

# **Strategic and Operational Decision-Making: Does Military Weakness Affect Decisions Made?**

**A Monograph  
by  
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**AY 2011-1**

# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 01 April 2011		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> SAMS Monograph		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> June 2010 – March 2011	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b> Strategic and Operational Decision-Making: Does Military Weakness Affect Decisions Made?				<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b> Major Corey A. Givens (U.S. Army)				<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) 250 Gibbon Avenue Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2134				<b>8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> Command and General Staff College 731 McClellan Avenue Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-1350				<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b> CGSC	
				<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> The United States and Japan had a very contentious relationship between 1939 and 1941. During this time, Japan's strategic objectives focused on the desire for a policy of national self-sufficiency and of non-reliance on Western imports or economic aid. Its major operational objective was the Dutch East Indies, where Japan imported its oil, rubber, and a number of other goods. Japan fully pursued its objectives as the armed forces provided the foundation for plans to identify, protect, modernize, and expand its national interests. Conversely, the weakness of the United States' military restricted its strategic and operational objectives. One of the strategic objectives for the United States was to uphold the principles of the Open Door in East Asia. However, the United States was unable to embark upon punitive measures to protest Japan's seizure and economic assimilation of Manchuria. America's key operational objective was maintenance of the Philippines, a place from which the United States could project its power. For state actors, keeping the elements of national power, or Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economy (DIME) in alignment is significant for national stability. An analysis of America's DIME construct reveals how the weakness of the United States' military forced it to rely on the Diplomatic and Economic elements of national power, and this negatively affected the way the United States conducted its strategic and operational decision-making with imperial Japan from 1939-1941. Diplomatically, American policy intended to uphold the Open Door Policy in the Far East; however, its foreign policy was weak because it did not have the necessary military might to back its demands. Therefore, the United States resorted to economic pressure. It implemented a policy of escalating deterrence in an effort to stop Japanese expansion. The economic pressure became too much when the United States deprived Japan of oil, which was a major commodity that the Japanese civilian sector could not live without. This highlights the fact that having a strong military assists in enforcing efforts made in other areas of the DIME construct, and this is just as important today as it was in 1939.					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> Strategic and Operational objectives, Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economy (DIME), national self-sufficiency, Open Door, military weakness					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b> (U)			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  (U)	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>  (U) 47	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b> Wayne W. Grigsby Jr. COL, U.S. Army
<b>a. REPORT</b> (U)	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b> (U)	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b> (U)			<b>19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b> 913-758-3302

# SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

## MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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Strategic and Operational Decision-Making: Does Military Weakness Affect Decisions Made?

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## Abstract

STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL DECISION-MAKING: DOES MILITARY WEAKNESS AFFECT DECISIONS MADE? by MAJ Corey A. Givens, United States Army, 47 pages.

The United States and Japan had a very contentious relationship between 1939 and 1941. During this time, Japan's strategic objectives focused on the desire for a policy of national self-sufficiency and of non-reliance on Western imports or economic aid. Its major operational objective was the Dutch East Indies, where Japan imported its oil, rubber, and a number of other goods. Japan fully pursued its objectives as the armed forces provided the foundation for plans to identify, protect, modernize, and expand its national interests. Conversely, the weakness of the United States' military restricted its strategic and operational objectives. One of the strategic objectives for the United States was to uphold the principles of the Open Door in East Asia. However, the United States was unable to embark upon punitive measures to protest Japan's seizure and economic assimilation of Manchuria. America's key operational objective was maintenance of the Philippines, a place from which the United States could project its power.

For state actors, keeping the elements of national power, or Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economy (DIME) in alignment is significant for national stability. An analysis of America's DIME construct reveals how the weakness of the United States' military forced it to rely on the Diplomatic and Economic elements of national power, and this negatively affected the way the United States conducted its strategic and operational decision-making with imperial Japan from 1939-1941. Diplomatically, American policy intended to uphold the Open Door Policy in the Far East; however, its foreign policy was weak because it did not have the necessary military might to back its demands. Therefore, the United States resorted to economic pressure. It implemented a policy of escalating deterrence in an effort to stop Japanese expansion. The economic pressure became too much when the United States deprived Japan of oil, which was a major commodity that the Japanese civilian sector could not live without. This highlights the fact that having a strong military assists in enforcing efforts made in other areas of the DIME construct, and this is just as important today as it was in 1939.

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## Introduction

The period between the two World Wars was a time of extreme change and turbulence. In Europe, the League of Nations attempted to deal with the shifting international order by providing security for nations as they recovered from the devastation of World War I. In the United States, the Great Depression altered every aspect of the American way of life, including its military preparedness between the World Wars. America reduced its defense budgets on the political attitudes that the U.S. did not need large standing armies because broad oceans and weak neighbors would give the U.S. time to mobilize its industrial and demographic resources. Therefore, most political leaders agreed that a small army during the interwar period was adequate.<sup>1</sup> The decision to reduce the army reflects the culture of isolation that separated military planners from the civilian directors of policy, resulting in a lack of communication and coordination between the two.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, interservice disagreements and confusion regarding U.S. strategy and policy further diminished the military's role in strategic planning. A small army and its inability to influence strategy, or sell its operational ideas to civilian leadership, weakened America's military during the interwar period. The weakness of the United States' military forced America to rely, principally, on the Diplomatic and Economic elements of national power, and this negatively affected the way the United States conducted its decision-making with imperial Japan from 1939-1941.

