actions in time, space, and purpose.”²⁴ Second, the case reveals a process where planners recognize the importance of understanding and consequence of not understanding the enemy’s will-to-fight.²⁵ Third, this case demonstrates a planning process where the discourse comprises two diametrically

²² Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Science* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 67.

²³ Ibid., 19.

²⁴ Department of the Army, *Unified Land Operations*, 9.

²⁵ DeForest van Slyck, “Observations on Post Hostilities Policy toward Japan,” Jul 12, 1945. memorandum, *The Occupation of Japan: U.S. Planning Documents, 1942–1945*, Congressional Information Service, Bethesda, MD, 1987, Part 5, Section A, Document 43, Microfiche Collection, Combined Arms Research Library (CARL), Archival Records, Fort Leavenworth, KS, November 10, 2011 [hereafter cited as *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part #, Section #, Document #, Microfiche Collection, CARL]; Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1999), 340.

opposite positions and two equally divergent operational plans.²⁶ Fourth, this case evidences how operational planners and commanders possess alternatives to the use of force or the threat of its use when considering how to subdue the enemy's will-to-fight.²⁷ Fifth, though many historians include recollections of this planning process in their accounts of Japanese history, WWII history, the U.S. Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, or the decision to drop the atomic bomb, few accounts focus on the critical decision to retain the Imperial Institution as part of a post-WWII Japan.²⁸

Measurement Criteria

When reviewing the U.S. planning effort for post-WWII Japan, one can assess to what degree planners considered the Japanese will-to-fight to be of importance in creating conditions for favorable conflict resolution. Additionally, readers may judge to what degree planners considered or failed to consider various sources of the Japanese will-to-fight. Furthermore, one can reflect upon the various courses of action and weigh their associated consequences. Specifically, readers may discern whether planners considered only the immediate consequences or if they also contemplated second order effects of their decisions. Lastly, one can determine whether the planners' understanding of the Japanese will-to-fight evolved or that they merely reified pre-conceived notions over time.

²⁶ Territorial Subcommittee, "General Problems of the Far East," October 22, 1943. meeting minutes, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 1, Section C, Document 4, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011; General Staff of MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur: The Campaigns of General MacArthur in the Pacific, Volume 1* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1966), 436–439, 451.

²⁷ Department of the Army, *Operational Terms and Graphics*, 1–54.

²⁸ Frank, *Downfall*; Grace P. Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War Against Japan* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982); Charles L. Mee, Jr., *Meeting at Potsdam* (New York: M. Evans & Company, 1975), Richard Storry, *A History of Modern Japan* (New York: Penguin Publishing, 1982); Eiji Takemae, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 2002); Kase Toshikazu, *Eclipse of the Rising Sun* (London: Jonathan Cape Publishing, 1951); Robert Wolfe, ed., *Americans as Proconsuls: United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944–1952* (Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984).

Data Sources

The data sources for this case study fall into two main categories—primary sources and secondary sources. First, this study considers secondary source historical texts. These texts harness the perspective of professional historians to provide a broader context within which to consider the primary sources—specifically the organizations and the men who authored them. Eiji Takemae's, *Inside GHQ: The Allied Occupation of Japan and its Legacy* and Robert Wolfe's, *Americans as Proconsuls: United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944–1952* provided excellent contextual perspectives.

Second, this study considers primary source documents from the U.S. National Archives. These documents compose a precise historical record of the contemporary research, positions, discussions, arguments, and policy of the U.S. planners and policy-makers regarding post-WWII Japan. Specifically, they provide evidence of the evolution of thought as documents transitioned from preliminary draft through heated discussion to endorsed policy. The critical resources within this category are the Congressional Information Service microfiche archives entitled, *The Occupation of Japan: U.S. planning documents, 1942–1945* and *The Occupation of Japan: U.S. planning documents, 1945–1952*, compiled by Professor Makoto Iokibe of Kobe University, Kobe, Japan in 1987 and 1989.²⁹ In addition to these archives, the U.S. Department of State's, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers* and General MacArthur's, *Reports of*

²⁹ These archives comprise twenty-two sections, with documents numbered sequentially by publication date. Sections include the following categories: Organization of Postwar Programs Planning (1–A), Territorial Subcommittee (1–B), Economic Subcommittee Documents (1–C), Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East Documents (2–A), Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East Minutes (2–B), Post-War Programs Committee Documents (2–C), Post-War Programs Committee Minutes (2–D), Research and Analysis Branch Reports (3–A), Civil Affairs Handbooks (3–B), Civil Affairs Guides (3–C), Allied Translator and Interpreter Section documents (3–D), Military Strategies and Tactics, 1943–1944 (4–A), Military Tactics for Victory, 1945 (4–B), Military Occupation Strategy, 1945 (4–C), Minutes of the JPS (4–D), Minutes of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (4–E), Conditions for Termination of the War against (5–A), Minutes of the Committee of Three (5–B), Minutes of the Secretary's Staff Committee of (5–C), Henry Stimson Diary (5–D), Atomic Bombing (5–F).

General MacArthur: The Campaigns of General MacArthur in the Pacific provided excellent first-hand perspectives.

Scope

The scope of this study has five primary limitations. First, this study relies upon archived primary source and secondary source historical records, limiting the accuracy of the account to that of the archival record from the 1940's. Second, this study employs only unclassified or declassified materials, fundamentally limiting the amount of data available for analysis. Third, this study focuses strictly on how U.S. planners understood the enemy's will-to-fight within the strategic context of the Pacific Theater at the end of WWII. Fourth, this study assumes that the positions and logic of actors recorded in the archived primary sources cited represents the true positions and logic of those attributed and not some form of deception or political intrigue. Fifth, this monograph does not contain a comprehensive hermeneutical study of the will-to-fight as a concept in historical military texts.

Summary

The case of the U.S. planning effort for post-WWII Japan is useful for understanding the need for, and difficulty in, understanding the enemy's will-to-fight. First, the case addresses operational art, linking tactical actions to strategic objectives. Second, it highlights the influence of the enemy's will-to-fight on conflict resolution. Third, this case exemplifies planning through conflicting perspectives on the problem and the solution. Fourth, the case evidences ways other than the use of violence or threat. Fifth, the case focuses on the planning process in a novel way. Consequently, studying the U.S. planning effort for post-WWII Japan offers a great deal of insight into developing theories for planning through ill-structured problems and may assist operational planners in reframing the problem of defeating an enemy in broader terms.

Case Study: The Imperial Decision

Introduction

From the earliest discussions about U.S. involvement in World War II, planners understood that Europe was the priority of effort. As such, policy for post-defeat Japan would likely deviate minimally from the plans for Germany. Yet, the Potsdam Proclamation and subsequent documents governing the occupation of Japan say nothing about “stamping out” the ruling class, imprisoning the Emperor, or prohibiting either’s reinstitution. In fact, by 1945 standards, the terms for Japan’s surrender and occupation appear less than “unconditional.” This discrepancy is more than merely interesting trivia or happenstance. It is the story of a deliberate and hard-fought battle to shape the understanding of the senior-most U.S. political and military leaders regarding the fate of Japan. It is a story of people, of organizations, and documents, but more so, it is a story of ideas.

In the following pages of this chapter, the author traces the tides of understanding that U.S. planners navigated on their way to the surrender and peaceful occupation of Japan. Specifically, the author follows the evolution of problem framing as planners began to understand the role of the Imperial Institution in the enemy’s will-to-fight, and the role of that will-to-fight in setting conditions for favorable occupation of the Japanese home islands. This case study employs a general chronology as a means to maintain structure and foster an appreciation for the temporal quality of hard-earned understanding. As planners framed the Japanese problem from the dawn of war in 1941 to the earliest months of occupation in 1945, the questions changed and the answers came—not by epiphany, but by iterative deliberation. With time, planners transitioned gradually from sweeping generalizations about the foreignness of Japan and an appreciation of their own ignorance to well-articulated questions of policy regarding the utility of retaining the Imperial Institution separate from Emperor Hirohito—the man.

Along this journey towards understanding, voices from well-informed scholars intermingled with bigoted ignorance and public opinion. The debate over the future of Japan had passion and consequence. As a result, two distinct camps formed regarding the future of Japan—one seeking a harsh peace, the other a soft peace. Even though both camps fixed their eyes firmly on the U.S. post-war strategic objectives, their separate cognitive approaches biased what options existed in their respective realms of the possible. In particular, the quality of thought exhibited by those seeking a soft peace was categorically different—a higher order. In the end, the voices that won the day reflected an understanding of the Japanese condition and the people’s will-to-fight—not from a mirror-imaged American perspective, but from a solemnly Japanese vantage point.

Fundamentally, the United States succeeded in post-war Japan largely because its planners—through an iterative and heated discourse—developed a rich and useful understanding of the influences that shaped Japanese identity and thus their will-to-fight. It is this understanding that set the conditions for both the well-informed policy issued from Washington D.C. and the tactical actions in Japan amongst the people. This is the story of the Imperial Decision—the planning for post-war Japan—the men, the documents, and the ideas.

