



# The Ambiguous Emperor: Hirohito's Role in Engaging in and Ending the Pacific War

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The Ambiguous Emperor  
Hirohito's Role in Engaging In and Ending the Pacific War

Patrick H. Choi

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## Abstract

Currently, Japan is the only country to sustain a nuclear attack. The devastation of such an attack resonates with only Japan's citizenry, but is also a grave reminder that such a force exists in the world. It is important for historians to dissect the events that perpetuated the war, and even more important to understand how such a war could have transpired. This thesis attempts to look at Emperor Hirohito's role in engaging in war and more importantly his inability or perhaps his unwillingness to end the war. We will dissect the Emperor's complicated place in the monarchial system, the Meiji constitution that was seemingly designed to complicate and the Emperor's role, how his advisors were able to buffer the Emperor in order to maintain his omnipotent image, and how the military looked to the Emperor for guidance and leadership.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

More than seven decades since the end of the Pacific War, historians continue to debate the question of the true role of Emperor Hirohito in Japan's war efforts. Despite the western public's wish to see Hirohito indicted as a war criminal, Hirohito was absolved. As a result, Hirohito remained until his death, in 1989, as a well-respected icon of postwar Japan, where peace and tranquility prevailed.

Regardless of how Hirohito was perceived at the time of his death, historians continue to debate the Emperor's role in Japan's ambitious plan to dominate Asia. Some scholars—let us call them populists—espouse the popular notion that the Emperor was a mere figurehead and was subject to the whims of the bureaucratic mechanisms of the Japanese government; other historians—let us call them revisionists—argue that Hirohito was in fact the architect of the war in the Pacific. After the end of the war, during the International Military Tribunal for the Far East for Class A war criminals in 1946-47, military leaders and government officials were able to fortify the idea that the Emperor's role was merely symbolic, and that Japan was a constitutional monarchy. Despite his ability to advise and make recommendations, Hirohito was not the architect of the war.

The two sides, populist and revisionist, utilize communication logs, meeting minutes, diaries, and memorandums to fortify their respective positions regarding Hirohito's role in World War II, but written statements without an understanding of the structure and role of communications can lead to improper conclusions. Rarely do historical events occur in a clear and linear manner. Simply looking at who said what

leaves out important aspects of the relationship between those who spoke and those who heard. Close examination will show that there existed a certain amount of miscommunication among the Japanese military, government, and the Emperor. This miscommunication can be attributed to the transition from an agrarian society to a constitutional monarchy. This transition brought those who reverently believed in the newly installed omnipotent perception of authority of the Emperor at odds with a more democratic form of government.

In addition to the populist and the revisionist views of Hirohito, there are scholars who have dissected the organizational/communication structure of the Japanese government. These scholars show that traditional forms of communication between leaders and followers allowed the war to begin and continue. In his paper, “Japanese Organizational Decision-making in 1941,” Omi Hatashin states that military leaders were looking to their superiors to tacitly imply *honne* (one’s unexpressed true wish) that they wanted the war to end.<sup>1</sup> This can be seen in the example of the army’s refusal to withdraw preparations to go to war with the United States.

By 12 October 1941, the Chief of the Naval General Staff, Admiral Nagano, had already taken the step of advising the Emperor to implement the recommendation of the navy’s First committee, arranging fleets in a battle formation and requisitioning ships for war. It was therefore difficult for the Admiralty Minister to say something, which was not consistent with the advice, which his senior officer, namely, the Chief of the Naval General staff, had given in audience with the Emperor... When the Chief tried to prevent the navy from aiding the army, which was then secretly maneuvering to conquer Manchuria, and said the action would “jeopardize Japan’s relationship with the US.” Admiral Togo angrily confronted the Chief’s US-Japanese-relationship remark, saying that the Admiral had

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<sup>1</sup> Omi Hatashin, “Japanese Organisational Decision Making in 1941,” *International Journal of Management and Decision Making* 12, no. 1 (2012): 74.



always been telling the Emperor that he could even fight the Americans;  
“Are you suggesting that I have been telling His Majesty a lie?”<sup>2</sup>

The nature of this type of exchange prevented military subordinates from making arguments against instigating a war with the United States, which they knew would end in a loss. The true wishes of the subordinates (*honne*) were not expressed.

Near the end of the war, the army and navy were at odds with each other. Both parties wanted to blame each other in order to save “face,” and both parties were simply maintaining their current positions hoping that a parental figure would understand the army and the navy’s true wishes and end the war. “Both of them implicitly expected, however, that the Emperor, as the father of the nation, would be kind enough to take into account the army’s and navy’s true wishes.”<sup>3</sup> The Emperor, however, chose to be faithful to the constitution and adhere to the “organ theory,” an interpretation of the constitution that considered the state as the sovereign and the Emperor as an organ of the state.

To understand how the miscommunication between subordinates and superiors could lead an entire country to war, it is important to note that the transition from an autocratic regime to a democratic constitutional monarchy was at odds with two essential principles of Japanese society, the pre-war perception of the Emperor and the influence of the military on Japanese society. To understand the former, we need to first understand the structure of a constitutional monarchy. A constitutional monarchy is a monarchy in which the governing powers of the monarch are restricted by a constitution. But the

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<sup>2</sup> Hatashin, “Japanese Organisational Decision Making,” 76.

<sup>3</sup> Hatashin, “Japanese Organisational Decision Making,” 76.

authority of the Emperor was above reproach. Hirohito was considered a living god forged from a dynastic line that extended back 26 centuries. Children were cautioned from looking at his face as they would be blinded, and mentioning his name was considered a taboo. Herbert Bix's article "The Showa Emperor's 'Monologue' and the Problem of War Responsibility" states,

It is permissible to say that the idea that the Japanese are descendants of the gods is a false conception; but it is absolutely impermissible to call chimerical the idea that the Emperor is a descendant of the gods.<sup>4</sup>

The Emperor reinforces the notion that he is a descendent of the gods. This notion was aligned with the Emperor's role as not only the "head of state" but also the highest authority of the Japanese religion, Shinto. The Emperor's prewar legitimacy rested on the notion of his descent from the Sun Goddess.

The transition from a bucolic society ruled by shoguns<sup>5</sup> to a constitutional monarchy with an emphasis on the sovereign authority of the Emperor left military leaders and those in government at odds over how to proceed.

To further understand the scope of the Emperor's authority on the military as well as the military's influence on the Japanese government and citizens, it is important to understand the extent to which the Japanese military had integrated itself into the societal structure of pre-modern Japan. One of the military founding fathers of pre-

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<sup>4</sup> Peter Wetzler, *Hirohito and War: The Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>5</sup>A Shogun was the military ruler of Japan from 1185 to 1868. During this time, the Shogun was the ruler of the country. The Emperor appointed them, but this was considered a formality.

World War 2 Japan was Yamagata Aritomo. In his closing speech to the opening ceremony of the Imperial Military Reserve Association, Yamagata said,

We reservists, reverently receiving our president's princely message, must carry out our organization's primary aims and fulfill the ideal that all citizens are soldiers. Not only must we repay our obligation to the Emperor, but we must also make our nation prosper.<sup>6</sup>

Yamagata was raised with the fervent belief in a national unity that espoused warrior-like spirit and fierce loyalty to the Emperor. He believed in the Bushido values<sup>7</sup>, and integrated them into Japan's military ideology. Unlike most of his fellow activists, Yamagata did not abscond to the civilian side of government. Instead, he continued to serve in the military. It was through the military that he established a national machinery to create and ensure an orderly society. He took the lead in building an army that operated independently of civilian control while influencing civil government and civilians on both the national and local levels. The end result was a Japanese society where the military's influence was found in almost all levels of civilian activity.

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<sup>6</sup> Richard J. Smethurst, *A Social Basis for Prewar Japanese Militarism: The Army and the Rural Community* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 2.

<sup>7</sup> Is a term used to describe the samurai way of life. The bushido code is analogous to chivalry.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

Herbert R. Bix is a revisionist who claims in his 2000 book, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, that

Hirohito and his key advisers participated directly and decisively as independent forces in policy making. Acting energetically behind the scenes, Hirohito influenced the conduct of his first three prime ministers, hastened the collapse of political party cabinets, and sanctioned opposition to strengthening the peace machinery of the League of Nations. When resistance to his interventions provoked open defiance from the army, he and his advisors drew back and connived at military aggression.<sup>8</sup>

Bix dismisses the popular image of Hirohito being docile, tacit, and lonely. Instead Bix argues that Hirohito's influence on the Japanese polity was vast. Bix claims that Hirohito took on a leadership role in the decision-making and war planning efforts.

Historians who promote the pacifist image of Hirohito continue to rebuke the revisionist theory by giving examples of the Emperor showing his passivity or lack of leadership when it came to matters of military/state affairs. Kazuo Yagami provides an example of when the Emperor had the opportunity to show his leadership or, at the very least, his allegiance to those who view the Emperor as the supreme commander. On February 26, 1936, a massive uprising occurred when the Kōdōha (Imperial Way) faction, which was comprised of young officers from the military, attacked and occupied several

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<sup>8</sup> Herbert R. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2000), 11-12.

important government buildings and killed several senior statesmen. The violators expected the Emperor's support but they did not receive it.<sup>9</sup>

In his book, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, Robert Butow states that, regarding the Emperor's role,

As the years passed, the sovereign was no longer allowed in any way personally to direct the affairs of the state or to meddle with the machinery of government. He could question or caution his ministers and advisers on matters within their competence and jurisdiction but he could not override policies formulated by the appropriate organs of state. When there was unanimity in the civil administration and the military command, the Emperor could do nothing but approve what was obviously the will of the state... Under no circumstances did the Emperor ever assume personal direction of the government.<sup>10</sup>

Butow paints a picture of an Emperor whose authority to rule had been stricken from him. The Emperor did not assume personal direction of the government.