The significance of this paper is in the understanding of how state actors respond when there is a perception of an imbalance in their Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economy (DIME) construct. The use of force does not always mean the use of military force. Nations typically use other elements of national power, singularly or in conjunction, to accomplish strategic and operational objectives. During the interwar period, the United States did not focus on building a strong military and consequently had problems enforcing demands made upon Japan. Therefore, there was a perception that Japan had a

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Gole, *A History of Military Thought: From the Enlightenment to the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Greene, "The Military View of American National Policy, 1904-1940," *American Historical Review*, v. 66 (January 1961): 356.

stronger military. This perception created an imbalance in America's DIME construct as it became a reality that Japan did have a stronger military. The realization that Japan did not have the economic infrastructure to support its military caused the U.S. to rely heavily on the Economic element of national power to bring the elements of DIME back in alignment. In today's era of persistent conflict, it is likewise critical to understand that nations will use all means necessary to keep their elements of national power in alignment for national stability. A strong military assists in enforcing the efforts made in other areas of the DIME construct.

The central theme of this paper is the conduct of U.S. strategic and operational decision-making with imperial Japan from 1939-1941. During this time, the United States and Japan had a very contentious relationship, and that relationship remained strained because of America's attempt to counter the aggressive actions initiated by Tokyo in its effort to become self-sufficient. The United States and Japan had fundamentally disparate strategic and operational objectives, and the measures that America took to thwart Japan's drive through China set these two nations on a collision course. Japan's strategic objectives focused on the desire for a policy of national self-sufficiency and of non-reliance on Western imports or economic aid. Its major operational objective was the acquisition of the Dutch East Indies, where Japan imported its oil, rubber, and a number of other goods. Japan fully pursued its objectives as the armed forces provided the foundation for plans to identify, protect, modernize, and expand its national interests.<sup>3</sup>

Conversely, the weakness of the United States' military restricted both its strategic and operational objectives. One of the strategic objectives for the United States was to uphold the principles of the Open Door in East Asia, and this would allow nations equal and unrestricted access to trade in the region.<sup>4</sup> America's key operational objective was maintenance of the Philippines. From the Philippines,

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<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Tarling, *A Sudden Rampage* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 43.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 25. John Hay, Secretary of State, sent

the United States could project its power; therefore, the U.S. began to strengthen its Navy to a level that was permissible by the Washington and London conference treaties. However, these naval activities did not deter Tokyo, but reinforced Japan's secret decision in May 1937 to out-build the Americans.<sup>5</sup> The strategic and operational decisions that the United States made between 1939 and 1941 were ineffective in attempting to thwart Tokyo's drive into China.

The perception that Japan had a stronger military forced America to rely on other elements of national power, which emboldened Japan to pursue its strategic and operational objectives. Perception is "the act, process, or faculty of becoming aware directly through the senses."<sup>6</sup> The perceived action does not always result in a rational act. An individual's interpretation of sensory information is specific to that individual and not always universal. In application, when a nation's leader or group of leaders perceive that there is an imbalance in their DIME construct, then they will tend to use force, kinetic or non-kinetic, to compel their enemy to do their will.

This application of force is the reciprocal action, and the decision to act develops from applying further observations of the environment and correctly orienting on the situation to meet the desired purpose or end state. John Boyd, a renowned military theorist, determined that observation is the task in which an individual or group identifies changes or lack of changes in the environment around them.<sup>7</sup> According to observations and the developed orientation, a nation or individual would decide to act in order to compel the enemy to do their will.

In 1931, for example, America began to observe Japan's urgency for a policy of national self-sufficiency and of non-reliance on imports or economic aid. This resulted from Japan's growing

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an "Open Door" note on September 6, 1899 to Japan, Germany, Russia, Britain, France, and Italy, asking them to respect equal trade opportunity for all nations in their spheres of influence in China.

<sup>5</sup> Robert G. Kaufman, *Arms Control During the Pre-Nuclear Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 181.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas A. Knott and William A. Neilson, *Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994), 872.

<sup>7</sup> Frans P.B. Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The strategic theory of John Boyd* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 230.



population and its scarcity in land. Both of these factors forced the Japanese to become increasingly more dependent on the United States for vital resources and materials that it needed to support its military.<sup>8</sup> As America oriented on the developing situation, it became apparent that Japan's armed services were a significant actor in its desire to develop an economic base that would support major-power status. Additionally, the strength and effectiveness of its armed forces reinforced its objectives and drive towards national economic independence. This contrast to the state of the U.S. military led military leaders and policy makers alike to perceive that there was an imbalance, militarily, in America's DIME construct. The Japanese military greatly influenced Japan's foreign policy and often acted autonomously. An example of this independent action was in 1931 when the Kwantung Army solely made the decision to use force in Manchuria.<sup>9</sup> Japan's obsession with obtaining critical materials and resources to support its war machine was the solitary reason for the exploitation of Manchuko and north China and was later the cause for Japan's southward expansion. If the United States understood the complexity of the geopolitical situation in Japan, then the conduct of its strategic and operational decision-making might have been more effective.

America's reciprocal actions were in response to the objectives that Japan sought to achieve. The United States wanted to prevent Japan's exploitation of Manchuko and north China, but was unwilling to use force to stop the Japanese resource drive. Leaders were hesitant to engage Japan in unnecessary conflict defending the Open Door when it was not certain how best to defend it.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, America decided on diplomatic and economic efforts because of the perceived and real weaknesses of its military.

Diplomatically, American policy intended to uphold the Open Door Policy in the Far East; however, its foreign policy was weak because it did not have the necessary military might to back its

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005), 147.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness: The Interwar Period," In *Military Effectiveness: Volume II: The Interwar Period* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 141.