Pre-Discourse Planning

On the morning of December 7, 1941, aircraft from the Imperial Japanese Navy conducted a surprise attack against the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The Imperial General Headquarters intended the attack as a preemptive strike against the U.S. Pacific Fleet in order to prevent it from interfering with planned military actions in Southeast Asia. A day later, the United States declared war on Japan.

Two weeks after the United States officially joined the war, representatives of 26 countries met for the ARCADIA Conference in Washington, D.C. From December 22, 1941 to January 14, 1942, delegates decided on the conditions required for a unified Allied response to Axis aggression and signed a *Declaration by United Nations*. The foundation for the Declaration

was the *Atlantic Charter*, an eight-point program for peace and freedom articulated by President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill in August of the previous year. Concurrently, participants established the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff with leadership provided by the United States and Britain, and agreed to pursue a Europe-first strategy in combatting the Axis. The Europe-first decision was critical as it established the priority for resources, operations, and planning in the war. With Japan being the lowest priority, planners understood that policy for post-defeat Japan would likely mirror or deviate minimally from the plans for Germany.³⁰

On December 28, 1941, in the middle of the ARCADIA Conference, President Roosevelt directed the State Department to establish the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Relations. The Advisory Committee drew its members from the highest ranks of the State Department and the Council on Foreign Relations—a nonpartisan think tank specializing in U.S. foreign policy. This overarching body became the hub of post-war planning and eventually established topical subcommittees focused on economic, political, security, and territorial issues.³¹

During the remainder of 1942, the U.S. government gathered the tools necessary to respond to the war and the post-war planning effort. By March, the State Department began leveraging the private sector scholars it had in the Division of Special Research to produce information papers on Japan for the Advisory Committee on Postwar Foreign Relations.³² In June, President Roosevelt ordered the establishment of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)—the precursor to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)—to collect/analyze strategic intelligence required by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and conduct special operations not assigned to other

³⁰ Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II*, 36.

³¹ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 202.

³² Ibid.

agencies.³³ In August of 1942, the State Department established the East Asia Policy Study Group as an intra-divisional think tank within the Division of Special Research to develop concrete proposals for post-war policy in Japan, focusing predominantly on the future government structure.³⁴ In September of that year, General Douglas MacArthur established the Allied Translator and Interpreter Section (ATIS) within his Army Command–Southwest Pacific Theater, to exploit captured military documents, interrogate prisoners, and provide research reports regarding cultural and political influences on the Japanese military.³⁵ Despite the establishment of so many well-purposed planning organizations, most of the documents that made it to policy-makers during the course of the year represented broad-stroke scholarship on desired military and geographic outcomes for the war.

A year after the ARCADIA Conference, British and American leaders met in Casablanca to plan the defeat of Axis powers in Europe. During this conference, the lack of problem framing made itself evident in the *Casablanca Declaration*, where Churchill and Roosevelt fixed the strategic objective for the war as the *unconditional surrender* of Germany, Italy, and Japan.³⁶ Post-war planners would spend much of the following three years trying to operationalize these two simple words.

On May 25, 1943, the State Department’s Territorial Subcommittee published the first official U.S. planning document regarding the future of the Japanese political system entitled, “Status of the Japanese Emperor” (T-315). The document was a general thought piece,

³³ Makoto Iokibe, *The Occupation of Japan: U.S. Planning Documents, 1942–1945* (Bethesda, MD: Congressional Information Service, 1987), iii–iv.

³⁴ Marlene J. Mayo, “American Wartime Planning for Occupied Japan: The Role of Experts,” in *Americans as Proconsuls: United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944–1952*, ed. Robert Wolfe (Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 20–21.

³⁵ Iokibe, *The Occupation of Japan: 1942–1945*, iii–iv.

³⁶ Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II*, 278.

expressing broad areas of consensus and controversy on the Imperial Institution, its function and its future.³⁷ Regarding the Institution, planners asserted that the Emperor was ultimately responsibility for but not the cause of the war. Additionally, they recognized that the Emperor embodied the divine identity of and wielded absolute influence over the Japanese people. Perhaps more pressing to the end of the war, the planners acknowledged that the Emperor was the constitutional sovereign and thus the only person who can legally surrender. Regarding the future of the Japanese political system, planners admitted that the Emperor represented the source of law, stability, and change in the Japanese government. Discussing potential advantages and disadvantages of discontinuing the Imperial Institution, the most notable disadvantages included a loss of basis for administration, for law and order, and “a permanent incentive for insurgency and revenge.”³⁸ Nearly a year and a half after the beginning of the U.S. involvement in the war, T-315 identified most of the salient points that would continue to shape and define the future of post-war planning for Japan. U.S. planners spent the next 26 months refining their understanding of the Japanese people, their military, the Imperial Institution, and Emperor Hirohito, specifically focusing on how each one influenced the end of the war.

The battle for greater understanding was not limited to the windowless offices of State Department planners, but also waged amidst the public as well. On September 9, 1943, former Ambassador to Japan, Joseph C. Grew produced the pamphlet entitled the “Truth about Japan” in efforts to shape U.S. public opinion. Grew—with over ten years of experience living among the Japanese people—believed that the general U.S. public and the government that represented them was too ignorant of Japan to make reasonable decisions about its future. Ambassador Grew pulled

³⁷ Territorial Subcommittee, “Status of the Japanese Emperor (T-315),” May 25, 1943. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 1, Section B, Document 2, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

³⁸ Ibid.

back the curtain on the Japanese people and culture in efforts to reveal just how foreign, yet reasonable they were. In his discussion of the Imperial Institution, Grew highlighted that the Emperor represented the source of spiritual strength for the Japanese people, and as such, they owed absolute obedience and worship to him.³⁹ As planners in the military and State Department discussed options for a post-war Japan, Joseph Grew would remain at the forefront of the discussion as a proponent for a well-informed and well-reasoned peace.

On October 6, 1943, the Territorial Subcommittee published “Japan: Postwar Political Problems” (T-381), as it regarded the future of the political system in Japan. In reference to the Imperial Institution, planners reasserted that the Emperor remained distinct from the militarists who started the war, but they used the Institution to endorse the attacks after the fact. When considering replacing the personal authority of the Emperor with a body of rights and laws, planners noted that the Japanese people viewed authority in terms of the person or position exercising power and not the corpus of laws in whose name they acted. As such, in the eyes of the Japanese, the Emperor was the law. As the discussion continued, planners again acknowledged that the Emperor, or at least the Imperial Institution, was potentially the most stable element of post-war Japanese civil administration.⁴⁰

For nearly two years, the U.S. government struggled to come to grips, intellectually and organizationally, with being at war simultaneously in Europe and the Pacific. For this reason, post-war planners produced a number of militarily, geographically, and politically informative documents regarding Japan. However, these documents only foreshadowed the murky edges of a

³⁹ Joseph C. Grew, “Truth About Japan,” Sep 9, 1943. pamphlet, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 5, Section E, Document 9, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁴⁰ Territorial Subcommittee, “Japan: Postwar Political Problems (T-381),” Oct 6, 1943. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 1, Section B, Document 28, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

much deeper discourse that was to come. What did stand out, even at this early stage, among the discussions of the Emperor and the Imperial Institution, were the notions that the Imperial Institution somehow increased stability within the Japanese people.

The Foregone Harsh Peace

On October 22, 1943, the Territorial Subcommittee published minutes from meeting #54 entitled “General Problems of the Far East” as the first formally documented expression of the *Harsh Peace/Soft Peace* debate.⁴¹ It was here that the two distinct ideological approaches to post-war Japan appeared—based predominantly along geographical loyalties. The first school of thought was the *Harsh Peace* or pro-China group, exemplified by the writings of Dr. Stanley Hornbeck and John Vincent. The Harsh Peace group believed that Japanese expansionism resulted from the Imperial Institution’s totalitarian control of Japan’s powerful financial-industrial syndicates. The natural policy response to the Harsh Peace perspective called for eliminating the Imperial Institution and restricting production to light industry.⁴²

The second school of thought was the *Soft Peace* or pro-Japan group, exemplified by the writings of Ambassador Joseph C. Grew, Eugene Dooman, Joseph Ballantine, and Cabot Coville. The Soft Peace group believed that Japanese expansionism resulted from the militarist’s control of Japan’s weak central government. Thus, the policy response to the Soft Peace perspective called for retaining and reforming the Imperial Institution, demilitarizing political organizations, and redistributing production across all industries. Focusing more on the Imperial Institution itself, Grew considered it the moderating force between fascism and communism, and Dooman

⁴¹ Territorial Subcommittee, “General Problems of the Far East,” October 22, 1943. meeting minutes, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 1, Section C, Document 4, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁴² Mayo, “American Wartime Planning for Occupied Japan,” 3–51.

noted that the Japanese considered the Emperor as the “living manifestation of the racial continuity of the Japanese people.”⁴³ Both perspectives garnered their own following within the planning groups, but the Harsh Peace position definitely enjoyed greater public support.