Lester Brooks concurs with Butow's image of the Emperor:

It was a fiction that he was supreme commander of the army and navy. True, he held the title, but when he attempted to exercise control he was hamstrung or his wishes were politely ignored. Of course it was nothing personal. The mechanism was so rigged that the military could easily block efforts they disapproved.<sup>11</sup>

Brooks gives us the example that the Emperor's attempt to work through the Japanese foreign office to halt the military's actions in Manchuria was fruitless. Brooks furthers his

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<sup>9</sup> Kazuo Yagami, "The Role of Emperor Hirohito in the Pacific War: 1941-1945," *Virginia Review of Asian Studies* 10, no. 1 (2012): 137.

<sup>10</sup> Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1954), 229.

<sup>11</sup> Lester Brooks, *Behind Japan's Surrender: The Secret Struggle That Ended an Empire* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 98.

position on the Emperor by showing how Japanese army had taken retaliatory action for “Chinese hostility” near Beijing.<sup>12</sup>

In his book, *The Age of Hirohito*, Daikichi Irokawa espouses the notion of a complacent Emperor who was lost in the quagmire of ambiguity and allowed the military to take action.

On this occasion, there were several violations of the Emperor’s supreme command. In accordance with the wishes of Ishiwara Kanji and other planner, the commander of the Kwatung Army, Honjō Shigeru, ordered a general offensive and occupied all of Manchuria on his own authority. Even though the Emperor had been presented with the plan, he had not specifically approved it.... These incidents were serious arrogations of imperial authority.<sup>13</sup>

Hirohito was not only complacent in the actions of the military, but he also contradicted his own words. According to Irokawa, Hirohito did not only decide to not have his own way with regards to how he would have treated the military’s incursion into China, he presented Honjō Shigeru with a commendation.

Irokawa shows that the Emperor’s actions towards the military were inconsistent.

At times the Emperor exercised his authority, on other occasions he did not. Sackett’s vigorous questioning followed the course of events such as the Manchurian Incident, the Sino-Japanese war, and finally the war between Japan and the United States. In these cases, the Emperor did not exercise his authority and allowed major incidents and acts of aggression. Moreover, rather than punishing those responsible for the crimes of aggression, the Emperor repeatedly honored them.<sup>14</sup>

Irokawa paints a picture of an Emperor who sent mixed signals with regards to the

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<sup>12</sup> Lester Brooks, *Behind Japan’s Surrender: The Secret Struggle That Ended an Empire* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 99.

<sup>13</sup> Daikichi Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 77.

<sup>14</sup> Daikichi Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 80.

decisions that his military made.

Irokawa also shows that the Emperor had great interest in the strategies of the military operations.

The best policy would have been... to defend the Philippines. I disagreed with the army and the navy general staffs, and believed that we should have struck hard at Kyoto.... But my opinion did not reach the Supreme War Council. The army, navy and Yamashita all disagreed. For this reason Yamashita failed to make vigorous use of the troops; he was fighting reluctantly. And the navy recklessly sent out the fleet, engaged in battle in an unscientific fashion, and failed.<sup>15</sup>

Irokawa is surprised by how well versed the Emperor was in matters of military operations. A premise utilized by the pacifist historians with regards to Hirohito's passive involvement in the war is in the relationship that existed between Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro and Hirohito. Konoe's view was that engaging in war with the United States would lead to a certain defeat. As such from 1937 until his resignation as Prime Minister in 1941, almost all the acts of Konoe were carried out with his determination to avoid going to war against the United States. Kazuo Yagami, in his article "The Role of Emperor Hirohito in the Pacific war 1941-1945: The Views of the Revisionists," argues:

For example, when the military and general public was showing strong desire to make an alliance with Germany by signing the Tripartite Pact in 1939, Konoe was not in favor of the idea of the Tripartite Pact, being apprehensive about its negative impact on Japan's relation with the United States.<sup>16</sup>

Yagami, uses Konoe's stance regarding the Tripartite Pact and his relationship with Hirohito to show how the Emperor's views towards the war changed.

Hirohito, contrary to Bix's and other revisionists' assertions, never made himself inclined to support the idea of going to war against the United

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<sup>15</sup> Irokawa, *The Age of Hirohito*, 237.

<sup>16</sup> Yagami, "The Role of Emperor Hirohito," 142.

States under any circumstance and made tenacious efforts along with Konoe to save Japan from getting into that direction.<sup>17</sup>

Yagami concludes by saying that the Emperor was simply following the traditional custom of the Emperor's role as a figurehead. "Although he was a supreme commander in chief under the monarchical system of Japan, he was always faithful to this long established tradition and never desire to defy it."<sup>18</sup>

Essentially, the current historical scholarship surrounding Emperor Hirohito's involvement in the continuation of World War II has occurred in three compartmentalized forms. There are the populist who espoused Hirohito's lack of participation and inability to control the military, the revisionists who insist that the Hirohito was in fact at the helm and participated more than he led on, and those who study the organizational behavior of Japanese management structures. Yet the evidence provided by both the pacifists and the revisionists are observations of specific events, the evidence is provided without context and relations to the existing management structure.

The majority of the body of work does not provide insight into the notion of *honne*, one's unexpressed true wish as opposed to what one feels ought to be expressed publicly, and *amae*, a dependence on a person of a parental position who could understand and act on one's unexpressed true wishes.<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to note that despite the Emperor's lack of authority when it comes to matters of state, and more importantly the military, there were several attempts to re-

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<sup>17</sup> Yagami, "The Role of Emperor Hirohito," 139.

<sup>18</sup> Yagami, "The Role of Emperor Hirohito," 144.

<sup>19</sup> Omi Hatashin, "Japanese Organisational Decision Making 1941," *International Journal of Management and Decision Making* 12, no. 1 (2012): 70.



instate the authority of the Emperor. Many of those pursuing that route were ultra nationalist groups who wanted to bring Japan back to a state where the Emperor was more than a figurehead. Therefore, despite what the pacifist historians have claimed, Hirohito had the opportunity to regain authority over the military and to provide direction of the war. Although how long he would have stayed in power would be questionable.

### Chapter III

#### Research Method

This thesis will bridge the two opposing canonical view of the Emperor's role by viewing the evidence collected by both the revisionist and the pacifists through the lens of Japanese management/communication behavior. We will look at how these decisions were affected by the relationship between the subordinates and their superiors. How those involved in the decision-making and those who relayed information did so in hopes that those above them on the organizational structure would understand their *honne*, and that those in charge would understand their subordinate's *amae*. The broader implications of this study will seek to answer the questions, "If the Emperor had the authority to end the war, then why did the war progress to the extent it had?" and "How did the Emperor's inaction lead to the continuance of the war?" I will utilize the observations made by both historians and explain the Emperor's actions, or his inaction, through the lens of a cultural of dependence and perform a counterfactual experiment. This study will attempt to show how the Emperor's inactivity was his attempt to exploit the ambiguity found in the constitution in order to further his own goals.

This thesis will begin by extrapolating the historical origins of the Meiji constitution. The process of forming the Meiji constitution led to the Emperor's role as being ambiguous. We will show how the ambiguity with regards to the role of the Emperor was exploited by the military, the citizen government, factions within the military, and the Emperor himself. In other words, had the Emperor asserted greater resolve to never declare war, Japan would never have engaged in war with the Allies.

From the Meiji constitution, this thesis will explore the cultural aspects that permeated Japan's society up and during the war. This is an important aspect of the research as it provides the research with insight as to why the Japanese people felt and support the war, and could have also influenced the Emperor's decisions.

Then this thesis will seek to test its hypothesis using counterfactuals through causal analysis.<sup>20</sup> This thesis will assess whether an event of  $x$ , where  $x$  is the event in discussion, caused the event  $y$ . This thesis will conduct a thought experiment in which we mentally remove  $x$  from the actual course of history and try to ascertain if this removal would have made a difference to occurrence of the event of interest. In other words this thesis will try to figure out had  $x$  not been true,  $y$  would not have been. Consensus amongst scholars is that there are six criteria for judging counterfactual arguments. Due to the unique application of our counterfactual analysis, we will be using three of the six.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin, "Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives," in *Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Philip E. Tetlock and Aaron Belkin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>21</sup> According to Tetlock and Belkin in "Counterfactual Thought Experiments in World Politics: Logical, Methodological, and Psychological Perspectives," there are six normative criteria for judging counterfactual arguments. They are:

1. Clarity: specify and circumscribe the independent and dependent variables.
2. Logical consistency or contentability: Specify connecting principles that link the antecedent with the consequent and that are contentable with each other and with the antecedent;
3. Historical consistency: Specify antecedents that require altering as few "well-established" historical facts as possible;
4. Theoretical consistency: Articulate connecting principles that are consistent with "well-established" theoretical generalizations relevant to the hypothesized antecedent-consequent link;
5. Statistical consistency: articulate connecting principles that are consistent with "well-established" statistical generalizations relevant to the antecedent-consequent link;
6. Projectability: tease out testable implications of the connecting principles and determine whether those hypotheses are consistent with additional real-world observations.