<sup>10</sup> Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 116.

demands.<sup>11</sup> Because these efforts proved to be ineffective, the U.S. then implemented a policy of escalating deterrence using economic embargoes to stop Japan's drive further south into China. However, the economic pressure became too great because oil was the one major category of commodities Japan could not make up and that the Japanese civilian sector could not live without.<sup>12</sup> The Roosevelt administration decided to implement these reciprocal actions in order to balance America's DIME construct.

The key issue for America's strategic and operational decision-making with Japan from 1939-1941 was how best to achieve deterrence without the application of military force. The United States attempted to enforce embargoes in an effort to provide its military with the necessary materials and resources needed to sustain itself in the event of war. Economic sanctions was the only alternative America had because diplomatically, efforts failed, and militarily, it did not have the necessary military might to back up the policies that it tried to enforce. Japan viewed these sanctions as unnecessary for America's defense, and this caused a strain on U.S.-Japanese relations. The oil embargo forced Japan to act and on December 7, 1941, America fully realized the significant impact that the economic embargoes had on Japan's military.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 151.

<sup>12</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 197.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

## Chapter 1

### Japan and U.S. Strategic and Operational Objectives from 1939-1941

When looking at Japan's Strategic and Operational Objectives from 1939-1941, it is important to realize the effects that a growing population and a scarcity of land had on Japan. The Japanese became dependent on outside sources for vital raw materials and complained that for years, the Western nations intruded into their sphere of influence and controlled products central to their economy. Therefore, Japan's strategic objectives focused on the desire for a policy of national self-sufficiency and of non-reliance on Western imports or economic aid. To that end, Japan's major operational objective was the Dutch East Indies. This objective supported its strategic objectives, as the colony was where Japan imported its oil, rubber, and a number of other goods. Japan's armed forces enabled Tokyo to pursue its objectives and provided the foundation for plans to identify, protect, modernize, and expand its national interests.<sup>14</sup>

Japan realized early on that an important factor in its drive towards national economic independence was the strength and effectiveness of its armed forces. In 1927, Sato Ichiro, a Commander in the Japanese Navy, expressed the importance that essential materials and resources had and would continue to have on the military. He wrote in *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual* about the strategic doctrine of the navy and of the absolute necessity of commanding the seas that separate Japan from its economic resources. After describing Japan's enormous dependence on overseas supplies (55 percent of its wheat, 95 percent of its sugar, 100 percent of its rubber, 100 percent of its nickel, 55 percent of its steel, and 45 percent of its iron were imported, for example), Commander Sato emphatically stated that in order to maintain the huge imports of food items and raw materials from the Asian continent, the security of the East China Sea was essential.<sup>15</sup> He also stated that control of the entire sea route from the vicinity of Borneo through the South China Sea, the Formosa Strait, and the East China Sea to Japan would be

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<sup>14</sup>Tarling, *A Sudden Rampage*, 43.

<sup>15</sup> Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness," 143.

necessary for Japan's power of resistance. He concluded that, "The protection of trade in these waters is, therefore, a charge against the Japanese Navy almost as essential as its first duty."<sup>16</sup>

Japan, however, continued to rely on Western imports to obtain those critical materials that were most vital to the military and to the effort to expand production. British Malaya and the Philippines mined Japan's iron ore, and nearly 70 percent of Japan's requirement for steel production came from scrap iron in America, with much of the balance from Australia and British India. These critical materials and resources were the hardest to secure and as a result, Japan became increasingly more dependent on the United States for both scrap iron and pig iron. The United States also held a commanding position in certain essential specialty steels and finished steel products.<sup>17</sup> In 1939, Japan's Planning board asserted that a revision of the American neutrality legislation would divert materials not used for the military to Britain and France and away from other potential purchasers.<sup>18</sup> With these projections, the Planning Board predicted substantial economic setbacks that would delay Tokyo's success of accomplishing its strategic objectives, with major consequences for Japan's Foreign Policy.<sup>19</sup> Continued reliance on Western imports negatively affected its ability to have a policy of national self-sufficiency.

Japan's desperate need for action came when the Operations Division of the Army General Staff overruled the recommendation of the army's economic staffers to reduce the number of troops in China from 850,000 to 500,000 men by mid-1941. The operations officers argued not for a drawback in China, but for a large-scale attack on Nanking, which was a key city in Kwangsi Province. The Planning Board urged retrenchment so that Japan could prepare for a long struggle against China in a hostile international

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<sup>16</sup> Hector C. Bywater, *Navies and Nations: A Review of Naval Developments since the Great War* (London, 1927), 207.

<sup>17</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 149.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 130. The Neutrality Act of 1937 required belligerents wishing to trade with the U.S. to carry away U.S. goods in their own ships ("cash and carry"). It also prevented U.S. citizens to travel on belligerent vessels. An amendment of 1937 made the U.S. neutral in the Spanish civil war. In November 1939, after Germany's conquest of Poland, Congress revised the Neutrality Act so that England and France, as belligerents, could purchase American arms on a cash-and-carry basis.