Towards the end of 1943, British and American leaders met with other key allies to discuss the future of the war. In November, Chinese leader Chiang Kai-Shek joined Churchill and Roosevelt for the SEXTANT Conference in Cairo. At the conference, the Allies reaffirmed Japan’s unconditional surrender as the strategic objective in the Pacific.⁴⁴ In December, Russian leader Josef Stalin joined the British and the Americans for the EUREKA Conference in Tehran. At the conference, the Allies reaffirmed the Soviet pledge to enter the war against Japan once Germany had been defeated.⁴⁵ Though no new policies emerged from these two conferences, they do demonstrate that the policy pursued by the United States was subject to the cooperation of other very influential players.

On December 3, 1943, the Territorial Subcommittee published minutes from meeting #58 entitled “The Post-War Territorial Settlement with Japan” where planners acknowledged that Allied actions during the war have consequence after peace. During this meeting, new themes regarding the Imperial Institution emerged. In particular, the planners discussed distinctions between what influence the Emperor had over the people and the military regarding surrender. Additionally, the planners questioned whether the Allies possessed sufficient capacity to institute governmental reform without the involvement of the Emperor. Of immediate interest, planners discussed an unofficial policy within the Office of War Information (OWI) to refrain from issuing negative propaganda about the Emperor, affirming that denigrating the position during the war

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II*, 520.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 531.

may limit its efficacy after. Along similar lines of thought regarding targeting, planners acknowledged that the Japanese people considered the Emperor as inviolable regardless of any physical attack (i.e. bombing). Lastly, historians within the planning group offered a cautionary tale, referencing how the Chinese people devolved into civil war after they abolished their Imperial Institution.⁴⁶ Though the nature of these themes appears disconnected, they represent a very nuanced and organic approach to understanding the Japanese problem. Specifically, the notion that United States forces should not take tactical action targeting the Emperor demonstrates a growing appreciation for his role in the behavior of the Japanese people.

On December 17, the State Department's Territorial Subcommittee published minutes from meeting #59 entitled "The Institution of the Japanese Emperor" where they discussed the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining the Imperial Institution. This document represented the first time planners equated answering the *question of the emperor* with successful conclusion of the war. The Subcommittee discussed such practical topics as whether or not Allies should spare the Imperial Residence from air raids and if the Emperor should sign the "Instrument of Surrender." Regarding the Institution, planners asserted that the Emperor represented a conduit for post-war policy. Some Harsh Peace planners noted that associating the Emperor with defeat or surrender might discredit the supernatural nature of the Institution and diminish its sway over the people. Some Soft Peace planners noted that abolishing or endangering the Institution would likely challenge the basic tenets of Shintoism and nationalism or even strengthen the resolve of the people to fight. At this point, the only area of consensus between the Harsh Peace and Soft

⁴⁶ Territorial Subcommittee, "Meeting #58," December 3, 1943. meeting minutes, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 1, Section C, Document 8, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

Peace planners was to agree that the continuation of the Imperial Institution remained problematic concerning the Casablanca Declaration's terms of *unconditional surrender*.⁴⁷

On December 29, 1943, Joseph C. Grew gave an address at the annual banquet celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the Illinois Education Association in efforts to shape the public opinion once again. Ambassador Grew spoke on how bigoted and biased public opinion can seriously influence policy decisions. In efforts to draw distinction between the states of the Axis, Grew highlighted that the Imperial Institution united the Japanese people in thought and spirit even more than Hitler united the Germans. Perhaps his most salient point, Ambassador Grew asserted that the Japanese people do not think as Americans do and nothing could be more inappropriate than to try to presuppose Japanese decisions by western preconceptions—a theme that would echo in later years.⁴⁸ With the heavy burden of consequence on his mind, Joseph Grew saw the *Japanese problem* fundamentally as an *American problem* with cross-cultural understanding.

In October of 1943, the State Department established the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East (IDACE) as an internal working committee to review and revise preliminary position papers and prepare them for endorsement as official State Department policy.⁴⁹ On March 4, 1944, the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East endorsed the document entitled “Japan: Political Problems: Institution of the Emperor” (CAC-93 preliminary), as it discussed concrete policy alternatives for the Imperial Institution. This document represented

⁴⁷ Territorial Subcommittee, “The Institution of the Japanese Emperor,” Dec 17, 1943. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 1, Section C, Document 9, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁴⁸ Joseph C. Grew, “Address at the Annual Banquet Celebrating the 90th Anniversary of the Illinois Education Association,” December 29, 1943. speech, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 5, Section E, Document 9, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁴⁹ Lee Seokwoo, *The Resolution of the Territorial Dispute between Korea and Japan over the Liancourt Rocks* (Durham, (UK): International Boundaries Research Unit, 2002), 16.

the first policy recommendation regarding the future of Imperial Institution as a function of the Japanese people's will. Regarding the Institution, planners conceded an inability to affect change externally. As a practical consequence, any unilateral measure to abolish the Imperial Institution—against the will of the Japanese people—might necessitate indefinite occupation by U.S./UN forces if they wished to prevent the revival of the institution. As an aside, the planners reaffirmed that the Emperor remained the source of all authority in Japan and this condition may be useful if coopted to support post-war reforms.⁵⁰

On March 14, 1944, the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East endorsed the document entitled “The Postwar Objectives of the United States” (CAC-116), as it outlined the broad territorial, military, economic, and political end states sought by the United States in its war with Japan. This document represented the first articulation of the principle end state desired at the conclusion of the war with Japan. These same principles—almost to the letter—later found themselves in the Potsdam Proclamation of July 1945.⁵¹

On March 21, the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East endorsed the document entitled “Japan: Political Problems: Institution of the Emperor” (CAC-93), as it discussed concrete policy alternatives for the Imperial Institution in direct relation to an occupying U.S./UN military government. This document represented the first policy recommendation for retaining the Imperial Institution while suspending some of the Emperor's official functions. Regarding the Institution, the Harsh Peace planners continued to rally for abolishing the Institution as they asserted its incongruence with American public opinion. The

⁵⁰ Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, “Japan: Political Problems: Institution of the Emperor (CAC-93pre),” Mar 4, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942-1945*, Part 2, Section A, Document 5, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁵¹ Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, “The Postwar Objectives of the United States (CAC-116),” Mar 14, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942-1945*, Part 2, Section A, Document 34, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

Soft Peace planners brushed this argument aside and recounted many previous arguments regarding the authority and inviolability of the Emperor. The discussion that characterized the bulk of the document noted particularly the Emperor's influence over the totality of the civil service. The Area Committee acknowledged that suspending all of the Emperor's functions—let alone abolishing the Institution—might result in widespread loss of local support for administrative activities. Such a loss would then require considerable additional Civil Affairs Administration (CAA) forces to replace lost capacity in the government. CAC-93 recommended adopting a moderate approach, suspending only some of the Emperor's functions early with the option of further limiting them later should the need arise.⁵²

In January of 1944, the State Department established the Postwar Programs Committee (PWC) as the highest policy-making body in the Department, staffed by the Secretary, the Under-Secretary, and his assistants.⁵³ On April 4, 1944, the Post-War Programs Committee published "The Treatment of the Japanese Emperor" (PWC-147), as it discussed official State Department policy regarding the Imperial Institution. This document represented the first fully articulated argument for retaining the Imperial Institution. Regarding the Institution, committee members admitted that popular American and Chinese sentiment remained set on abolishing the Imperial Institution. However, the committee members balanced this argument by highlighting the Emperor's non-military character, differentiating his roles in politics and religion and war. The most notable counterargument to the removal of the Imperial Institution was that such a unilateral action is anathema to the fundamental principles of self-determination espoused in the Atlantic Charter. PWC-147 concluded that the Allied forces should not specifically target or safeguard the

⁵² Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, "Japan: Political Problems: Institution of the Emperor (CAC-93)," Mar 21, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942-1945*, Part 2, Section A, Document 6, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁵³ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 205.

Emperor during the war, but should remain protected after hostilities as an instrument of stability in the post-war occupation.⁵⁴ Once again, planners reinforced the notion that U.S. tactical actions regarding the Emperor have strategic consequences.