In order to ascertain what would have happened if *A* had not been true and *B* would have been true, there needs to be a clear placement of independent and dependent variables. Our thesis will focus on the Emperor's complacent behavior towards the demands of the military factions to continue the war as the independent *A* variable. The Emperor's behaviors is the independent *A* variable because the Emperor's actions affected the other variables. This thesis will not look at any singular behavior or action but will consider the Emperor's actions when presented with military matters. An example of the Emperor's action when presented with military information can be found in the Honjō Diary,

April 18

When His Majesty found out that the Kwantung Army had crossed the Luan River and was rushing into China proper beyond the borders, he summoned me and asked, 'Can the Kwantung Army be ordered to cease its advances?' He seemed to be concerned that Japan's integrity was being undermined by the movement of Japanese troops toward Peking and Tientsin ... I requested His Majesty to postpone issuing such an order ... I was overwhelmed by his graciousness in readily agreeing to my request.<sup>22</sup>

This particular incident shows that the Emperor did feel as though he had a say in military matters. This incident shows that he took General Honjō's advice, nevertheless, it is clear that the Emperor did in fact have a say in such matters.

The transitional rule that will be applied to this counterfactual experiment is that of the Japanese management structure, the organizational behavior dealing with the dependence (*amae*) on a person in a parental position who could understand and act on

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<sup>22</sup> Honjō Shigeru, *Honjo Diaries: Honjo Nikki*, trans. Mikiso Hane (Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 1967), 75.

one's unexpressed true wishes (*honne*). The principle of *honne* and *amae* is a consistent principle found in the management structure of the Japanese government. The principle of *honne* and *amae* allows the counterfactual argument to have logical consistency and provide this thesis with a link between the antecedents, the Emperor's actions/inactions, with the consequent. The antecedent and the consequence of the antecedent can be seen here,

The Chiefs of the General Staff had been refusing to take any order from the Prime Minister by invoking Article 11 of the Constitution, "The Emperor shall command his Army and Navy." The army and navy were so powerful that their abusive conduct was indulged. The only solution to their abuse of the constitution would have been the Emperor's order in the style of the "voice of heaven".<sup>23</sup>

Hatashin contends that the Emperor's orders were, at times, the only way to control the military. Unlike issues found with the principles in other counterfactual experiments, the *honne* and *amae* principle's consistency makes it a good principle to utilize. The *honne* and *amae* principle applies to the Emperor's subordinates and it is very possible to know what would have happened based on the Emperor's action or inaction. This reduces speculation regarding the reaction of the military to the Emperor's commands.

We will look at how the ambiguity surrounding the Emperor's role with regards to military actions transpired. Although the Emperor's role was not traditionally viewed as ambiguous, the nature of the ambiguity took the public stage when the ultra nationalists, to create uproar within the government and military leaders, used Dr. Minobe Tatsukichi's Emperor as an Organ theory. From this ambiguity, this thesis will

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<sup>23</sup> Hatashin, "Japanese Organisational Decision Making 1941," 71-78.

segue into the decision-making structure of the Japanese government, and dissect the organizational structure. This will give us insight into how decisions were made, confirmed, and executed.

The ambiguity found in the constitution had also led to several major coup attempts as well as the assassination of several prominent members of the government. These coup attempts will provide us with much insight as they will show how much authority the Emperor had, and how even though he fancied himself simply a constitutional monarch, there were those in the military who followed his lead and left the decision making process to the Emperor.

Once the ambiguous nature of the role of the Emperor has been established, this thesis will dissect the events leading up to the Pearl Harbor attack, when the Emperor could have exerted his authority to abrogate ambiguity and end the war.

## Chapter IV

### The Creation of the Meiji Constitution: Sowing the Seeds of Emperor Ambiguity

At their meeting on September 27, 1945, General Douglas MacArthur asked Hirohito about where Japan stood concerning war responsibility. Hirohito replied, “It was not clear to me that our course was unjustified. Even now I am not sure how historians will allocate the responsibility for the war.”<sup>24</sup> During the same meeting, Hirohito was asked why he could not prevent the war from breaking out if he had the authority to end the war in August of 1945. Hirohito told MacArthur that such idea of intervention to prevent the war never occurred to him.

These two statements placed Hirohito at odds with the role of the Emperor and his scope of his authority. Throughout the postwar era Hirohito has maintained that he was simply a figurehead and was absolved from war responsibilities simply because he did not have the authority to dictate the actions of the military. In order to understand the truth to Hirohito’s position we need to understand how and why the Meiji Constitution was created. This portion of the paper will discuss the origins and development of the Meiji Constitution.

In attempts to avoid colonization by advancing western powers and in attempts to modernize society, the leaders of the Meiji government adopted a policy of enriching wealth and military strength in the country, *fukoku kyōhei*, and cultivating human

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<sup>24</sup> Yagami, “The Role of Emperor Hirohito,” 142.

intelligence and progressing civilization, *bunmei kaika*. In order to further these goals, the government believed they needed to have a western-style constitution.

A constitutional government was necessary for the *hanbatsu* (clans based upon the homelands of the leaders of the Meiji Restoration) government. As Japan was becoming more developed, the *hanbatsu* government was becoming obsolete in a more centralized capitalist state. As a result, it was necessary for the Meiji government to ensure a policy making process and a system of organization of government personnel. The government elites felt that a written constitution would do just that.

Concurrently there was a movement for the people's rights to freedom and participation in the political process, the Jiyū Minken Undō. This sentiment was so strong that the Meiji government had to make compromises with the people's demands if they proposed the establishment of a parliamentary system comprised of elected representative. Pressured by the desires of the movement for civil rights and a parliamentary government, the *hanbatsu* presented their own conception of the state, and since Western constitutional ideas were prominent at the time, the *hanbatsu* government presented their constitutional plan.<sup>25</sup>

The constitution was intended for the *hanbatsu* and the government elites to preserve their leadership but also satisfy the demands of the political movement. Iwakura Tomomi and Inoue Kowashi played an important role in expressing fundamental principles and opinions on a constitutional government. The main principles dictating the formation of the Meiji Constitution were:

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<sup>25</sup> David H. Rosenbloom, *Cages of Reason: The Rise of the Rational State in France, Japan, the United States, and Great Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 181.



- 1.) The constitution shall emanate from the Emperor and the policy of a gradual approach toward constitutional government shall prevail.
- 2.) The law of succession to the throne has followed traditional rule since the ancestors. It shall be provided in the Imperial House Law separated from the constitution.
- 3.) The Emperor shall have supreme command over the army and navy, declare war, make peace, conclude treaties, appoint and dismiss all civil and military officers, confer marks of honor, order pardons, and open and close parliament and dissolve its house.
- 4.) Ministers of state shall be responsible to the Emperor.
- 5.) Parliament shall consist of two houses: An upper house composed of members appointed by the Emperor and members elected from among the ranks of peers and former samurai, a lower house of popularly elected representative. The election law for the lower house shall include a property qualification for the suffrage.
- 6.) When parliament does not pass an annual budget bill the government may execute the provisions of the budget of the previous year.
- 7.) Rights and duties of subjects shall be provided.<sup>26</sup>

These principles give insight into what system of constitutional government that would be suitable to Japan's national polity and customs. There are two models of monarchical constitutional governments, the English and the Prussian. In the English constitutional monarchy, the Parliament enjoys administrative power as well as legislative power. The king's authority is limited and is the king's only in name, whereas the prime minister holds real power over state affairs. National sovereignty, in the English constitution, rests with the prime minister. This system was very similar to what transpired during the pre-Meiji era. The Emperor was the spiritual leader of the country, but the shogun governed the country.

The Prussian model, which contrasted sharply with English model, placed the king in charge of the country. The king shares the legislative power with the parliament,

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<sup>26</sup> Norikazu Kawagishi, "The Constitution of Japan: An Unfinished Revolution, in *Yale Law School Legal Scholarship Repository* (New Haven: Yale Law School, 2003), 47-48.

but is the sole proprietor of the administrative power. The prime minister is appointed by the king, and political parties do not play a role in the administration of state affairs.<sup>27</sup>

There were two arguments for a Prussian-style constitution. First was that England's constitutional monarchy functioned because of a two-party system. This system secured transition from one cabinet to another. Political parties had not yet organized in Japan. The fear was that numerous smaller parties would rise, leading to dissension as they sought power.

The second argument dealt with the notion that the government needed to reflect the will of the Emperor and not of the parliaments. The new constitution needed to have three provisions. It must have a provision that the Emperor holds the right to appoint and dismiss ministers and other higher officials. The ministers of state thus depend upon the favor of the Emperor and the trust of the nation, and they are not controlled by the opinions of the people. The new constitution must provide that the responsibilities of ministers are divided into instances of collective and individual responsibilities.

Itō Hirobumi was appointed as the chairman of the committee charged with drafting the constitution. He shared with the elite his vision of the constitution: a written constitution only confirms the monarch's sovereign right to govern and the monarch is situated above both legislative and administrative powers without any legal interference. Itō considered the Emperor's role in the constitution as one who does not participate in governance but operates it from outside. He ensures the government runs.

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<sup>27</sup> Bernd Martin, . *Japan and Germany in the Modern World* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 2005), 211.

The *hanbatsu* government wanted a constitution that was based on the principle that the Emperor had bestowed the constitution on the people in an act of benevolence. This principle, known as *kintei kenpō shugi*,<sup>28</sup> justified limiting the discussion and drafting of the constitution to a small number of officials.