<sup>19</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 150.

environment. The army operations planners' response was to attack southern China in an attempt to knock Chiang Kai-shek out of the war to provide the navy with an opportunity to advance to parts further south.<sup>20</sup> The attack on Nanking would start actions towards Japan's ultimate operational objective, the Dutch East Indies. Successful operations in the Philippines, its intermediate operational objective, would provide protection for Japan's Southward Advance. Accomplishment of its operational objectives would mean that Japan would become economically self-sufficient and politically dominant over all East Asia.<sup>21</sup>

Tokyo's decision to attack Nanking supports Alfred Thayer Mahan's worldview that the Far East would become the great future battleground in an economic and Darwinian struggle for survival and world supremacy.<sup>22</sup> Mahan was a professor of war at the Naval War College, whose thoughts on the strategy of navies had global influence.<sup>23</sup> Japan fully pursued its strategic and operational objectives as the armed forces provided the foundation for plans to identify, protect, modernize, and expand its national interests. The army defined Japan's national strategic goals, but in the process, it overestimated its own capacity to persuade with force. Before 1941, the Japanese Army's inability to restrict its strategic goals to its available operational capacity caused strategic and operational concerns to overlap.<sup>24</sup> The Japanese Army began the 1937 Sino-Japanese War with a drive calculated to reduce China to submission, but its strategic thinking did not envision the engagement as an all-out war that required an all-out commitment at the operational level. The Chinese will to resist was not broken, so in an effort to avoid a wasteful expenditure of strength, Japan resorted to a strategy of economic strangulation in China. The conquest of China, not stalemate, was a critical objective of the Japanese Army, assisting in the achievement of Japan's strategic objective of national self-sufficiency. Additionally, the army intended the conquest of

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<sup>20</sup> Donald S. Detwiler and Charles B. Burdick, *War in Asia and the Pacific* (New York: Garland, 1980), 8.

<sup>21</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 128.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, The Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 7.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 141.

China to put the army in a favorable position to take advantage of new opportunities that would later develop for the promotion of a southward expansionist policy. This highlights the fact that Japan's strategic goals in China became too great for the force that the Japanese were willing to commit.<sup>25</sup>

The first reports of the impact that the war in Europe had on Japan were complete just one month after Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa inherited the economy.<sup>26</sup> Prices of important commodities were rapidly rising. Scrap iron, for example, had cost 90 yen per ton before September 1939, but by early 1940, it was approaching 150 yen per ton.<sup>27</sup> Potassium salts, shipped from Germany and France, were rising similarly in cost. To complicate matters, Japan exported products primarily to Western countries, and the global depression greatly affected the prices of goods exported to those countries. Exports from Japan were not rising at a pace equal to increases in the costs of the critical materials they imported.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Japan was becoming ever less able to sustain the previous year's output of critical materials and more reliant on imports from the United States. The Planning Board pointed out that over 91 percent of commodities and equipment destined for military use came from imports mostly from the United States. Japan realized that its ability to acquire needed commodities abroad was starting to decline.<sup>29</sup>

The Yonai administration possessed the right mix of people that could have taken the alarms presented by the Planning Board and committed the Japanese Empire to a reorientation of its foreign policy. Yonai and his foreign minister, Arita Hachiro, favored friendlier relations with the Western maritime powers, and the new chief cabinet secretary, Ishiwata Sotaro, was another voice for better relations with the West. Fujihara Ginjiro, head of commerce and industry, opposed Abe's recent

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<sup>25</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 142.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 154. Admiral Yonai Mitsumasa became Prime Minister of Japan following Nobuyuki Abe's resignation. During the winter of 1939-40, the unusual cold weather contributed to the shortages of rice, coal, and other key goods. The army informed Abe that elections were impossible at a time of such popular dissatisfaction, and by mid-January he had no choice but to resign.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>29</sup> B.F. Johnston, *Japanese Food Management in World War II* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1953), 109.

tightening of government economic controls. Therefore, Yonai sought a balanced policy abroad and at home that would include maintaining friendships with the Axis powers while drawing closer to the West.<sup>30</sup> However, the Imperial Army damaged Yonai's policy when it launched a great new offensive in the spring of 1940. This offensive was a continuation of the army's obsession with achieving its objectives. Both the Army and Navy increased their air strength in China by 25 percent after the fall of Ichang and decided to pursue a still more aggressive policy.<sup>31</sup> The General Staff's Operations Section developed an operations plan designed for a southern advance into Indochina. Army leaders hoped that the seizure of Ichang would break Chiang's morale and end his resistance. However, if it did not, Japan planned to be ready to advance south by the end of August, when Hitler would invade Britain. The operations plan also recommended that Japan make itself economically independent by the greatest regulation of imports. It called for new and far-reaching domestic economic reforms, and additional efforts to expand production and replenish armament. Looking forward, Japan anticipated that due to the changing global situation in Europe, an alliance with Berlin was imperative to assist in these efforts.<sup>32</sup>

The accomplishment of Japanese strategic and operational objectives would continue to hinge on the need to provide its military with the essential materials and resources needed to carry on the fight. Shortages in the world markets diminished Japan's overall ability to meet its growing needs. Open American pressure also exacerbated an already deteriorating situation.<sup>33</sup> By the end of January 1940, the trade treaty between the United States and Japan expired and this opened the way to formal economic pressure against the empire. In Japan, the debate continued over the nature and timing of a southward advance and whether the economy could even sustain such a strike.<sup>34</sup> Many details of Japan's foreign policy were unsettled and no one was sure about Japan's economic standing. Earlier American embargoes

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<sup>30</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 156.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>33</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 169.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

of scrap iron and steel greatly affected critical areas of Japanese production, and the German-Soviet war essentially excluded the remaining sources of supply in Europe. Therefore, within ten days after the American freeze on Japanese assets, the doors closed to any peaceful settlement of Pacific differences.<sup>35</sup>

One of the strategic objectives for the United States was to uphold the principles of the Open Door in East Asia. In 1933, Stanley Hornbeck, chief of the State Department's Far Eastern Division and Joseph Grew, America's new ambassador to Tokyo, believed that Japan seized Manchuria not to achieve autarky but as a matter of pride for the Imperial Army.<sup>36</sup> Hornbeck believed that it would prove very difficult to persuade Tokyo to relinquish power peacefully or easily, and he feared that in time the Kwantung Army could make itself self-supporting in Manchuria even if Japan financially ruined itself in the process. Therefore, Hornbeck advocated active pressure on Tokyo in the form of sharp increases in American tariffs on goods imported from Japan.<sup>37</sup> Many leaders felt that the United States could not let Japan achieve hegemony over the western Pacific, but it should not cause needless friction defending the Open Door when it was uncertain how to defend it.<sup>38</sup> During this time, the state of the American military constrained many actions of decision-makers. The United States was unable to embark upon punitive measures to protest Japan's seizure and economic assimilation of Manchuria because its military was so weak.