On April 26, Mr. Grew issued a statement to the Post-War Programs Committee entitled “Japan: Institution of the Emperor” (PWC–146), as it discussed the distinction between the Imperial Institution and Emperor Hirohito the person. This document emphasized the practical utility of the Imperial Institution in the short-term and the need for the Japanese people to determine its role in the long-term. Mr. Grew’s statement made clear that many of the Harsh Peace arguments for abolition of the Imperial Institution were actually overstated issues with the Emperor Hirohito’s leadership in that institution. Despite this distinction, PWC–146 noted that cooperation and stability in occupied Japan stemmed directly from the throne and any policy directed at the throne is undertaken cautiously.⁵⁵

On April 27, 1944, the Post-War Programs Committee published minutes from meeting #25 as they discussed Allied preferences on the Imperial Institution and the harmony of policies between Germany and Japan. The Committee recorded that Chinese leader Chang Kai-Shek favored a self-determinant position in Japan but Russian preferences remained unknown. Additionally, Mr. Ballantine presented analysis on the character of the Japanese objectives as maintaining the same logic and tenor for Japan as they did for Germany—with the exception of

⁵⁴ Post-War Programs Committee, “The Treatment of the Japanese Emperor (PWC–147),” April 4, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 2, Section C, Document 9, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁵⁵ Post-War Programs Committee, “Japan: Institution of the Emperor (PWC–146),” April 26, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 2, Section C, Document 8, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

the unique position of the Imperial Institution. This represented the first time that such a discrepancy between the two post-war planning processes appeared in the public record.⁵⁶

On May 9, the Post-War Programs Committee published “Japan: Political Problems: Institution of the Emperor” (PWC–116d/CAC–93e), as it discussed official State Department policy regarding the Imperial Institution in direct relation to an occupying U.S./UN military government. This document represented a revised and comprehensive summation of the significance and recommended treatment of the Imperial Institution. In addition to previously recorded themes on the Institution, this document added fidelity to the consequence of proper handling of the Imperial Institution. The Programs Committee noted that in 1937, Japan employed over 500,000 civil personnel outside the military to administer the state. As such, the Programs Committee asserted that the Imperial Institution was the foundation for good behavior and cooperation of the people, and that the U.S. government should desire to see that no one killed the Emperor or spirited him away. PWC–116d/CAC–93e recommended that the military secure the Imperial Household and afford the Emperor courtesy in accordance with his position as Head of State. It also recommended that the Emperor retain only limited administrative functions and that occupying forces should give the State Department full consideration prior to any attempt to abolish the Imperial Institution or suspend functions any further. This last clause foreshadows the tension felt between policy-makers in Washington and policy-executors in MacArthur’s Army in the Pacific.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Post-War Programs Committee, “Meeting #25” Apr 27, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 2, Section D, Document 27, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁵⁷ Post-War Programs Committee, “Japan: Political Problems: Institution of the Emperor (PWC–116d/CAC–93e),” May 9, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 2, Section A, Document 11, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

For nearly seven months, post-war planners advanced their new Harsh Peace/Soft Peace discourse under the leadership of Harsh Peace masters. Documents from this period reflect a relatively open conversation regarding the nature of the Imperial Institution and the character of the Emperor. Despite the presence of Soft Peace arguments, the overall tenor remained ambivalent—if not openly hostile—towards the Imperial Institution. However, the Soft Peace concepts that slip through the cracks and make it into the public record are seeds for a very different future. Overall, one can see the gradual linking of tactical actions to strategic objectives, specifically with regard to the Emperor and the Imperial Institution. This emphasis on the Imperial Institution, though ill-defined at this point, exposes the early stages of a logical link between the condition of Institution and the Japanese people’s will-to-fight. Consequently, cautious planners began to consider how safeguarding the Imperial Institution from harm would influence that will-to-fight.

The Prospect of Soft Peace

In June of 1944, State Department Deputy, Edward Stettinius, Jr., appointed Joseph Grew and Joseph Ballantine as Chief and Deputy Director of the Far Eastern Affairs Division, respectively. This change in leadership effectively redirected U.S. policy concerning the future of Japan away from Hornbeck’s Harsh Peace position to a more Soft Peace position. Though the Harsh Peace perspective still appeared in many of the documents yet to come from the State Department committees, the weight of the arguments and attention afforded to their proponents suffered greatly.⁵⁸

On June 21, General MacArthur’s Allied Translator and Interpreter Section published “The Emperor Cult as a Present Factor in Japanese Military Psychology” (Research Report #76

⁵⁸ Mayo, “American Wartime Planning for Occupied Japan,” 34–35.

part II). The report specifically focused on the role of the Imperial Institution in reference to the Japanese military. This document recounted much of the previously published scholarship on the topic, but represented the first assessment where the Japanese people might universally surrender at the command of the Emperor. Regarding the Institution, analysts cited that the Japanese belief in the Emperor's divine origin and infallibility, their universal personal loyalty to his edicts, and his reflection of their national identity and distinctiveness as descendants of the divine all made his decision to surrender an objective of prime importance.⁵⁹

On July 12, the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East endorsed the document entitled "Japan: Military Government: Deposition of Hirohito by Military Government" (CAC-251 preliminary), as it discussed concrete policy alternatives for the deposition of Emperor Hirohito the person while retaining the Imperial Institution. This document represented the first official policy recommendation concerning Emperor Hirohito the person. It also represented the first citing of the Rules of Land Warfare from the Hague Convention of 1907 in any post-war Japan planning document since the war began. The Area Committee acknowledged that according to international law, occupying militaries have no authority to decide such basic political questions as the deposition of a sovereign. CAC-251 recommended not calling for the deposition of Hirohito as a requirement of surrender or occupation, or taking any action that would prejudice the ultimate disposition of the Imperial Institution.⁶⁰

On August 2, 1944, the Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East endorsed the document entitled "Japan: Abdication of Hirohito" (CAC-265 preliminary), as it discussed

⁵⁹ Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, "The Emperor Cult as a Present Factor in Japanese Military Psychology (Research Report #76 part II)," Jun 21, 1944. report, *OJPD 1942-1945*, Part 3, Section D, Document 5, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁶⁰ Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, "Japan: Military Government: Deposition of Hirohito by Military Government (CAC-251pre)," Jul 12, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942-1945*, Part 2, Section A, Document 73, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

concrete policy alternatives for the abdication of Emperor Hirohito the person while retaining the Imperial Institution. Though this document shared much of the same intent as CAC–251, it represented the first time that analysts judged the significance of the Imperial Institution as being outside the bounds of western logical positivism. After the document reaffirmed that occupying militaries have no authority to depose the Emperor, it continued to highlight a novel admission that understanding the Emperor’s significance was beyond western logic. The Japanese accrediting the Emperor as a link between the living nation and her divine ancestors “has no objective validity and cannot stand the test of reason and scientific rationalism.” Consequently, this lack of logical rigor was of little consequence so long as the “Japanese continue to regard the Emperor institution as the key element in their national existence.” The committee asserted that, because of this disconnect between American and Japanese thinking, any official military involvement with the deposition, abdication, or regency of Hirohito might have unintended negative consequences. CAC–265 recommended that occupying forces not participate in any action regarding succession of the throne without Japanese initiation.⁶¹

On August 12, at the request of President Roosevelt, Treasury Secretary Henry J. Morgenthau Jr. drafted the “Directives for the Occupation of Germany” which codified terms for a harsh peace with post-defeat Germany. This document, which policy-makers later referred to as the *Morgenthau Plan* called for radical *de-nazification*, destruction of centralized state power, direct Allied military rule, zonal occupation, and dismantling of heavy industry. Morgenthau intended this plan to dismember Germany and reduce her to a “country primarily agricultural and

⁶¹ Inter-Divisional Area Committee on the Far East, “Japan: Abdication of Hirohito (CAC–265pre),” August 2, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 2, Section A, Document 83, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

pastoral in character.” This harsh peace was indicative of popular U.S. opinion on the nature of the Germany problem—the Nazi government was Hitler and Hitler was the Nazi government.⁶²

On September 8, 1944, the Office of Strategic Services’ Research & Analysis Branch published “The Japanese Emperor and the War” (R&A #2261), as it represented detailed military intelligence and civil affairs knowledge of the increasing role of the Emperor in Japanese pro-war propaganda. Analysts identified a peculiar paradox resulting from increased reliance of the Japanese militarists on the Emperor to justify the war. As the militarists continued to emphasize the Emperor’s will as the authority to wage war they also inadvertently empowered the Imperial Institution with the increasing authority to end the war.⁶³

With the U.S. Navy’s capture of Saipan on July 9, 1944, Allied land-based bombers could now range the Japanese home islands. This capability factored heavily in discussions during the OCTAGON Conference of September 1944, where British and American military leaders met in Quebec to conceptualize a final offensive against Japan. The Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed upon a three-pronged strategy of sea and air blockades of the home islands, aerial bombardment of industry, and a land invasion.⁶⁴ In response to the increasing fidelity of military plans in the Pacific, the State Department began detailed planning for the occupation and administration of a post-defeat Japan.⁶⁵

⁶² John H. Backer, “From the Morgenthau Plan to the Marshall Plan,” in *Americans as Proconsuls: United States Military Government in Germany and Japan, 1944–1952*, ed. Robert Wolfe (Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 155.

⁶³ This document quotes an article from the June 1943 Japanese magazine, *Fuji*, entitled, “Revere the Emperor, Expel the Barbarian” which states, “...the Emperor himself declares war... Accordingly the war will continue until the Emperor says ‘Cease!’” Office of Strategic Services Research & Analysis, “The Japanese Emperor and the War (R&A #2261),” September 8, 1944. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 3, Section A, Document 95, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁶⁴ Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II*, 625.

⁶⁵ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 209.