The constitution was presented to Prime Minister Kuroda Kiyotaka on February 11, 1889, the anniversary of the mystical founding of the empire in 660 BCE. The people celebrated the new constitution. Its promulgation was an unprecedented event, and the government sponsored celebratory events. This was despite the fact that only a few had an opportunity to partake in the drafting of the constitution.<sup>29</sup>

It is important to note that most Western constitutions were created as a result of public deliberation. For example the United States Constitution involved debates between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. In particular, the Meiji constitutional regime was based upon a system in which the most important element of modern constitution, freedom of expression, was extremely fragile from its inception because of the premise that the constitution had been bestowed upon the nation as a gracious imperial gift.

In addition to the difference in the way it was promulgated, the creators of the Meiji government decided to create a dual system of laws, the constitution and the Imperial House Law (*kōshitsu tenpan*). The Imperial House Law dealt with matters concerning the Imperial family. Despite being part of the imperial order, it was not

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<sup>28</sup> *Kintei kenpō shugi* was based on the principle that the emperor magnanimously granted his followers a constitution.

<sup>29</sup> Kawagishi, “The Constitution of Japan,” 52.

officially released. As such the imperial family enjoyed the ability to determine domestic matters regardless of how they affected political affairs of the nation. In other words, popular control over imperial matters was out of the question. The framers of the constitution argued that consent of the Imperial Diet was unnecessary for amending the Imperial House Law simply because the Emperor received instructions from his ancestors. The Imperial House law existed with the Meiji Constitution and not as part of the constitution.<sup>30</sup>

The need for the Imperial House law to be above civilian scrutiny derived from the divine right of the Emperor. The Emperor was regarded as the sovereign and the Meiji constitution was understood as a confirmation of the Emperor's status and not a declaration. The Emperor came from an unbroken line of succession of the throne and this was to last forever because the Emperor created the constitution. As such popular consent had no hand in creation of the constitution and in the sovereign will.<sup>31</sup>

The sovereignty of the Emperor allowed the framers to institute a constitution that allowed the Emperor to directly govern the people with advisory support. The Meiji constitution was characterized as imperial prerogative centered.

According to Minobe Tatsukichi, there were four features of the prerogative-centered style of the Meiji regime. First was that the Imperial Diet was restricted to deal in matters pertaining only to the governmental process. This was simply because it was the Emperor and not the Diet who dictated legislative authority. The Diet was to play a

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<sup>30</sup> Kawagishi, "The Constitution of Japan," 56.

<sup>31</sup> David Anson Titus, *Palace and Politics in Prewar Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 16-26.

subsidiary role, and had no official authority over the people. Essentially, the Diet's decision was invalid unless the Emperor approved of them. Law was an expression of the will of the Emperor.<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, the Imperial Diet was unable to act for itself. The Emperor was the only one who could open, close, and prorogue the diet and to dissolve the House of Representatives. The Diet was not allowed to assemble without the Emperor's consent. Subsequently members of both the House of Peers and the House of Representatives were not allowed to ask the Emperor to convoke the Diet.

Thirdly, the government could act even without the consent of the Imperial Diet. For example, if there was an urgent need to maintain public safety, the government might "take all necessary financial measure" by the form of an imperial ordinance without the consent of the Diet which could not be called. If the Diet could not agree on a budget then the government could execute the budget of the preceding year.<sup>33</sup> The Emperor in emergency might issue emergency imperial ordinances instead of laws if it was necessary to maintain the peace and the Diet was closed. In effect, the government was able to take legislative action without the participation of the imperial diet. Even more, the Emperor had the right to declare a state of siege and the constitutional rights of the subject would become suspended under it.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Frank O. Miller, *Minobe Tatsukichi: Interpreter of Constitutionalism in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 115-132.

<sup>33</sup> This was an unintended, but incredibly powerful, tool for the Diet to force the government to compromise.

<sup>34</sup> Kawagishi, "The Constitution of Japan," 62.

Under the Meiji constitution, the Emperor enjoyed a wider range of authority and influence than found in most western monarchies. The Emperor had the authority enact constitutional amendments, executive prerogatives, determine administrative organizations, conclude treaties, bestow honors, grant pardons, command the army and the Navy, and determine military organization. The Emperor was also allowed to issue imperial ordinances without any legislative check. Foreign affairs were also beyond the purview of the Imperial Diet. Only the Emperor could conclude treaties. No parliamentary consent was required.

The Emperor was able to declare war and make peace. The Diet was not allowed to intervene. The most important area outside of the legislative process was the *tōsuiken*, the power to command the military force. The government and the Imperial Diet were not involved in the decision-making process, nor was their consent necessary. This was, as we see, a major breakdown in the Meiji constitutional system.

In addition to being the chief priest of the nation, the Emperor was the supreme commander of the military. Under the Meiji Constitution the Emperor had prerogative of supreme command of the Army and Navy and, as stated in Article 11 of the Meiji Constitution, the Japanese Army was under the Emperor's direct control. Thus, among the military there existed a sense of being the Emperor's private army and the belief that they were quite independent of the nation or state.

The military was outside of the authority of the civilian government. The issue of which governmental branch manages the military is not stated in the Meiji constitution. It has been suggested that the framers' intention was that "paramount authority in military and naval is combined in the most exalted personage as his sovereign power, and that

those affairs are in subjection to the commands issued by the Emperor.”<sup>35</sup> Even though the constitution and the framers do not specifically state which branch of government will be in charge of the military, it is evident that the Diet had nothing to do with this prerogative. It can be explained from the commentaries that the prerogative of the commander in chief was out of reach of the government. That is, the Emperor’s command of the military was to be independent of the government. Minobe concurs that independence of the commander in chief was a practice long before the promulgation of the Meiji constitution and that it was more of a constitutional customary law.

Because of the highly skilled nature of the military and operations, the Emperor was to be advised, not by the ministers of state, who were civilians, but by military personnel. Most notably the Chief of the General Staff Office (the Army) and the Chief of the Naval Staff Board. *Tōsui* generally meant military strategies and tactics, but under the Meiji constitution the word *tōsui* grew to include preparations in peacetime and encompassed the act of preparing the military for operations such as the training of officers and soldiers. These preparations were referred to as *gunsei*, administrative matters related to military operations. Essentially, the concepts of *tōsui*, and of the *gunsei* were different concepts because the organizational structure and development of the military, *gunsei*, are different from the strategies and tactics.

Unlike the *gunrei* (military ordinance), the management of the *gunsei* was clearly outlined in the Meiji constitution. Under article 12.93, the *gunsei* should have been managed with the consultation of the ministers of state. The issue was that what fell under the purview of *gunsei* shrank as the category of things in the *gunrei* increased. This

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<sup>35</sup> Kawagishi, “The Constitution of Japan,” 63.

is worth noting because the *gunrei* matters were executed with the input from the ministry of war and the navy. This is a crucial point, as the prime minister could not organize his cabinet without support from the military. If the military was powerful then the cabinet had to make compromises to keep the government working.

### The Emperor's Advisors

In order to ensure the Emperor's role as being above the law, it was necessary that the decision-making process belonged to the cabinet. In order to separate the role and responsibility of the Emperor from that of the state there existed a duality with regard to imperial roles. First there was the Emperor in court and the Emperor in state. These two roles had two additional aspects: Emperor-in-public and Emperor-in-chambers. The Emperor-in-Public represented the imperial will in politics and society. This referred to the aspects that were visible to the public.

The Emperor-in-public was the public face of the Emperor and the imperial will. This was in contrast to the Emperor-in-Chambers, which was the Emperor's personal face. The Emperor-in-Chambers was where he was able to express his own views and ideas on matters. It was important that these views were not made known to the outside world. The secrecy of the Emperor-in-Chamber was attributed to the successful implementation of the reverent image of the Emperor throughout the war. The government was responsible to the Emperor-in-State for implementing the "real polity." The Emperor was not to be involved in "real polity" matters as a person but as an institution. The Emperor-in-State was to ratify decisions reached by responsible



government leaders. The ratification of a given policy signified the legitimacy of the decision of state, having been sanctioned by the imperial will.

Because it was stated that the Emperor had to sign off on almost all aspects of the law, the Emperor needed advisors. His cadre of advisors were the prime minister, the ministers of state, the cabinet, the Minister of the Imperial Household, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, the *genrō* (a group of senior statesmen), the Privy Council, and the General Staff office and the Naval Staff Board, during times of peace, and the Imperial Headquarters in wartime. A feature of the Meiji constitution stipulated that the prime minister and his cabinet would not be the sole advisors to the Emperor regarding state affairs. Instead, several institutions had to compete for the Emperor's attention, as he was the only way to legitimize these institutions agenda. This led to infighting and dissension that proved to be disastrous in the long run.

Some of the more notable institutions, and unique to Japanese government were the Ministry of the Imperial Household and Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. These two institutions were considered very important because they were very close to the Emperor and they would decide who had access to the Emperor.

The Ministry of the Imperial Household was established in 1885 when the cabinet system was organized, and was established independent of the cabinet. The Minister of the Imperial Household advised the Emperor relating to matters of the imperial house and not state affairs.

The Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal was appointed by the Emperor and acted as a liaison between the ministers of state and the imperial household. As such, it was his duty to always be in attendance of the Emperor.

In addition to the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and the Ministry of the Imperial Household, there was the *genrō*. The *genrō* was a group of senior advisers and was an extra-constitutional institution. These men were statesmen who held important positions in either politics or the military and advised the Emperor on issues of regarding the state affairs. One of their more important duties was to advise the Emperor on the appointment of prime ministers. They initially wielded a large amount of influence, but as movements for a more constitutional movement and democratic government grew, the *genrō*'s<sup>36</sup> influence waned. Their influence became limited to advising the Emperor on the appointments of the next Prime Minister and on matters concerning the imperial household. As with the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, and the Minister of the Imperial Household, the *genro* also screened those who had access to the Emperor.