The weaknesses of the United States' military contributed greatly to how America conducted its strategic and operational decision-making with imperial Japan from 1939-1941. The U.S. Navy emerged from World War I as one of the most powerful in the world and a building program, authorized in 1916, provided for a greater expansion of the battle fleet. However, early in 1920, President Harding and the Republican Congress were unwilling to assume financial responsibility for such a costly naval expansion.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>37</sup> Hornbeck memo, 12 July 1932, Stanley Hornbeck Papers, Box 453.

<sup>38</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 116.



Instead, President Harding proposed a program of world-power naval disarmament, which resulted in the scrapping of many old or incomplete capital ships and put an upper limit on the Great Powers' battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and carriers. The program established ratios of relative tonnage between the various navies, with the United States being given an equal ratio with Great Britain and a 40 percent superiority over Japan. It also assessed qualitative limitations, such as tonnage and armament to capital ships, carriers, and cruisers. In 1930, the signing of a second disarmament agreement in London restricted the three great naval powers on the number and characteristics of cruisers built. Additionally, the agreement set ratios in this category at 10:10:7 for Great Britain, the United States, and Japan, respectively.

The Washington agreements, however, dissatisfied naval officers as they resulted in the United States discontinuing construction of its most advanced battleships and battle cruisers. The subsequent London treaty saddled the navy with warship types, not determined by military requirement, but instead by negotiation.<sup>39</sup> The Great Depression curtailed naval expenditure even further. Older battleships had their complements reduced by as much as 60 percent, and Congress was not willing to appropriate funds for any new construction.<sup>40</sup> In the 1930s, the U.S. Navy failed to secure a force of the size and capability necessary to fight Japan in the Western Pacific. Additionally, the Five Power Washington Treaty restricted the U.S. from building forts on Guam since Japan might have viewed forts there as being provocative acts toward them. America's agreement to the treaty reflects the navy's inability to sell its strategic ideas to the civilian leadership. By the late 1930s, the Five Power Washington Treaty, which prevented the construction of bases or fortifications in specific areas of the Pacific and East Asian possessions of Britain, France, the United States, and Japan, expired, and naval leaders argued adamantly that the United States could no longer delay in establishing an operating fleet base in the Western

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<sup>39</sup> Ronald Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the US Armed Forces, 1919-39," in *Military Effectiveness: Volume II: The Interwar Period* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988), 72.

<sup>40</sup> Gerald E. Wheeler, *William Veazie Pratt: A Sailor's Life* (Washington, D.C.: Naval History Div., Dept. of the Navy, 1974), 214.

Pacific.<sup>41</sup> However, Congress remained unconvinced and a year after the outbreak of war in China, it voted to take no steps to establish a naval base in the Western Pacific.<sup>42</sup>

Prior to World War II, the United States' military was very small. The neglect of this peacetime army was due to fact that governmental leaders did not want to spend money for an organization that it neither trusted nor needed. What contributed to the idea of maintaining a small army was America's belief that its isolation and economic self-sufficiency would protect it from any outside threat. Therefore, the United States did not spend an extraordinary amount of money to build a strong military and accepted all risks that went with this. America also maintained limited ground forces for domestic defense and to preserve civil order.<sup>43</sup> Because of such unprecedented neglect, the interwar army's combat preparedness was less than mediocre.<sup>44</sup>

The National Defense Act of 1920 provided for a regular army of 280,000 Soldiers, which included nine infantry divisions, two cavalry divisions, and various smaller units. The National Guard was to support this regular force; however, neither Congress nor the president made the financial resources available to pay for the implementation of the National Defense Act. As early as 1921, Congress reduced the regular army force to only 150,000 soldiers, followed by a further reduction to 137,000 soldiers a year later. Throughout the 1920s and early 1930, Congress never allowed the strength of the army to exceed 135,000 soldiers.<sup>45</sup> At the start of World War II, the army was 90,000 soldiers short of its 280,000-soldier strength authorized by the National Defense Act of 1920.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Report on Need of Additional Bases to Defend the Coast of the United States and Its Territories and Possessions, 76th Cong., 1st sess. H. Doc. 65, pp. 27-33.

<sup>42</sup> Louis Morton, *Strategy and Command: The First Two Years, The United States Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, 1962), 42.

<sup>43</sup> Russell Hart, *Clash of Arms* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 17.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>45</sup> James P. Tate, *The Army and Its Air Corps*, PhD dissertation, University of Indiana, 1978, p. 245.

<sup>46</sup> Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the US Armed Forces, 1919-1939," 71.