On December 12, 1944, Joseph Grew testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee regarding the planning for a post-war Japan. In his testimony, Grew compared the Emperor to a queen bee, suggesting that wherever the queen decides to go, the hive will follow. Appreciating a sense for the moment, the former Ambassador boldly asserted, “only an early surrender could prevent the apocalyptic event of an invasion of Japan, and the key to a quick capitulation was the Emperor.”⁶⁶ Within a week, Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr. appointed Joseph C. Grew as Under-Secretary of State.⁶⁷

Also on December 12, President Roosevelt established the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) to evaluate occupation proposals for the Axis powers. The under-secretaries of the State, War, and Navy Departments composed the primary membership, supported on an ad hoc basis by academic experts from a variety of fields. The Coordinating Committee reviewed and approved draft State Department policies from the Postwar Programs Committee and the Country and Area Committees.⁶⁸

Within the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, the Subcommittee for the Far East formulated its own set of proposals for post-war Japan independent of the State Department bodies as well. Eugene H. Dooman, John Carter Vincent, James K. Penfield, and Hugh Borton—all Soft Peace thinkers—chaired the Subcommittee successively. The Subcommittee for the Far East worked closely with the two primary Joint Chiefs of Staff planning bodies—the Joint Civil Affairs Committee and the Joint War Planning Committee—in drafting SWNCC policies. Once the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved a Subcommittee for the Far East policy proposal, the Coordinating Committee submitted the document to the President for final approval and

⁶⁶ Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Record of Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations*, 78th Cong., 2nd sess., 1944, 18–19.

⁶⁷ Mayo, “American Wartime Planning for Occupied Japan,” 34–35.

⁶⁸ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 209.

establishment as official U.S. policy. MacArthur's General Headquarters (GHQ) came to adopt many of the Subcommittee for the Far East recommendations, especially the SWNCC-209 series on the Imperial Institution and SWNCC-228 series on reforming Japan's government system, as post-surrender occupation policy.⁶⁹

On December 20, 1944, the State Department established the Secretary's Committee (SC) as the highest policy-making body in the Department, replacing the function of the Policy Committee (PC) and the Post-War Programs Committee (PWC). On January 1, 1945, this newest State Department body published "The Treatment of Japan" (SC-5a), as it recorded the recommendation for the Secretary to forward the seventeen approved PWC documents to the War and Navy Departments as official State Department policy. As the Post-War Programs Committee did in April of 1944, the Secretary's Committee compared the Japanese terms with those planned for Germany. The assessment held that the objectives for both are similar with a few caveats unique to Japan. The Secretary's Committee asserted that the caveats were reasonable responses to the preponderance of U.S. involvement in the Pacific, the absence of a Nazi-like party in Japan, the potential stabilizing influence of the Imperial Institution, and the need to co-opt Japanese civil administrators in light of paucity of qualified U.S. Japanese linguists/culturists.⁷⁰

On January 20, the *Imperial General Headquarters* published "The Decisive Defensive Plan for the Homeland." The document divided Japan into six territorial defense commands, extended the age range for men and women called to the civilian defense force, and asserted that so long as the Allies threaten the safety of the Emperor, every Japanese citizen should be

⁶⁹ Mayo, "American Wartime Planning for Occupied Japan," 34-35.

⁷⁰ Secretary's Staff Committee, "The Treatment of Japan (SC-5a)," Jan 1, 1945. memorandum, *OJPD 1942-1945*, Part 5, Section C, Document 2, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

prepared to repel the invaders.⁷¹ Though shadows of this last criterion appeared in various U.S. planning documents, this Japanese document reflected unequivocal equation of the state of the war with the status of the Emperor. The condition of the Imperial Institution related directly to the Japanese people's will-to-fight.

On March 15, 1945, at Henry Morgenthau's recommendation, President Roosevelt established the Informal Policy Committee on Germany (IPCOG) in order coordinate U.S. policy for the occupation of Germany. The Committee on Germany, now isolated from moderating forces in the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, resurrected Morgenthau's harsh proposals and endorsed them formally. Perhaps more important, the SWNCC now held responsibility for formulating postwar policy for Japan and Korea alone. Despite Morgenthau's insistence that the SWNCC pattern the plan for Japan on the German model, the new division of labor allowed Subcommittee for the Far East analysts to build policy based upon two crucial policy assumptions unique to Japan. The first assumption was that unconditional surrender by Japan would not entail the annihilation of the Japanese state. The second assumption was that occupation forces would execute policy indirectly via existing government agencies and institutions—including the Emperor.⁷²

On April 3, 1945, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered General MacArthur to initiate planning for the final assault on Japan with Admiral Nimitz. On April 8, the staffs of the two military leaders met in Manila and drew up a joint plan code-named DOWNFALL. The plan consisted of two subordinate offensive operations, code-named OLYMPIC and CORONET. Operation OLYMPIC called for the largest Allied naval armada ever assembled—including 42

⁷¹ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 38.

⁷² Hugh Borton, *American Pre-Surrender Planning for Postwar Japan, Occasional Papers of The East Asian Institute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 21.

aircraft carriers, 24 battleships, and 400 destroyers. The ground operation focused on an attack of the southernmost island of Kyushu by 14 Divisions of the Sixth U.S. Army on December 1, 1945, and represented a critical step, “essential to a strategy of strangulation.” Operation CORONET called for the largest amphibious operation of all time. The ground operation included an attack on the main island of Honshu by 28 Divisions of the Eighth, Tenth and First U.S. Armies on March 1, 1946 in order to “knock-out blow to the enemy’s heart that would force capitulation.”⁷³ As a contemporary comparison, Operation OVERLORD employed only 12 divisions in the initial landings.⁷⁴

On April 12, President Franklin D. Roosevelt died in Warm Springs, Georgia. With the passing of Roosevelt, Harry S. Truman acceded to the office of President and Commander in Chief. As an additional consequence of Roosevelt passing, Henry Morgenthau quickly lost favor in the executive branch and subsequently lost influence in planning for the postwar occupation of Germany and Japan. The most vocal proponent of harsh peace with the Axis now observed post-war planning from afar.

On April 19, the SWNCC’s Subcommittee on the Far East drafted the “Summary of United States Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to Japan.” The Subcommittee for the Far East produced the document at the request of the War Department’s Chief of Civil Affairs Division, John H. Hilldring. Caught unprepared by the request, the Soft Peace group of Dooman, Blakeslee, and Borton based the Summary upon the May 1944 PWC document, “Post-War Objectives of the United States in Regard to Japan.” As a result, the Summary reflected a harsh peace anticipated by the previous Harsh Peace planners. The Summary called for Japan’s unconditional surrender, its return to pre-war territorial boundaries, and the establishment of a military government to

⁷³ Frank, *Downfall*, 117.

⁷⁴ General Staff of MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur, Volume 1*, 411.

administer occupied Japan directly. The objective of this military government was to eradicate Japanese militarism, strengthen democratic tendencies among the people, and encourage the development of liberal political groups. As a reflection of the Soft Peace group's latent influence, the Summary required the occupying military government to "utilize the Japanese administrative machinery and, so far as practicable, Japanese public officials...." This document would become the foundation for the governing SWNCC-150.⁷⁵

On May 8, 1945, the Allies celebrated Victory in Europe (VE) Day, foreshadowing the opportunity for Washington to redirect resources from the European to Pacific Theater.⁷⁶ The next day, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff published the "Immediate Demand for the Unconditional Surrender of Japan" (JCS-1340), which justified why the Secretary of State should openly call for the immediate unconditional surrender of Japan. The Joint Chiefs asserted that growing Japanese concerns over invasion and the safety of the Emperor might make surrender a more palatable option than continued resistance.⁷⁷ Supporting this pursuit of a surrender option, U.S. Army Lieutenant General Robert C. Richardson published the "Draft of a Diplomatic Note to the Emperor of Japan" on May 16, making a case to influence the Emperor towards recognizing that unconditional surrender is the only option remaining to Japan.⁷⁸

On May 28, 1945, Acting Secretary of State Grew visited President Truman with a proposal to conclude the war quickly. He argued that the Allies should modify their terms of

⁷⁵ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 210.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 38.