The Privy Council was an additional advisory council to the Emperor and operated from 1888 to 1947. The functions of the Privy Council were to:

- 1.) Propose amendments to the Constitution of the Empire of Japan
- 2.) Propose amendments to the 1889 imperial household law
- 3.) Matters of constitutional interpretation, proposed laws, and ordinances
- 4.) Proclamations of martial law or declaration of war
- 5.) Treaties and other international treaties
- 6.) Declarations of a regency under the imperial household law
- 7.) Matters submitted by the Emperor.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The *genrō*'s waning influences was also because the first generation of the Meiji leaders had passed away.

<sup>37</sup> Kawagishi, "The Constitution of Japan," 77-78.

The council wielded a larger amount of authority when it came to matters of the state, yet there is only one mention of the Privy Council, in article 56 of the Constitution. The council had two functional roles. One was to advise regarding state affairs and the other was to advise regarding the imperial household. The importance of their roles and because they were not overseen by the imperial Diet, the Privy Council had a great amount of influence in prewar Japan.

It is important to note the strength of the Privy Council. Considered a third house of legislature, the Privy Council did not deliberate on matters unless consulted by the Emperor. This form of consultation came by the means of Imperial message. There were two forms of the imperial message. One was consultation regarding cabinet proposed laws and ordinances, and submitted treaties for ratification. The other was a request of the opinion of the council. The council would submit a collective opinion regarding matters and it was the Emperor's prerogative to listen to the opinions of the council.

The prime minister and cabinet members attended council sessions and were eligible to vote. This muddled the independent role of the Privy Council because government members also voted on the issues at hand with the council, if the government advised the Emperor to not listen to the advice of the council it would be seen as contradictory. Therefore when the government and the council disagreed there were theoretically being three options available to the government. The first would be the government reports its own opinions to the Emperor. The second, the government would address to the Emperor on dismissal of the Councilor. Third, the government could resign. The first two options would provide the Emperor with a conflicting viewpoint,

which would place the Emperor in a bad position.<sup>38</sup> Therefore the resignation of the cabinet was generally the more viable option.<sup>39</sup>

Because of the aforementioned situation, the government was subordinate to the Privy Council. The Meiji constitution clearly outlines that the ministers of the state were allowed to give the Emperor advices regarding matters of the state. But the Privy Council was positioned as the branch that was able to influence the Emperor's decision-making power and was not held accountable to any other entity.

Articles 11-13 of the Meiji constitution clearly outline the Emperor's role in the military affairs. More importantly, these articles clears takes away military matters from the civilian government and places them under the responsibility of the Emperor.

Initially, the Emperor's inner circle was comprised of these political leaders and oligarchs, even if there were disagreements amongst the institutions, they were able to resolve such disagreements in their reverence for the Emperor. But by the 1930s the inner circle's cohesion began to dissolve. If the Emperor showed favoritism towards one policy, the representatives of the offended institution would confer with his colleagues and rumors of the disagreement would leak. As a result his pluralistic advisors destroyed the secrecy of the Emperor in chambers.

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<sup>38</sup> Yamamoto was strongly urged, when he was deliberating on signing the Tripartite Treaty, that dissension within the military would lead to the collapse of the current government.

<sup>39</sup> Edwin Hoyt, *Yamamoto: The Man Who Planned Pearl Harbor* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), 95.

## The Emperor as an Organ Theory

In addition to Hirohito's diligence as an Emperor, a much larger issue regarding the Emperor's role as defined by the constitution was brewing. In 1934 an ultraconservative, Kyoki Minoda,<sup>40</sup> made an attack on Dr. Tatsukichi Minobe's Emperor as an organ theory. This theory states that the Emperor is an organ of the state possessing no authority over and above the state, which exercised power only as the highest organ of the state.

The timing of this attack is interesting, as Dr. Minobe had introduced the Emperor as an Organ theory some 31 years earlier. It was not overtly controversial then. The anti-Minobe coalition, constitutional conservatives, fell into three distinct categories: the academic opposition, the bureaucratic opposition, and military opposition. Many of the senior military officers had never been reconciled to the Taisho Political Crisis of 1912–13; they continued to cherish authoritarian, elitist, hyper loyalist concepts of the states as idealized in the golden era of the Satchō Oligarchy,<sup>41</sup> when the civil and military arms of the empire were common and exclusive preserve of the post-Restoration nobility and when capitalistic-parliamentary politics had not yet cracked the citadel of military and bureaucratic autonomy erected by the *genrō* Yamagata Aritomo.

The attack on Minobe's theory came at a time when the military felt as though the liberals were trying to push them out of the political arena. The rise of the

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<sup>40</sup> Even though Dr. Hozumi Yatsuka was one of the first scholars to challenge Minobe's Organ Theory when it was first published, Minoda Kyoki could be credited for the resurgence of academic opposition to the Organ Theory.

<sup>41</sup> The Satchō Oligarchy or the Satsuma-Chōshū Alliance was a military alliance between the feudal domains of Satsuma and Chōshū formed in 1866 to combine their efforts to restore Imperial rule and overthrow the Tokugawa shogunate of Japan.

parliamentary party system had meant a substantial curtailment in the political and social influence of the military and a departure from reliance in state policy on strong military power and its active use.

The military leaders were able to muster support through all levels and branches of military service because of budgetary parsimony and “weak” foreign policy of the party government. As Frank Miller has put it:

Constitutional conservatism, under the banner of imperial loyalty, was an expression of the determination to reassert the authority of the military councils in the formulation of economic, educational, and defense policy against the unsympathetic attitude and un-militaristic impulses of governments centered on the diet.<sup>42</sup>

The rise of the parliament gave way to a conflict between the military and the party governments over specific issues regarding national defense policy. The conflict between the military and the party came to a head with the signing of the London Naval agreement of 1929.

In addition to the military’s fear of losing clout, the military’s loyalty to the Emperor was very strong. In 1882 this loyalty was reinforced by special edicts addressed to soldiers and sailors by the Emperor. In one such statement the Emperor said, “I am your Generalissimo.”<sup>43</sup> Thus among the military there existed a sense of being the Emperor’s private army and the belief that they were quite independent of the nation or state.

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<sup>42</sup> Frank O. Miller, *Minobe Tatsukichi: Interpreter of Constitutionalism in Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965), 212.

<sup>43</sup> Edward Behr, *Hirohito: Behind the Myth* (New York: Villard Books, 1989), 118.

The result of such psychological closeness among military personnel fostered a special confidence that matters of national defense and military administration were conducted in accordance with the will of the Emperor. This was true only in the legal sense of the word concerning the administration of military affairs. The Emperor had a passive character and relied heavily upon his subordinates and senior military leaders. While senior military leaders could not control their subordinates, young military officers could easily plot to take any action that they thought were justified. Some senior military officers tacitly approved of unauthorized action taken by younger military men. The breakdown of the military hierarchy caused incidents such as the Manchurian<sup>44</sup> and February 26<sup>th</sup> incidents, which were serious violations of the Emperor's supreme sovereignty.

If the Emperor were truly to be an organ of the state, then the military would have a difficult time enacting their aggressive policies in Asia. The military would have a hard time exercising absolute authority in the name of the Emperor. Minobe and the liberals ardently believed the Emperor was in fact an organ of the state. This discourse provided the Emperor with the opportunity to support one side of the argument or another. As Behr points out in his book *Hirohito: Behind the Myth*, "Hirohito's passivity, and his tendency to test the pros and cons of his every move, allowed the Emperor-organ issue to grown into a major crisis."<sup>45</sup> Hirohito was obviously very irritated by the issue.

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<sup>44</sup> The Manchurian Incident was an event created by the Japanese military in order to justify Japan's invasion of Manchuria. The event involved a bomb that was detonated near a Japanese railway. Even though the bomb did little damage to the tracks or the train, the Japanese military accused Chinese dissidents.

<sup>45</sup> Behr, *Hirohito*, 119.

This can be seen in his conversations with Honjō, (March 29, 1935). Hirohito summoned Honjo to point out that Article 4 of Japan's constitution "states that the Emperor is head of the state. This shows that the constitution is based on the organ theory, so if the organ theory is revised the constitution also will have to be revised."<sup>46</sup> The Emperor's unwillingness to take a stance on the issue fueled the fire of the ambiguity.

This ambiguity culminated into several coup attempts during the years leading to the war. On May 15, 1932, naval officers, aided by Army cadets, and right-winged civilian elements staged their own attempt to complete what had been started in the league of Blood incident. By the end of the day, eleven young Naval officers shot Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi. The insurgents also attacked the residence of Makino Nobuaki, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal and attacked the Mitsubishi Bank headquarters in Tokyo. Even though the coup did not achieve its intended goal, the murderers used the trial as a platform to proclaim their loyalty to the Emperor.<sup>47</sup>

On February 26, 1936, another coup d'état was attempted. This attempt, like the May 15<sup>th</sup> attempt was organized by a young group of Imperial Japanese Army officers with the goal of purging the government and military leadership of their factional rivals and ideological opponents. The rebels explained their intentions in a document titled, "Manifesto of the Uprising."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Hane, Mikiso and Shigeru Honjo, *Emperor Hirohito and His Chief Aide-De-Camp: The Honjo Diary, 1933-1936* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1967), 131.