The National Defense Act also envisioned a large trained reserve, which was to serve as the core of the citizen army. This did not come to fruition as little money was available for the reserve officers, who were commissioned through the Reserve Officer Training Corps at various colleges and universities, to train or serve with the army. A projected Enlisted Reserve Corps never developed as means were not available for the recruiting or training of necessary personnel. The National Guard maintained about 200,000 soldiers and carried on some training, but due to budgetary restraints, its training and equipment was inadequate for modern, mechanized warfare.<sup>47</sup> There was very little that the War Department could do to improve capabilities given the economic stringencies of the time. Additionally, the choices made by army leaders in their effort to cope with these stringencies made matters worse. Army leaders decided to retain its complete 1919 force structure of nine divisions instead of maintaining a smaller number of units at full strength. This structure made realistic training impossible and canceled out any possibility of maintaining even a small combat-ready force.<sup>48</sup>

At the start of World War II, the total strength of the U.S. Army's regular establishment was about 190,000. Its organization consisted of four armies and nine corps areas, with each corps area having one regular and two National Guard divisions. However, only three regular divisions could operate as such, and they were less than half strength. The 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Brigade (Mechanized) and two horsed cavalry divisions of about 1,200 men each, together with a few smaller independent units completed the army's order-of-battle.<sup>49</sup> The Regular army had begun the process of conversion from the First World War style square division to a smaller but more flexible triangular division comprising of three infantry regiments and one artillery regiment. At its existing strength, the army could only field at most five triangular divisions with the majority of their support troops.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 399.

<sup>48</sup> Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the US Armed Forces, 1919-1939," 72.

<sup>49</sup> Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, 419.

<sup>50</sup> Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the US Armed Forces, 1919-1939," 80.

Another weakness that the interwar military faced was its use of antiquated doctrines. The army's combined-arms conception overemphasized the central role of the infantry and saw the role of tanks as only part of a combined-arms force. The navy overemphasized the big-gun battleship and neglected aviation, anti-submarine, and amphibious warfare. The U.S. Army Air Corps (USAAC) overemphasized bombing at the expense of ground and air defense support roles.<sup>51</sup> The reasons for the apparent short-sighted decisions and policies of the services were due to the period of rapid and continuous change in many different fields of military technology during the 1920s and 1930s. Additionally, the economic stringencies of the period prevented the services from acquiring a sufficient number of new weapons systems or testing them thoroughly enough to gain a good idea of their effectiveness.<sup>52</sup> For example, in the case of naval aviation, the only sure way to determine the proper role of this new arm was through extensive experimentation and experience with various types of carriers and aircraft. However, treaty limitations and budget restrictions severely restricted obtaining the required number of either aircraft or ships, or carrying on any realistic training.<sup>53</sup>

The greatest difficulty that the interwar military faced was its inexperience, which was the result of poor training that derived from severe fiscal restraints, and this led to the abandonment of multi-division maneuvers.<sup>54</sup> The army did not have a large-scale operation before 1940 and when it did conduct its first ever corps and army maneuvers, noted deficiencies ranged from small-unit training to poor signal communications to inadequate artillery support.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, prior to World War II, the army did not gain any actual tactical experience with which to test its doctrines, organization, and tactics.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>52</sup> Robert K. Griffith Jr., *Men Wanted for the U.S. Army: America's Experience with an All-Volunteer Army between the World Wars* (Westport: Greenwood, 1982), 77.

<sup>53</sup> Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the US Armed Forces, 1919-1939," 85.

<sup>54</sup> Hart, *Clash of Arms*, 20.

<sup>55</sup> Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the US Armed Forces, 1919-1939," 92.

<sup>56</sup> Hart, *Clash of Arms*, 18.

Lack of interest in or desire for integration or close coordination between the services exacerbated the un-preparedness of the U.S. armed forces during the interwar period. Results of joint exercises were unimpressive as confusion, lack of coordination, and frequent breakdowns in communications between the army, navy, and Air Corps units characterized most of these attempts. The field of coastal defense highlighted the greatest failure in inter-service coordination and integration. Army and navy leaders regularly disagreed over issues such as permitting the navy to operate reconnaissance and strike aircraft from land bases and whether the army aircraft should operate against targets far out to sea.<sup>57</sup> Training between the army and Marine Corps units proved even less successful. Inter-service coordination continued to prove unsuccessful as the Air Corps was reluctant to cooperate with the ground army and made no preparation for close air support of ground forces between the wars.<sup>58</sup>

However, the military's strength was its ability to learn from its mistakes and improve upon them. From 1939 to 1941, the military began to restructure for war and experienced a change in its doctrine. The purpose of traditional doctrine was to halt the enemy far from America's shores and conduct counteroffensive operations, but by late 1939, the military developed strategic plans that called for not only hemispheric defense but also offensive transatlantic operations against Germany and Italy. In 1940, the development of the RAINBOW 5 plan focused U.S. troops on offensive-oriented training.<sup>59</sup> Planners of RAINBOW 5 saw the need to project forces "to the Eastern Atlantic and to either or both the African and European Continents as rapidly as possible" in a combined effort with France and Britain to decisively defeat Germany or Italy or both.<sup>60</sup> The change in doctrine also meant that the armed forces trained in amphibious operations in an effort to develop a good understanding of amphibious warfare

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<sup>57</sup> Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the US Armed Forces, 1919-1939," 86.

<sup>58</sup> Hart, *Clash of Arms*, 19.

<sup>59</sup> Hart, *Clash of Arms*, 70.

<sup>60</sup> Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 120.

techniques.<sup>61</sup> The military's ability to evaluate and refine training and learn from its mistakes allowed it to reorganize, adapt, and innovate effectively prior to December 1941.<sup>62</sup> This ability would ultimately prove essential in thwarting Japan's drive for economic self-sufficiency.