⁷⁷ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Immediate Demand for the Unconditional Surrender of Japan (JCS-1340)," May 9, 1945. memorandum, *OJPD 1942-1945*, Part 4, Section B, Document 15, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁷⁸ Robert C. Richardson, "Draft of a Diplomatic Note to the Emperor of Japan," May 25, 1945. memorandum, *The Occupation of Japan: U.S. Planning Documents, 1945-1952*, Congressional Information Service, Bethesda, MD, 1989, Part 1, Section A, Document 1, Microfiche Collection, Combined Arms Research Library (CARL), Archival Records, Fort Leavenworth, KS, November 10, 2011 [hereafter cited as *OJPD 1945-1952*, Part #, Section #, Document #, Microfiche Collection, CARL].

unconditional surrender to permit Japan to retain the Imperial Institution if the people desired it. Grew supported America's primary goals of destroying Japan's military machine and blotting out the cult of militarism, but warned, "The Japanese are a fanatical people and are capable ... of fighting to the last ditch and last man." He went on to say, "the greatest obstacle to unconditional surrender by the Japanese is their belief that this would entail the destruction or permanent removal of the Emperor and the institution of the Throne." Grew insisted that if the United States compelled the Japanese people to defend their Emperor, untold number of Americans would die. He recommended that America permit Japan to determine its own political structure in order to allow the country a means of saving face—a position Chang Kai-Shek also held. President Truman acknowledged these assertions and claimed his own thoughts were similar. On May 29, Grew met with the Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, who agreed too with these assertions, but claimed it was not yet time for the President to make any statements for "certain military reasons." This represented the first record of the President being involved in a discussion regarding the Imperial Institution and the first association of that institution as the irreducible condition for surrender.⁷⁹

Also on May 28, Assistant to Secretary of State for White House liaison, Charles Bohlen published a "Memorandum of the 3rd Conversation at the Kremlin, 6pm, May 28," recording a conversation between the State Department's Special Envoy to the Soviet Union, Mr. Harry Hopkins and Marshall Stalin. The conversation focused on Allied progress in the war in the Pacific and tentative plans for the future. Of note, Stalin surmised that the Emperor as a person was of no consequence, but that the Allies should abolish the Imperial Institution as it represented

⁷⁹ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 214–215.

opportunity for “an energetic and vigorous figure who could cause trouble.” This represented the first record of the official Russian position on the Imperial Institution.⁸⁰

On June 8, 1945, the Imperial General Headquarters published the “Fundamental Policy for the Conduct of the War,” which committed the nation to fight to the death so long as the Allies threatened the Emperor. The General Headquarters organized the Imperial homeland defenses into three geographic Army Groups while the population mobilized for war along similar lines as the German *Volkswehr* or *People’s Defense* model. Despite Allied sea and air superiority, the Japanese ground forces outnumbered the Allies by millions.⁸¹

On June 11, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee published “Politico-Military Problems in the Far East: United States Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to Japan” (SWNCC–150), making official the “Summary of the United States Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to Japan” drafted previously in April. As mentioned before, this early version of SWNCC–150 mentioned the Emperor only to say, “The constitutional powers of the Emperor shall be suspended.” This verbiage reflected the harsh peace influence of the Harsh Peace planners.⁸²

On June 16 and 18, Acting Secretary Grew clarified and reasserted his position with President Truman that open concession over the Imperial Institution would bring a speedy capitulation of the Japanese. He recommended that the President should issue the statement after the fall of Okinawa. Records reflect that Truman wanted to wait until the upcoming TERMINAL Conference in Potsdam to discuss the idea with Churchill and Stalin. Records also mention

⁸⁰ Charles E. Bohlen, “Memorandum of the 3rd Conversation at the Kremlin, 6pm, May 28,” May 28, 1945. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 5, Section A, Document 26, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁸¹ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 38–39.

⁸² State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, “Politico–Military Problems in the Far East: United States Initial Post–Defeat Policy Relating to Japan (SWNCC–150),” Jun 11, 1945. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 5, Section A, Document 28, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

“certain other matters,” which likely refer to Soviet participation in the Japanese theater, the atomic bomb, and the Imperial Institution.⁸³

On June 18, Army Chief of Staff, George C. Marshall met with President Truman to seek his endorsement of MacArthur’s plan for the first phase of Operation DOWNFALL, Operation OLYMPIC. Despite urging Truman to endorse the invasion plan, Marshall noted the likely incomprehensible toll for a frontal assault on the Japanese homeland. President Truman approved OLYMPIC “as the best solution under the circumstances and authorized the military to proceed with the planning for an invasion of the Tokyo region, as well.”⁸⁴

On June 29, the Presidential Briefing Book contained a paper entitled, “Unconditional Surrender of Japan and Policy toward Liberated Areas in the Far East in Relation to Unconditional Surrender” (no. 589), which succinctly reasoned why the President should issue a statement “presenting in general terms the salient features of our [Allied] program for the treatment of defeated Japan.” The document articulated that a statement would alleviate fears that the Japanese people face extinction upon surrender. More importantly, the statement would ameliorate fears regarding the fate of the Imperial Institution. This reinforced the notion that the fate of the Imperial Institution was the irreducible condition for surrender.⁸⁵

In early July 1945, Professor William Shockley—an American physicist with a strong history of support to the military—conducted a study for Secretary of War Henry Stimson, estimating Allied casualties associated with an opposed assault on the Japanese home islands. The report stated that conquering Japan would likely cost from 1.7 to 4 million Allied casualties

⁸³ Masanori Nakamura, *The Japanese Monarchy: Ambassador Grew and the Making of the ‘Symbol Emperor System’, 1931–1991* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Incorporated, 1992), 73–74.

⁸⁴ Frank, *Downfall*, 117.

⁸⁵ Presidential Briefing Book, “Unconditional Surrender of Japan and Policy toward Liberated Areas in the Far East in Relation to Unconditional Surrender (no. 589),” Jun 29, 1945. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 5, Section A, Document 29, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

(including 400,000–800,000 fatalities) and 5 to 10 million Japanese fatalities. The factor in this estimation was the anticipated large-scale participation of civilians in the defense of Japan. These projections likely influenced other invasion-related decisions, to include the decision to use atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.⁸⁶

On July 2, 1945, Secretary Stimson presented his “Memorandum for the President—Proposed Program for Japan” to President Truman where he outlined the framework for the Potsdam Proclamation. Of note, Stimson included permissive language in Article 12 regarding the future of the Imperial Institution in the belief that it increased the likelihood of Japanese surrender. President Truman’s advisors also suggested that explicit mention of the atomic bomb or Stalin’s signature on the Proclamation might induce Japanese surrender.⁸⁷

For nearly 13 months, post-war planners advanced the Harsh Peace/Soft Peace discourse under the leadership of Soft Peace masters. Documents from this period reflect a generally positive conversation regarding the nature of the Imperial Institution and the character of the Emperor. Despite the presence of Harsh Peace arguments, the overall tenor remains accepting—if not openly supportive—towards the Imperial Institution. It was during this period, U.S. planners definitively linked the condition of the Imperial Institution to the Japanese people’s will-to-fight. The challenge remained, however, of how to convince U.S. policy-makers that the enemy’s will-to-fight and the balance of the war rest with a decision not to use force or the threat of force against the Imperial Institution.

⁸⁶ Frank, *Downfall*, 340.

⁸⁷ Mee, Jr., *Meeting at Potsdam*, 243–244.

The Return to Harsh Peace

On July 3, President Truman replaced Secretary of State Edward Stettinius with James Byrnes (pro-China). As a result, Joseph Grew's days in the State Department were numbered. Secretary Byrnes—counseled by Former Secretary of State Cordell Hull—measured each decision in light of an American public sentiment set against Hirohito. Hull advised Byrnes that the American people would not tolerate any hints of appeasement.⁸⁸

On July 6, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, Archibald MacLeish published an “Interpretation of Japanese Unconditional Surrender” (No. 593), as it protested the issuance of any statement clarifying the terms of surrender until the U.S. Department of State reached a conclusion on the topic. MacLeish (pro-China) conceded that “the views of the Japanese with regard to the institution of the throne indicate that the non-molestation of the person of the present emperor and the preservation of the institution of the throne comprise irreducible Japanese terms” which was, by definition, conditional surrender. Unlike previous assessments of the harmony between Japanese and German policies, MacLeish highlighted that the IPCOG 1/4 of May 11, 1943 mentioned, “stamping out” the Nazi Party, arresting the *Fuehrer*, and prohibiting the reinstitution of either. MacLeish asserted that these terms are decidedly different from those proposed for Japan. He also emphasized that the Emperor was “part of the problem” and was therefore incapable of being “part of the solution.”⁸⁹

On July 12, 1945, U.S. Army Air Corps' Colonel DeForest van Slyck published “Observations on Post Hostilities Policy toward Japan” as it discussed some of the most articulate

⁸⁸ Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, Volume 2* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1948), 1589–1593.

⁸⁹ Archibald MacLeish, “Interpretation of Japanese Unconditional Surrender,” July 6, 1945. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 5, Section A, Document 31, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

planning factors regarding the occupation of Japan. Of note, van Slyck affirmed that time was the enemy of an occupying force, observing a precipitous fall in public support for occupation after about six months. Additionally, van Slyck asserted that the Allies had insufficient resources and experience for a protracted experiment in military government. As such, he recommended that the United States pursue any policy that used the existing civil administration infrastructure—including the Emperor—to manage the immediate problem of occupation and the long-range problem of restoring Japan to a functioning independent state. In practical terms, van Slyck posited that the existing government and the Imperial Institution were the keys to a short, and thus less costly, occupation.⁹⁰

On July 16, General MacArthur's staff completed a plan code-named Operation BLACKLIST—the uncontested occupation of a willingly surrendered Japan. This alternative to Operation DOWNFALL firmly established the U.S. Army as executive agent for the administration of post-conflict Japan. Operation BLACKLIST called for an unopposed landing and occupation of the Japanese homeland by 19 Divisions from the U.S. Sixth and Eighth Armies as early as September 1, 1945.⁹¹ With the completion of BLACKLIST, two very different futures awaited the Allies. The first—and more importantly presidentially approved—operational approach, Operation DOWNFALL, spelled a costly invasion and the potential eradication of the Japanese as a people. The alternative, Operation BLACKLIST, suggested a less severe occupation under an acquiescent Japanese people. Comparing force requirements and casualty estimates of the two plans made the choice to compel Japan's surrender the obvious military preference to frontal assault.