<sup>47</sup> Hugh Byas, *Government by Assassination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 48.

<sup>48</sup> Byas, *Government by Assassination*, 78-80.



The Meiji Constitution was a compromise between the omnipotent Emperor and the will of the people. It was the juxtaposition between monarchical rule and democratic rule, the former ruled from the top down and the later ruled from the bottom up. The opposing sides were the notion that the Emperor was an organ of the state versus the Emperor was the omnipotent ruler.

The dissection of the origin of the sovereignty can be found in Japan's origin story. According to the *Kojiki* (712), Japan was founded by eight million deities who lived in the Plain of the High Heaven. The greatest amongst them, Amaterasu Ōmikami, the Sun Goddess, sent down envoys to pacify the unruly nature of the original inhabitants of Japan. She then sent her Heavenly Grandchild to begin the dynasty of Emperors. The grandchild brought with him the mirror, jewels, and sword that would become the symbols of the imperial line. His first human Emperor descendant was Emperor Jinmu, and since then, according to some, the imperial line has remained unbroken to the present.

The mysticism surrounding the origin of Japan, and sovereignty was important to the unity of Japan. Hozumi Yatsuka, a professor at the Imperial University, argued that there was difference between *kokutai*, the national polity, and the *seitai*, the form of government. He argued that “the national polities should be differentiated according to who has sovereignty” and that “the form of government should be differentiated according to the form of the exercise of sovereignty.” Hozumi thought that because the Emperor was from the ancestors of the Japanese people and as such the Emperor is to be the head of all Japanese families.

The creation of the Meiji constitution brought forth the tenuous discussion of the *kokutai* and the *seitai*. The national Essence [*kokutai*] of the country of our ancestors must be persevered forever. The form of government [*seitai*] by the court must hinge with the times. This is the general principle not only of our country, but also of each country in the world, in accordance with the way of heaven and earth.

Therefore, countries where the *kokutai* changes, or is unstable, violate the way of Heaven and Earth. Where they go against the standards of their ancestors, the country becomes disordered, and ultimately falls into destruction. This is amply demonstrated beyond doubt in both ancient China and modern Europe. And chaos was the original condition of our country when it was created by Heaven.

Then the deity Ninigi no Mikoto [the Heavenly Grandchild of the Sun Goddess] first opened up the country. The principles were established everywhere and forever of the unbroken succession of Emperors for ages eternal, of affectionate relations between father and son, and of the duties of the ruler and the subjects, resulting in our prosperous country of the present day.

Our *kokutai* based on the ruler must be preserved for ages eternal. However, the *seitai* has changed, according to the conditions among the people and local customs, and thus developed with the times, in accordance with the natural principle of non-action.<sup>49</sup> The promulgation of the Meiji constitution and the Emperor being declared sovereign because of his unbroken lineage, the stage was set for the *kokutai* to take hold. The Emperor was the embodiment of the *kokutai* and could not be limited by the *seitai*.

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<sup>49</sup> John S. Brownlee, "Four Stages of the Japanese Kokutai," JSAC Conference, British Columbia: University of British Columbia, 2000, <<http://www.adilegian.com/PDF/brownlee.pdf>>.

This was at odds with another school of constitutional interpretation known as the *tennō kikan setsu* (the Emperor Organ Theory) espoused by Minobe Tatsukichi a professor at the Tokyo Imperial University.

Minobe's premise for his Emperor Organ theory was based on his opposing views of the legal definition of the *kokutai* given by Hozumi. Minobe viewed *kokutai* as the characteristic, historical, cultural, and ethical, of the Japanese state. As such, Minobe was opposed to the idea that the sovereignty was absolute and wielded unlimited power. He was opposed to the idea that the sovereignty was absolute and unlimited. His issue was in regards to the use of the word *kokutai* as opposed to the word sovereignty. According to Minobe, *kokutai* is an ambiguous word. The common characteristic of *kokutai* discourse was that it defined the Emperor-centered regime as Japan's traditional polity, but there was no common understanding about what *kokutai* meant. In fact, there was no dominant interpretation of the National polity even in the 1930s–1940s discourse.<sup>50</sup>

#### A Nation Convinced Its Only Recourse Is War

It is important to discuss the nationalism in Japan in the decades leading up to the war. If this thesis attempts to prove that the Emperor could have ended the war, then it is equally important show why Japan felt the need to go to war. The early twentieth century brought several international events that would appear to be anti Japanese or at the least the west's, the United States and Great Britain's, attempt at curbing Japan's ambition's to expand its empire.

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<sup>50</sup> Brownlee, "Four Stages of the Japanese Kokutai."

The Washington Naval Conference of November 1921 forced the Japanese Navy to limit their number of naval ships in relation to the United States and Great Britain. There it was established that the Japanese would maintain a ration of 3 (Japan): 5 (US): 5 (Great Britain). The US Immigration Law of 1924, which prevented Japanese from emigrating to America. This furthered notion that the United States feared being dominated by Japanese immigrants. Then in 1930, the Naval disarmament conference was held. At this conferences the United States and Great Britain proposed that Japan's shipping tonnage would be restricted to a ration of Japan 6.0: US 10: GB 10.<sup>51</sup>

The seeds of a war with the west were being sowed during this period. An excerpt from Kiyokatsu Satô's book mirrored the sentiment that was brewing in the public's mind.

Today, the biggest obstacle to American ambition is the power of Japan in China. In an attempt to weaken Japan, the USA made Britain annul the Anglo-Japanese Alliance after the Great European War. Moreover, they forced us to give Quindao back to China at the Washington conference in 1920, limited our Navy's capital to 60 percent of theirs, and at the same time annulled the "Ishii-Lansing" Agreement, which held our special rights and interests....

However, the problem cannot be settled by this alone. By 1936, America will have built up her Navy to more than one million tons, at which time they will demand that we renounce Manchuria and withdraw Lushun and Dalian. When we reach that point in time, we will have to choose whether we should swallow our tears and renounce Manchuria to satisfy the demands of America, or whether we should start a war in which all the odds are against us.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Nobutaka Ike, *Japan's Decision for War: Records of the 1941 Policy Conferences* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967), 129.

<sup>52</sup> Toshio Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese in Wartime* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1991), 132.

Japan continued to feel pressure from the Allied powers. This was especially the case when on July 26 1939, the Japanese people learned that the US- Japan Treaty of Commerce and navigation was to be annulled. In 1940 an embargo on the export of machine tools to Japan was enacted after Japanese forces occupied French Indochina, the on July 26, there was an embargo on scrap iron to Japan. The United States, Britain and Netherland froze Japanese assets. On August 1, 1941 the US issued an embargo on lubricating oil for airplanes. In addition to these embargoes, the US, Britain, Australia, and the Netherlands deployed troops in strategic locations around the pacific.

The Bungei Shunjû publishers conducted a national survey asking if Japan should adopt hardline diplomacy. 63 percent of the respondents were in favor of hardline diplomacy, whereas 37 percent were in favor of a conciliation approach. In another survey, people were asked whether the Japan-US war could be avoided. 61 percent of the respondents replied “Yes” and 39 percent replied “No”. It is important to note that those who were Businessmen, teachers, students, engineers, and doctors tended to say that the war could be avoided whereas public officials, writers, newspaper men, and agricultural farmers tended to answer “no”. The distinction in responses based on occupation shows that the lower classes had a more realistic assessment of the likelihood of war whereas the upper classes were more idealistic.<sup>53</sup>

On April 16 1941, the US-Japanese Draft understanding was presented to Japan. Despite support for the draft in many members of the Japanese ministers, it was ultimately rejected. On November 26 1941, Secretary of State Hull handed a memorandum to the Japanese government which demanded that Japan’s territories in

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<sup>53</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 140.

China should returned to the status the held before the Manchurian Incident. According to Robert Butow, the Japanese response was:

Everyone was “dumbfounded” at the harshness of the American proposal. It was interpreted as an ultimatum to which Japan could not possibly bow. It was decided that the United States knew full well that such a proposal would be unacceptable. It was judged that the American Government had apparently made up its mind to go to war, that there was no telling when Japan might be attacked by the United States, and that consequently the utmost vigilance was required....<sup>54</sup>

These events culminated in the Japanese government feeling as though there was no other recourse but to defend Japan. This notion of self-defense gained support among the majority of the Japanese people. The Emperor’s Imperial Rescript declaring war gave credence to the notion of war, and validated it.

It is important to not that the media was under strict governmental control and that the Japanese people had no was of knowing what really transpired. The Japanese people accepted the propaganda, which told them that the international community’s pressure was unwarranted thus fueling the fire of anti American and British sentiments.