Japan continued its exploitation of Manchuko and north China through 1935. In response, Cordell Hull, U.S. Secretary of State, informed Yoshida Shigeru, Tokyo's ambassador to Britain, that many Americans believed that Japan was in violation of the Open Door Policy by intending to dominate China and deny Chinese markets to the rest of the world.<sup>63</sup> However, the armed forces' inability to project military might abroad again tied the hands of policy makers. Realizing this weakness, Hull declared on 16 July his government's objection to the use of force in pursuit of policy [and]...interference in the internal affairs of other nations." In addition, he spoke of "effective equality of commercial opportunity" and removing barriers to international trade. But, he did not come any closer to this in a defense to China's territorial integrity. Hull's statement was nothing more than a recapitulation of American policy in East Asia since 1933.<sup>64</sup>

America's key operational objective was maintenance of the Philippines. From the Philippines, the United States perceived that it could project its developing power; therefore, the U.S. began to strengthen its Navy to a level that was permissible by the Washington and London Conference treaties. These naval activities did not deter Tokyo, but instead reinforced Japan's secret decision in May 1937 to out-build the Americans.<sup>65</sup> Japan continued its imperial expansion into China, and this led to the *Panay* incident, which killed several Americans in the process.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Hart, *Clash or Arms*, 71.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>63</sup> Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 290.

<sup>64</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 120.

<sup>65</sup> Robert G. Kaufman, *Arms Control During the Pre-Nuclear Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 181.

<sup>66</sup> Joseph Grew, Diary entry of 13 December 1937, Grew Papers, Vol. 85. The *Panay* was an American gunboat, attacked and sunk by Japanese planes while it escorted tankers from the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company

The Philippines were equally important to Japan as the islands mined Japan's iron ore imports. Additionally, Japan realized that control of the Philippines was essential to protect its drive further south. For the United States, the Washington Treaty provisions affected U.S. actions in the Philippines. In addition to prohibiting the protection of the American-owned island of Guam, it restricted the establishment of additional defenses for the Philippines. The navy believed that without a major naval base at either one of these locations, it would be impossible to carry on a successful war against Japan. In 1938, Rear Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn headed a board which recommended the development of Guam into a fully-equipped naval base to protect the Philippines and block Japanese moves into Southeast Asia. This base would also serve as a deterrent warding off any Japanese attempt to strike east at Hawaii or Midway.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the force size and structure of the U.S. armed forces hindered its ability to accomplish strategic and operational objectives. Plan Orange was the foundation for Army strategic and operational planning for the Far East, and it consisted of four phases. Phase 1 was the securing of the line Alaska-Hawaii-Samoa-Panama 70 days after mobilization. Phase 2 was the departure of the joint expedition 85 days after mobilization and the arrival at the Torres Strait 111 days after mobilization. Phase 3 secured the Philippines, built up U.S. forces, and conducted offensive operations against the Japanese; and Phase 4 blockaded Japanese ports and cut Japan's line of communication.<sup>67</sup> However, its lack of sufficient fleet auxiliaries made it unlikely that the navy would be able to accomplish its operational objective of fighting through to the Philippines.<sup>68</sup> Army and navy strategists both were aware of the shortcomings in Plan Orange, but they avoided any suggestion to modify or abandon the

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during their exodus from China. For more on this, see Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 149.

<sup>67</sup> Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 86.

<sup>68</sup> Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the U.S. Armed Forces, 1919-1939," 79.

plan. This meant that war with Japan would be long and expensive, and anticipated losses on both sides would be heavy.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 85.



## Chapter 2

### Japan's Military Capabilities

Unlike the stated the U.S. military, Japan's armed services during the interwar period provided the foundation for plans to identify, protect, modernize, and expand Japan's national interests. Japan strove to develop an economic base that would support major-power status and Japan's armed services figured prominently in the nation's economic rise.<sup>70</sup> In the first half of the century, Japan's shipbuilding was a key heavy industry and the Japanese Navy always had access to government as well as private resources. Additionally, despite the Washington Naval Limitation Treaty concerning capital ships, Japan's shipbuilding technology remained modern. Japan continued to build smaller naval vessels and merchantmen throughout the interwar years and carried out extensive modernization to Japanese dockyards. With the abolition of the Washington Treaty in 1934, a construction program began in the mid-1930s in an effort to gain parity with the United States and Great Britain. Japanese industrial and technological resources took advantage of the new arms construction programs.<sup>71</sup>

In Japan, service in the armed forces has always been popular and during the period of material expansion between the wars, it easily met military organizational requirements. The army required many more personnel than the navy, but this was not a problem because the army's long-term military promotional campaign was very effective. In the 1920s and 1930s, the army's indoctrination campaign contributed to the growing number of ultranationalists within its ranks. The number of Japanese Army divisions increased from twenty-four divisions in 1937 to thirty-four in 1938. An increase from forty-one divisions to fifty occurred between 1939 and 1940, and the last increase was to fifty-one divisions by the summer of 1941.<sup>72</sup> In 1926, the navy's personnel strength was very small, but by the summer of 1941, Japanese naval personnel numbered well over two hundred thousand. Large reserves also enabled the

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<sup>70</sup> Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness," 136.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>72</sup> Chihiro Hosoya, "Retrogression in Japan's Foreign Policy Decision-Making Process." In *Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan* (Princeton: 1971), 84.

armed services to increase its manpower during the interwar period.<sup>73</sup> A U.S. naval intelligence report of 1939 estimated that in the Japanese first and second reserves, there were nearly sixty thousand officers and enlisted men.<sup>74</sup>