⁹⁰ van Slyck, "Observations on Post Hostilities Policy toward Japan," Jul 12, 1945.

⁹¹ General Staff of MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur, Volume 1*, 436–439, 451.

On July 18, the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent a note to President Truman at Potsdam, expressing concern that Stimson's permissive language in Article 12 regarding the Imperial Institution could be construed as either a threat to or endorsement of the monarchy. They added:

From [the] strictly military point of view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff[, it is] inadvisable to make any statement or take any action at the present time that would make it difficult or impossible to utilize the authority of the Emperor to direct a surrender of the Japanese forces in the outlying areas as well as in Japan proper.⁹²

Before passing the Potsdam Proclamation on to the present delegates, President Truman and Secretary Byrnes struck the permissive language regarding the Imperial Institution for fear it was too vague.⁹³ Ultimately, the signatories did not include any of the aforementioned caveats; Churchill and Truman feared that mention of the atomic bomb would spur the Soviets to request access to the Bomb and Stalin had no authority to sign the document—as the Kremlin was not yet officially at war with Japan.⁹⁴

On July 26, 1945, Churchill and Truman issued the 13-point Potsdam Proclamation, warning Japan to surrender without condition or face annihilation. The Potsdam Proclamation represented the first of four governing U.S. policies for post-war Japan.⁹⁵ That same day, the State Department published a memorandum entitled, “Comparison of the Proclamation of Jul 26, 1945 with the Policy of the U.S. Department of State” (No. 1254), as it provided analysis on the similarities and differences between the Potsdam Proclamation and extant State Department policy. Of note, the memorandum asserted that the Proclamation constituted a legally binding

⁹² William D. Leahy, “Memorandum for the President,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945. The Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference), 1945. Volume 2* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1945), 1269.

⁹³ Henry Stimson, “Proposed Program for Japan,” in *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945. The Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference), 1945. Volume 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1945), 892.

⁹⁴ Mee, Jr., *Meeting at Potsdam*, 243–244.

⁹⁵ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 219.

document if accepted by Japan, and as such, any ambiguity within the document would favor the Japanese when interpreted. The analysts noted three primary conceptual differences as a guide to future planning purposes. First, the Proclamation applied the terms for unconditional surrender to the Japanese armed forces, whereas, previous policy presumed application to the Japanese government and armed forces. Second, the Proclamation did not clarify the future of the Japanese government but appeared to retain it in some form, whereas, previous policy presumed an Allied Military Government would replace the standing administration. Third, the Proclamation did not mention the Emperor explicitly but appeared to retain him in some form, whereas, policy presumed the Emperor would sign the “Instrument of Surrender,” be placed into protective custody, and be powerless. More than semantics, these differences in policy would have far-reaching repercussions.⁹⁶

On August 6, 1945, the first U.S.-made atomic bomb laid waste to the Japanese 2nd General Army Headquarters and Kure Naval facilities at Hiroshima, killing an estimated 66,000 people. On August 8, in anticipation of an impending surrender, General MacArthur’s staff published the “Assumed Terms of Surrender” as Annex 5 to the Operation BLACKLIST plan. This annex recorded the “assumed terms of surrender relative to military matters which require immediate post-surrender action by Occupation Forces.” This basic military plan referenced principles from documents already approved by the SWNCC and JCS, but acknowledge that all terms are subject to change. Of note, the document reflected a position that the Emperor would participate in the surrender process and would continue to perform functions as they facilitated the terms of occupation.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Department of State, “Assumed Terms of Surrender,” July 26, 1945. memorandum, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 5, Section A, Document 41, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

⁹⁷ U.S. Army in the Pacific, “Assumed Terms of Surrender,” August, 1945. orders annex, *OJPD 1942–1945*, Part 4, Section C, Document 24, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

On August 9, as the Russians simultaneously declared war on Japan, another U.S.-made atomic bomb destroyed the Mitsubishi Steel and Arms Works and Japanese Naval facilities at Nagasaki, killing an estimated 39,000 people. It was on this morning that the six members of Japan's Supreme Council for the Conduct of the War met to discuss terms for Japanese surrender. Though the Japanese leadership disagreed strongly over how many terms Japan would seek for surrender, Foreign Minister Togo contested that the only irreducible term was preservation of the Imperial Line.⁹⁸

On August 10, 1945, at Hirohito's insistence, the Suzuki Cabinet tentatively accepted the terms of the Potsdam Proclamation on condition that the Allies allow the "Imperial Institution and its prerogatives to continue."⁹⁹ That same day, the State Department finalized a draft "Instrument of Surrender" (SWNCC-21/3). On August 11, Secretary of State Byrnes issued a purposefully vague communiqué to the Japanese, stating that the authority of the Emperor and the government would be subject to the Allied Supreme Commander, but suggested that the monarchy would not be overthrown unilaterally.¹⁰⁰

On August 12, the Subcommittee for the Far East issued a modified "Summary of United States Initial Post-Defeat Policy Relating to Japan" (SWNCC-150/2) as an initial attempt to address the concept of indirect rule. Of note, this document represented the first reorientation of policy documents away from "Post-Defeat" toward "Post-Surrender."¹⁰¹

On August 14, again at Hirohito's prompting, Tokyo formally agreed to capitulate, and on August 15, the Emperor broadcast an unprecedented prerecorded radio address to the people

⁹⁸ Storry, *A History of Modern Japan*, 230.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Mayo, "American Wartime Planning for Occupied Japan," 44-45.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

of Japan. Without using the words “surrender” or “defeat,” the Emperor instructed the Japanese people to seek peace. On August 17, after the Suzuki Cabinet resigned, Prince Higashikuni Naruhiko formed the “Imperial Cabinet.” The fact that a member of the royal family headed this new cabinet suggested that the Imperial Institution was secure and legitimate.¹⁰²

Following the Imperial radio broadcast on August 15 and until the 23rd, Japan experienced a rash of rebellious events throughout the country, some by angry civilians, and others by uniformed soldiers. In each case, the Japanese government put down these uprisings and restored order. By the time Allied troops began arriving on August 28, the land was calm and ready for occupation. At this time, Japan proper had roughly 3.5 million regular Imperial troops still under arms.¹⁰³

On August 22, 1945, the Assistant Secretary of War, General John J. McCloy inserted the phrase “the Supreme Commander will exercise his authority through the Japanese governmental machinery and agencies, including the Emperor” in order to harmonize post-surrender policy with the letter and spirit of the Potsdam Proclamation. This change became policy in the approved version of SWNCC–150/3. This phrase represented a compromise between the Harsh Peace and Soft Peace positions; but, more practically, it instructed the Supreme Commander not to remove the Emperor without consulting Washington.¹⁰⁴

On August 28, 1945, the first Allied forces, consisting of combat ships from the U.S. Naval Task Force 31, entered Tokyo Bay unopposed. Vice Admiral Totsuka, Commandant of the

¹⁰² General Staff of MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur: The Campaigns of General MacArthur in the Pacific, Volume 2* (Washington, DC: United States Army Center of Military History, 1966), 728.

¹⁰³ Toshikazu, *Eclipse of the Rising Sun*, 56–57.

¹⁰⁴ Mayo, “American Wartime Planning for Occupied Japan,” 44–45.

First Naval District and the Yokosuka Naval Base reported to the USS San Diego for further instructions regarding the surrender of his command.¹⁰⁵

On August 31, 1945, President Truman endorsed the “US Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan” (SWNCC–150/4) as the official U.S. policy and immediately forwarded it to General MacArthur for execution.¹⁰⁶ Three weeks later, the U.S. government would release the “US Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan” (SWNCC–150/4) to the people of Japan through the media.¹⁰⁷ The “US Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan” (SWNCC–150/4) represented the second of four governing U.S. policies for post-war Japan.

On August 13, 1945, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee published “Unconditional Surrender of Japan” (SWNCC–21/3), as it recorded the endorsement of the “Instrument of Surrender” by President Truman and its circulation for information and guidance. The actual Instrument used oblique phrases such as “by command of and in behalf of the Emperor,” “unconditional surrender ... of the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters and of all Japanese armed forces,” and “for the Emperor, the Japanese government and their successors.” These phrases suggested that the Emperor would not participate in the signing of the Instrument of Surrender, that the Emperor was not surrendering himself, and the Emperor was not leaving power. Additionally, in the appended “Directive to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Forces,” the document noted, “from the moment of surrender, the authority of the Emperor and

¹⁰⁵ Benis Frank and Henry Shaw, *Victory and Occupation: History of the U.S. Marine Corps—Operations in World War II, Volume 5* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1968), 484.

¹⁰⁶ Takemae, *Inside GHQ*, 226.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 205.