In conjunction with the limited access to information, the government was also working diligently to foster a sense of national unity and solidarity. After the First World War, a report entitled “The necessity of having a plan to mobilize the whole nation” was conceived. The idea behind this report was to plan for the country as a whole to establish a war-time system. The idea was that future wars would require participation of the whole country. In order to achieve this, the Japanese government understood that their

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<sup>54</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 143.

needed to be a strong spiritual solidarity among the citizens. This catalyzed the Japanese national mobilization policy.<sup>55</sup>

The national mobilization policy emphasized solidarity and unification of the Japanese people. The government wanted people to prepare themselves psychologically for a potential war. On August 24, 1937, the government formalized “a summary of essential points”. According to Iritani, “The summary was intended to solidify the ‘measures on the drive for people’s indoctrination’, and the ‘propaganda measures in current affairs’, which were already drawn up in accordance with the essential points for national mobilization....”<sup>56</sup>

On October 12, 1937, the Central League of the National Spiritual Mobilization Drive was organized. The goal of the drive was to strengthen the movement through weekly “enforcement of the national spirit.” This movement was divided into two periods. The first period, September 9 to October 12, 1937, was considered the abstract and idealistic phase of the movement. The second period, October 13 to 19, was aimed at “achieving far reaching changes in people’s lives in order to deal with the current state of affairs.” This theme was the focus of the government’s propaganda.<sup>57</sup>

A special edition of the Weekly Report was issued, posters and handbills were printed and distributed, and lectures on the purpose of the war were given by people of note. Frequent use of the radio was made. Music, the national anthem, calls for people to bow in the direction of the Imperial Palace, slogans and radio gymnastics were broadcast

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<sup>55</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 121.

<sup>56</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 123.

<sup>57</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 122.

for ten minutes every day. Special programs were run according to the theme of the day: current affairs day (the 13<sup>th</sup>), thanksgiving day for the soldiers at the front (14<sup>th</sup>), emergency economic measures day (15<sup>th</sup>), the day for the defense of the home front (the 16<sup>th</sup>), day of respect for the patriotic martyrdom of brave soldiers (the 17<sup>th</sup>), labor and patriotism day (the 18<sup>th</sup>), and the day of training body and spirit in time of crisis (the 19<sup>th</sup>).<sup>58</sup>

The national movement for solidarity was not limited to the adult members of the Japanese society. Children were also asked to participate in the mobilization activities once every three days. The children's activities generally involved making bags, parts of military uniforms, and visiting families whose male members have gone to the front.

This strategy worked well. When Japan's military position was compromised because of the American and British forces, the people's reaction was very visceral. "When Japanese soldiers were isolated because military supplies could no longer reach the many islands, and many soldiers died in action against American forces, people in every workplace were overcome with tears of indignation, and appealed for the extermination of Americans and British."<sup>59</sup>

### Culture of Top-Down Communication

There is an old Japanese proverb that says, "Nagai mono niwa makareyo," which translates to "There is no use fighting our betters with short daggers."<sup>60</sup> The sentiment

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<sup>58</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 123.

<sup>59</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 150.

<sup>60</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 85.



here is that it is useless to fight a something with more power. The hierarchal structure of communication existed, and exists still to this day, in Japan. This hierarchal communication structure is one where the older members make decisions, and the younger members must follow. Yet, this type of decision-making structure is only fruitful if those in power have accurate information to make informed decision. If, for example, a subordinate has accurate information, but the superior does not, then a decision is made by the superior based on the information at his disposal.

The decisions that lead to Japan's entry into war and its continuation despite information to the contrary is an example of hierarchal decision making gone wrong. Despite being resource poor, Japan's leaders decided to enter into war. "The reexamination of national policy conducted at the end of October 1941 by the new Tojo Cabinet had made it clear that Japan would be in serious trouble if she became involved in a war lasting more than two years."<sup>61</sup> Even though members of the Japanese government had access to more accurate information (more so than what the media was presenting to the public), the government believed that they would be able to terminate the war. " They simply believed that at some future date some opportunity or other would somehow present itself."<sup>62</sup>

One explanation for the government's hubris regarding matters of war could have been the result of Japan's past success in wars.<sup>63</sup> "These experiences created a feeling of confidence in Japan's status as a first-class power, and led the Japanese leaders and

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<sup>61</sup> Ike, *Japan's Decision for War*, 37.

<sup>62</sup> Ike, *Japan's Decision for War*, 43.

<sup>63</sup> Japan was successful in the first Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars as well as their invasion into Manchuria and China.

public to underestimate the power of the Americans and the British as well as that of the Soviet Union.”<sup>64</sup>

## Discussion

This thesis has discussed the hodge-podge that is the contextual situation surrounding the Japanese government during the time of World War II. The constitution was designed to absolve the emperor of legal responsibilities while placing major components of the country’s assets under his rule. In doing so, interpretations of the constitution were ambiguous. This was shown in the discussion of the Minobe’s Organ theory.

The ambiguous role of the Emperor was coupled with sentiment of the Japanese population. Propaganda and incomplete information conveyed to the public in the form of media and volunteer organizations created a situation where the Japanese people felt that there was no other recourse but to go to war with the West.

Additionally, the hierarchical structure of communication found in the Japanese government and military created a situation where despite accurate information, the government decided to go to war. The subordinates carried out their orders. We will dissect Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, and apply our counterfactual thought experiment.

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<sup>64</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 86.

## Chapter V

### Counterfactuals and the Attack on Pearl Harbor

In the history of American military conflicts, not many have stood out as much as Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor left more than 2,400 Americans dead as well as damaging or destroying eight Navy battle ships and more than 100 planes. America became an arsenal of democracy. The day after the attack, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed a joint session of the 77<sup>th</sup> United States Congress. He called December 7 "a date which will live in infamy." Congress declared war on the Empire of Japan amid outrage at the attacks and the late delivery of the note from the Japanese government breaking off relations with the U.S. government, actions considered treacherous.

It is important to note the events leading up to the attack on Pearl Harbor from Japan's perspective. The architect of the Pearl Harbor Attack, Admiral Yamamoto, was a reluctant participant in the Japan's instigation of America. He fervently believed that "[i]n the first six to twelve months of a war with the United States and Great Britain I will run wild and win victory upon victory. But then, if the war continues after that, I have no expectation of success."

## Historical Context

Yamamoto Isoroku, originally named Takano Isoroku, was the naval officer who conceived of the surprise attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. His role is pertinent when discussing the action and the antecedent, as Yamamoto's rigid stance towards peace was well known throughout the Japanese government and military. Despite his stance of peace, it was Yamamoto's plan for Pearl Harbor that launched Japan towards war with America. It was his stance that and his relationship with the royal family.

In the years leading up to the fatal day in December, Yamamoto and Admiral Yonai's<sup>65</sup> actions showed that they were against war and even more against war with the United States. On December 1, 1937, while the Japanese army was attacking the Chinese army upriver from Nanjing, the Japanese army accidentally bombed and sank 3 steamers of the Standard Oil Company and the United States gunboat the USS Panay. At the same time the Japanese artillery command attacked the British gunboats the Lady Bird, Bee, Cricket, and Scarab.

This incident put Japan at odds with America. The United States Ambassador to Japan, Joseph Grew, started packing his belongings with the expectation that US would sever diplomatic ties with Japan. Yamamoto feverishly worked towards saving the relationship between the two nations. Yamamoto's actions were juxtaposed with the how other Naval officers were feeling. They were jubilant. When Admiral Shimizu Mitsumi returned to Tokyo, Yonai promptly and very publicly fired him.

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<sup>65</sup> The two military leaders formed a strong bond over their views of Japan engaging in war with the United States.

In 1938, the Tripartite Pact became an issue for Yamamoto and Yonai. Yamamoto believed that forming an alliance with the worst enemies of the United States and Great Britain was to court war. Despite Yamamoto's stance, the naval officers of Navy and the Army began speaking out in favor of the Tripartite Pact, and against Yamamoto and Yonai. The complaints from the officers eventually came in the form of daily death threats.

In 1939, the Konoe Fumimaro Cabinet fell over the issue of the Tripartite Treaty. Hiranuma Kiichirō formed a new cabinet. Both Yonai and Yamamoto retained their posts. In hopes to achieving a compromise, Yamamoto tried to negotiate to turn the pact into a sort of anti-Comintern pact. An anti-Comintern pact would not be operable if, for example, Hitler went to war with Great Britain. Japan would not have to follow.

In 1939, the Hiranuma government collapsed. General Abe Nobuyuki was chosen to form the new cabinet. General Abe wanted a less militant Navy so as to not conflict with the directives of the Army. Abe dismissed Admirals Yonai and Yamamoto. One of Yonai's last acts as a minister was to appoint Admiral Yamamoto as Commander in Chief of the Combined Fleet.

Admiral Yamamoto's shift from being a politician, as we saw while he was a Minister, to becoming a military leader, as Commander in Chief of the Combined fleet, was sharp contrast. Ultimately, Yamamoto felt that if war with the United States was inevitable, then he would be the best person to do so.

The first year of Admiral Yamamoto's tenure as Commander in Chief of the Combined fleet was devoted to creating a powerful fighting machine. This can be seen in the completion of the Yamato and Musashi, 76,000-ton battleships readied in 1940. This is in comparison to the 350,000-ton battleship in the British Navy.

By the fall of 1940, Yamamoto was certain that war was not far away. He and Admiral Yonai failed to stop the drive for the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo pact and it was signed in the fall, putting Japan in league with Great Britain's enemy Germany.

With the signing of the pact, Yamamoto made his famous statement to Prime Minister Konoe that he could run wild across the Pacific for six months or a year, but after that the American productivity capacity would begin to show and Japan would most certainly lose a war against America.

### Performing a Counterfactual Thought Experiment

When trying to assess whether factor A caused event B, the counterfactual argument would be, if A had not occurred, B would not have occurred. It is important to note that the word cause. What is considered as a cause, can differ according to the historical event. Therefore, we will refer to causes as conceivable causes, factors that could have been different according to the best of our knowledge about how the social and physical world works. In our study, we will discuss the conceivable causes according to our knowledge about how the world in context of the Japanese culture during the years leading up to and during the war.

For our study, we will look at transitional rules to explain how if A had not occurred, B would not have occurred. A transitional rule is a set of causal mechanisms that explains social, political, or economic interactions. An example of a transitional rule is, "People choose actions that make sense in light of their beliefs and objectives." For our study, our transitional rule will be: the Emperor would do what his people wanted him to do. The event will be if the Emperor did not exercise an indirect form of communication and instead chose to directly state that he did not want to declare war

against the west, then the attack on Pearl Harbor would not have occurred. It would be difficult for us to dictate whether or not Japan would have declared war, or if the war would have continued for as long as it did, using our method. Transitional rules allow predictability at a more local level.

Yamamoto was a key figure in Japanese military history throughout his political career he showed that he was to be against anything that might instigate a war:

a war between Japan and the United States would be a major calamity for the world, and for Japan it would mean, after several years of war already, acquiring yet another powerful enemy, an extremely perilous matter for the nation. If, after Japan and America had inflicted serious wounds on each other, the Soviet Union or Germany should step in with an eye to world hegemony, what country would be able to check it? If Germany should prove victorious [in war with Britain] Japan might look to its goodwill as a friendly nation, but if Japan at the time happened to be in a wounded state, its advances would carry no weight; a friendly nation can only look for friendly treatment so long as it has powerful forces of its own. The reason why Japan is respected and its hand frequently sought in alliance is that it has actual power in the shape of its naval and other forces. It is necessary therefore that both Japan and America should seek every means to avoid a direct clash, and Japan should under no circumstances conclude an alliance with Germany.<sup>66</sup>

The Emperor's stance regarding a potential conflict with the United States can be seen in his backing of Admiral Yonai's appointment to form a cabinet in 1939. According to biographer Edwin Hoyt, "The reason was Emperor Hirohito's hope that he could avoid the signing of the pact with Berlin and Rome."<sup>67</sup> Hirohito's feelings regarding the relationship between Japan and the UK were not hidden. In fact, Hirohito has stated in the past that he wished to maintain good relations with the UK. When Hirohito was presented with personal message from the King of England mentioning the need for

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<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Hoyt, *Yamamoto*, 155.

<sup>67</sup> Hoyt, *Yamamoto*, 106.

England and Japan to cooperate fully. The Emperor's response was, "He wanted the reply to indicate that the King of England's sentiments are in complete harmony with his own views."<sup>68</sup>

Yonai's government ultimately failed, but Admiral Yonai's appointment is important to note because it shows that Emperor did not want to sign the Tripartite agreement. It is also worth noting that Admiral Yamamoto was popular with the Emperor. In Edwin P. Hoyt's book, *Yamamoto: The Man Who Planned Pearl Harbor*, he states that one of the reasons Yamamoto garnered popularity with the Fleet was that "Another reason was Yamamoto's undeniable popularity with the royal family, and the Emperor himself, who shared Yamamoto's respect for the West, although he now found himself a captive within the new system of Emperor worship invented by the army to stabilize its own position."<sup>69</sup> Here we see that Yamamoto was popular with the Emperor. The naval officers felt that their actions were validated by the Emperor simply because their Commander was close to the Emperor. If this was not the will of the Emperor then surely he would tell Yamamoto.

If the Emperor had understood Yamamoto's *honne*, then perhaps he would have stepped in to prevent the signing of the Tripartite agreement. Yamamoto's loyalty to the Emperor was without question,

To die for Emperor and Nation is the highest hope of a military man. After a brave hard fight the blossoms are scattered on the fighting field. But if some person wants to take a life instead, still the fighting man will go to eternity for Emperor and country. One man's life or death is a matter of no importance. All that matters is the Empire. As Confucius said, "The may crush cinnabar, yet they do not take away its color; one may burn a

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<sup>68</sup> Hane, and Honjo, *Emperor Hirohito*, 126.

<sup>69</sup> Hane, and Honjo, *Emperor Hirohito*, 102.



fragrant herb, yet it will not destroy the scent.” They may destroy my body, yet they will not take away my will.<sup>70</sup>

Yet Hirohito’s passivity would not allow him to take a direct stance in support for Yamamoto.

He avoided confrontation-unless it was absolutely necessary—and went along with what seemed to be the consensus. This is seen fairly consistently in his political behavior despite the fact that he had clear-cut political preferences and opinions. He firmly believed that his role was carefully circumscribed by the constitution and that he must exercise extreme caution not to overstep the proper constitutional bounds as defined by his advisers.<sup>71</sup>

On September 6, 1941, an Imperial Council meeting was held to discuss the prospect of war with the rest. It was on this occasion the Emperor read a poem written by the Meiji Emperor. “We are surrounded by many seas, and I think that the world and all its peoples belong to a universal brotherhood. So why have the waves and winds become so rough?”<sup>72</sup> This poem was meant to convey that the Emperor was a pacifist. This indirect form of communication allowed those who heard the Emperor interpret it as they saw fit. The military leaders were mired in their ideals of an undefeatable Japan.

It is evident that Yamamoto would have followed the wishes of the Emperor. His loyalty to the Emperor was unwavering. All that was missing was the Emperor’s direct command.

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<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Hoyt, *Yamamoto*, 192.

<sup>71</sup> Hane, and Honjo, *Emperor Hirohito*, 119.

<sup>72</sup> Iritani, *Group Psychology*, 92.

Still the questions remains, “If A had not occurred, B would not have occurred”. If the Emperor did not exercise an indirect form of communication and instead chose to directly state that he did not want to declare war against the west, then the attack on Pearl Harbor would not have occurred. Based on the contextual evidence found, it is doubtful that the Emperor could have prevented the attack on Pearl Harbor. The climate was right for a Japan’s war with the west. The government had already placed Japan on the path to war, and it is plausible that nothing could have deterred it.

The transitional rule we used, the Emperor would do what his people wanted him to do, fits with our study. Even though he did not directly communicate his stance on the Organ theory, it is argued that the Emperor did consider himself an organ of the state. If this was the case, then the Emperor’s opinion regarding the attack on Pearl Harbor could be considered ambiguous for a reason. He did not want to abrogate the will of his people, but he also wanted to be known that he was a pacifist.

## Conclusion

Over the course of any war, the warring states have three broad policy alternatives, or generic strategies for terminating it: (1) to negotiate with the enemy, either face to face or through a thirds party, and to do so overtly or in secret; (2) to modify their war aims or terms of settlements-unilaterally in order to facilitate accommodations with the other side; and (3) to escalate or deescalate their use of military force by stepping up mobilization at home, deploying new weapons, expanding the war to new theatres, inducing allies to enter the fray, or refraining from taking these steps.

A rational actor would view these alternatives and calculate the trade-offs among these alternatives in relation to the state’s goals or the nation’s interests. In deciding to

end a war, a rationalist actor needs to estimate the rate at which it will take on casualty outweighs the rate of damage it will inflict on the enemy. This calculation allows us the baseline for when a war should end. This baseline is reached once the war has reached a point beyond which it is no longer effective to continue fighting. Economically speaking, this is the point where marginal cost outweighs the marginal benefits. At which point, the actor should forgo any sunk cost and end the war.

Kecskemeti, author of *Strategic Surrender*, argues that this is the point in which fighting should end: “The critical point is reached when prolongation of fighting would inevitably break up the structure of the besieged unit.”<sup>73</sup> Kecskemeti’s point regarding when war should end takes on a rationalistic approach. He further states that, “By the same token, accepting surrender is a rational decision for the winner: he can obtain his objective without paying for the costs of a last battle.” Yet, in doing so, Kecskemeti extrapolates that the beginning a war without the assurance of victory is also non rational, but understandable. A rational actor would not choose to go to war unless victory was assured, but military hubris, denial, claims of manifest destiny, and a reverent support of the military arms of the government can skew the prediction of an outcome.

With perfect foresight, the potential loser would know before the conflict started that he must lose, even if his forces were initially superior. In this case, if he were rational, he would not initiate hostilities. In the absence of perfect foresight, however, the belligerents have to make the best estimates they can about the future shape of the war. Early in the conflict, the data permit of many different estimates. The actual outcomes reveals itself only gradually, so that there is no way for the loser to guarantee himself

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<sup>73</sup> Paul Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat* (New York: Atheneum, 1958), 8.

against superfluous losses: he cannot know in advance whether further resistance may not reverse the trend.<sup>74</sup> In looking at Japan's entry into the war, was it not evident that militarily Japan's arsenal was inferior to those of the west, mainly the United States?<sup>75</sup> The breakdown of the naval size in 1930 was: 526,200 U.S. large cruisers, small cruisers, destroyers and submarines versus 367,050 for Japan.<sup>76</sup>

As war comes to an end, the goals of the state begin to shift. In addition to the conflict with the warring state, the political conflict within the states may pose an even greater threat. Contrary to the commonly accepted notion, states are not unitary actors and at times there is no consistency within the state regarding decisions and actions. Japan was no different.

This paper initially set out to establish a simple thesis. If the Emperor had ordered the military to not go to war, then Japan would not have had to endure the devastation brought from the war. This research has shown that factors outside of the Emperor's control had already taken over Japan, and that war was almost inevitable.

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<sup>74</sup> Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender*, 16.

<sup>75</sup> Due to the military arsenal restrictions placed on Japan through the London treaty and Washington Treaty, Japan's naval capabilities was 2/3 of the United States. Despite the disparity in numbers, Japanese military officials believed that a 10:7 ration was sufficient to guarantee Japan's naval security.

<sup>76</sup> O. Tanin and E. Yohan, *When Japan Goes to War* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1936), 231.

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