Japanese government to rule the state will be subject to you.” The “Instrument of Surrender” (SWNCC–21/3) represented the third of four governing U.S. policies for post-war Japan.¹⁰⁸

On September 2, 1945, the “Instrument of Surrender” placed Japan under Allied military jurisdiction and stated unequivocally, “The authority of the Emperor and the Japanese government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate these terms.” Japanese leadership considered this verbiage and that of the Potsdam Proclamation as having sufficient room for interpretation to allow for the continuation of the Imperial Institution. In fact, neither the Emperor, nor any person of royal blood signed the Instrument, as they were part of the Imperial Institution, not the *government*.¹⁰⁹

By November 3, 1945—within three months of Japan’s indication that it would accept the surrender terms of the Potsdam Proclamation—four U.S. policy documents governed the Allied surrender and occupation. The first document was the Potsdam Proclamation of July 26. The second document was the “Instrument of Surrender” (SWNCC–21/3) of September 2. The third document was the “US Initial Post-Surrender Policy for Japan” (SWNCC–150/4) of September 22. The fourth document was the “Basic Directive for Post-Surrender Military Government in Japan Proper” (JCS–1380/15) of November 3. The Joint Chiefs of Staff published this final document as a *how-to* guide for translating principles from the previous three documents into concrete tactical actions for the military. JCS–1380 was Top Secret and remained so until the latter part of the occupation in the 1950s. During its development, the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not send the document to President Truman or the Far East Commission. Instead, the Joint Chiefs of

¹⁰⁸ State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, “Unconditional Surrender of Japan (SWNCC–21/6),” Aug 13, 1945. memorandum, *OJPD, 1945–1952*, Part 2, Section A, Document 33, Microfiche Collection, CARL, November 10, 2011.

¹⁰⁹ General Staff of MacArthur, *Reports of General MacArthur, Volume 2*, 728.

Staff sent the Directive directly to General MacArthur, advancing a draft copy (JCS–1380/5) as early as mid-September.¹¹⁰

The short four months that marked the end of post-war planning represented some of the most critical thinking and decision-making of the war. U.S. planners advanced the Harsh Peace/Soft Peace discourse under the leadership of Harsh Peace masters and the documents from this period reflect a generally neutral tone regarding the Imperial Institution. However, the Soft Peace logic from previous months maintained a momentum of its own, increasingly affecting military operational planners. More importantly, policy-makers eventually acknowledged that the condition of Imperial Institution related directly to the Japanese people's will-to-fight and that to threaten the Imperial Institution actually ran counter to the conditions necessary for favorable conflict resolution.

Summary

The U.S. post-War planners for Japan did not have perfect knowledge, nor were they all subject matter experts on the topic of Japan. However, they demonstrated a unique conviction for wrestling with the problem they faced—ending a war with a decidedly foreign people. These conditions necessitated a lengthy and heated discourse on how to defeat the enemy, not solely in terms of the Japanese means-to-fight, but primarily their will to do so. Though planners considered the Emperor's role in the war from practical position early in the discussion, over time they developed an appreciation for the Imperial Institution's role in the Japanese national identity. It was through this linkage that the planners began to understand how a threat to the Emperor or the Imperial Institution constituted a threat to the Japanese national identity, and therefore a

¹¹⁰ Theodore Cohen, *Remaking Japan: The American Occupation as New Deal* (New York: The Free Press, 1987), 13, 48.

provocation for continuing the war. Suddenly, the conventional practices of targeting national leadership or threatening force against the throne became counterproductive—even fatal to the cause of a better peace. Consequently, military planners had already developed two plans for the Japanese home islands—the first with 29 divisions invading a hostile Japan and the second with only 19 divisions occupying a submissive state. With time running short, U.S. planners had to find a way to influence U.S.—and ultimately Allied—policy-makers to openly commit to safeguarding the Imperial Institution they would otherwise consider an irresistible target in war. Ultimately, just enough people were convinced to write just enough in the Potsdam Proclamation for the Japanese leaders to see just enough room for interpretation regarding the Imperial Institution. This room for interpretation permitted the Emperor to concede to the terms and end the war.

Conclusions

Findings

The historical record of the U.S. post-WWII Japan planning effort provides a good case from which to answer this study's research questions. The first of which was—*what options did U.S. post-WWII Japan planners have in terms of strategy at the end of WWII?* Based upon the influence of military thought at the time, the author hypothesized that planners would have considered two primary options—to invade the Japanese home islands, or compel Japanese surrender through continued threat of military force. In actuality, planners entertained a third opportunity—to co-opt the existing Japanese government by safeguarding and retaining the Imperial Institution.

The second question was—*why did they choose to safeguard the Japanese Imperial Institution?* Considering popular public sentiment of the day, the author hypothesized that planners would have considered safeguarding the Emperor to retain a Japanese national figure to

endorse surrender and/or ultimately hold responsible after the war. In actuality, planners considered the Imperial Institution as inexorably linked to the Japanese people's will-to-fight.

The third question was—*what did U.S. post-WWII Japan planners understand about the enemy's will-to-fight?* In terms of their understanding of the Japanese will-to-fight, the author hypothesized that planners likely considered the Japanese will-to-fight in terms of their military, economic, and political means to do so. In actuality, planners understood that the Japanese will-to-fight increased in response to threats against their national identity and a fear that their extermination as a people was otherwise inescapable. These concepts of national identity and fear of inescapable extermination collectively manifest in the Japanese people's perception of the condition of the Imperial Institution.

The fourth question was—*how did the planners' understanding of the Japanese will-to-fight inform the strategy they pursued?* The author hypothesized that had planners considered the Japanese will-to-fight in terms of their military, economic, and political means to do so, planners would have produced a strategy that continued to force or threaten force against military, economic, and political institutions—especially the Imperial Institution. Instead, the planners' understanding of Japan's will-to-fight led them to favor co-opting the existing Japanese government by safeguarding and retaining the Imperial Institution. Planners explicitly equated preserving the Imperial Institution with eliminating the primary motivation for insurgency, retaining the largest portion of existing civil servants, and eliminating the need for a costly invasion.

The fifth question was—*how did planners develop that understanding?* Based upon the Joint and Inter-Agency nature of the U.S. post-WWII Japan planning effort, the author hypothesized that planners would develop their understanding of the Japanese will-to-fight by engaging the expertise of military and civilian individuals with relevant cultural knowledge. This was the case as planners developed their understanding of the Japanese will-to-fight through engaging experts in the fields of diplomacy, military governance, political culture, anthropology,

and military intelligence. Consequently, the involvement of these experts led to a lengthy, iterative, and contentious discourse between the two primary theoretical camps – those seeking a harsh peace with Japan and those seeking a soft peace.

Though not originally a question considered in this structured, focused comparison study, the question arises—in the case of WWII Japan, did the United States defeat the Japanese will-to-fight by use of force or threat against their means-to-fight? Entire books exist in support of the argument that the atomic bombs dropped at Hiroshima and Nagasaki coerced Japanese leadership to surrender; and this short monograph cannot match their volume of evidence.¹¹¹ However, it is compelling how the Japanese did not capitulate on August 6, after the first atomic bomb destroyed the Japanese 2nd General Army Headquarters and Kure Naval facilities at Hiroshima. Likewise, the Japanese did not capitulate on August 9, after the second atomic bomb destroyed the Mitsubishi Steel and Arms Works and Japanese Naval facilities at Nagasaki. The Japanese capitulated on August 14, 1945, only after they secured sufficient assurance from Secretary of State James Byrnes that the Imperial Institution would continue under the terms of the Potsdam Proclamation.¹¹²

Implications

This study holds many implications on current and future military operations. First, operational planners and commanders now know that a critical gap exists in contemporary military thought regarding an enemy's will-to-fight—a gap not filled by professional military

¹¹¹ See in Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House Publishing, 1999); Robert J. Maddox, *Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Years Later* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1995); D. M. Giangreco, *Hell to Pay: Operation DOWNFALL and the Invasion of Japan, 1945-1947* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009).

¹¹² See principle of diminishing relevance in John Lewis Gaddis, *Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 96.

education or doctrine. Second, planners and commanders now know that their applications of operational art, problem framing, and conflict termination likely fail to recognize all available options to defeat the enemy. Third, military professionals now have a historical example where planners deliberately considered the consequences of their strategy in light of the enemy's will-to-fight, not just their means to do so.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although this monograph is a stand-alone research document, time and space restrictions do not permit it explore all related content or context. As such, many potential research topics persist. First, despite the contextually informative nature of the extant literature reviewed, there is no apparent explanation for the conflating of the enemy's means-to-fight with the will-to-fight. Second, the case of the Japanese Imperial Institution offered in this work sacrifices breadth in favor of depth. As such, opportunity exists to explore other military operations in search of how the planner's understanding of the enemy's will-to-fight influenced their operational approach. Third, the case of the Japanese Imperial Institution highlighted the influences of culture, religion, and identity on the Japanese people's will-to-fight. Consequently, opportunity exists to pursue a more focused cross-discipline study of the relationships among identity, decision-making, and the will-to-fight

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