The limitations of Japan's armed forces did not restrict Tokyo from fully pursuing strategic objectives. The military had the capacity for independent action, highlighted in 1931, when the Kwantung Army made the decision to use force in Manchuria. The emperor permitted war and navy ministers to report directly to him, a privilege enjoyed by only one other Cabinet member, the Prime Minister. Service ministers asserted great control over the Cabinet.<sup>75</sup> They could force the collapse of an unyielding Cabinet and prevent another one from forming. The army likewise exercised disproportionate influence in shaping Japan's Foreign Policy in Asia during the 1930s. In the field, it often created a dramatic incident on which national prestige appeared to rest and then presented the foreign minister with a situation that was irreversible. The Cabinet usually endorsed these independent military actions after the fact. Failure to check the army's role in shaping foreign policy in 1931 left the diplomats no other alternative but to accept the military's involvement in political and international matters later in the decade.<sup>76</sup>

As the military became more influential at the political level and the government's policy began to focus on one aimed towards the expansion of Japan's interest on the Asian mainland regardless of the costs, its strategic objectives became too great for military means. Based on the false confidence from its earlier military experience of the latter 1920s and early 1930s, Japan found itself in a full-scale war with China by 1937. Military strategic effectiveness decreased and by the time Japan decided to expand the war to include the American, Dutch, and British powers, Japan's strategic capacity was at its all-time low

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<sup>73</sup> Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness," 139.

<sup>74</sup> Office of Naval Intelligence File, Naval Attache' Reports, 1886-1939, no. 13366-D, E-8-a, Record Group 38, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>75</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 24. The Prime Minister exercised the authority of the Cabinet, and it had no power to enforce any laws without his approval.

<sup>76</sup> Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness," 141.

in the interwar years. What contributed to this were the military's usurpation of foreign policy-making and the burden of military goals for the nation. The goals were not always logical and the decisions that military officers made often went unchallenged and unchecked in their initial quest for dominance.<sup>77</sup>

During the interwar period, an important difference between the Japanese armed forces and the armed forces of the United States was the emphasis that Japan placed on its navy.<sup>78</sup> The mission of Japan's Navy was to provide commerce protection in the Western Pacific and to establish a strong defense of Japanese interests in home waters and along the Chinese coast. To accomplish its mission, Japan retained ten capital ships after the Washington Conference and added lighter vessels to the navy. In the event of war, Japan prepared itself to protect its sea communications, something upon which a thriving sea trade was extremely dependent.<sup>79</sup> Another one of its interests was submarines and even before the Washington Treaty, Japan was building several submarines, which mirrored those purchased from the Italian Fiat-Laurenti, the French Schneider-Laubeuf, and the British Vickers "L" boats during World War I. The Japanese always sought the best available submarine technology and incorporated it in such a way that it supported operational doctrine.<sup>80</sup>

Japan's operational doctrine, which was defensive in nature, relied a great deal on submarines. The Japanese took available technology and designed a fleet component that would support the battleship. In 1924, this program developed the I-boats, which were the new class of larger cruiser diesel submarines. These I-boats contributed to the navy's effort to establish hegemony in the Western Pacific in time of war.<sup>81</sup> They were particularly effective in helping to tie together the newly acquired mandated islands into

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<sup>77</sup> Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness," 140.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>80</sup> Fukui Shizuo, *Japanese Warships: the Development of Japan's Shipbuilding Technology and the Changes in Naval Vessels* (Tokyo: 1962), 167.

<sup>81</sup> Fukui Shizuo, *Japanese Warships: the Development of Japan's Shipbuilding Technology and the Changes in Naval Vessels* (Tokyo: 1962), 167.

a defensive perimeter surrounding important sea communications of the Japanese empire.<sup>82</sup> Japan's defensive operational doctrine, developed from Commander Sato's earlier assessment of naval doctrine, where he emphasized the necessity of commanding the seas that separated Japan from its economic resources. Protection of the sea communications ensured that nothing interfered with goods coming from the Dutch East Indies, which was its major operational objective. Additionally, securing the sea routes supported its strategic objectives of national self-sufficiency and of non-reliance on Western imports or economic aid. In this regard, the technical capabilities of the I-boats were consistent with the navy's operational concepts.<sup>83</sup>

Japan constructed airfields on various mandated islands in 1934 in order to develop an interlocking defensive air network. Japan acquired these islands as a result from the Treaty of Versailles, which was the peace settlement signed after World War I.<sup>84</sup> In the Marshalls, several islands of the Kwajalein Atoll became advanced bases, with repair facilities for submarines, a torpedo station, piers, fleet anchorage, and a seaplane ramp. To strengthen the Kwajalein fortifications, Japan added fighter and bomber airfields and heavily reinforced concrete pillboxes and blockhouses. Japanese vessels were likewise constantly shuttling Korean laborers and material from Japan for the systematic militarization of Truk in the Carolines and the Kwajalein Atoll.<sup>85</sup> After 1936, the navy took over all of the mandated islands' administration of communications and constructed additional radio stations in the Marianas and Carolines. The mandated islands became a network of military support facilities, and in time of war the enemy would have an extremely hard time forcing the Japanese armed forces from the area.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Boyd., "Japanese Military Effectiveness," 151. The newly acquired mandated islands were islands in the North Pacific that Germany gave Japan because of their defeat in WWI.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 151.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 80.

<sup>85</sup> Samuel E. Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II. Vol. 7* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 74.

<sup>86</sup> Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness," 151.

The new configuration of the recently-secured mandated islands and the other naval advancements that occurred during the interwar period enabled Japanese submarines in the Western Pacific in time of war to concentrate on the protection of the Japanese sea traffic, disrupt adversaries' sea-lanes within the Japanese defensive perimeter, or serve as pickets for the battle fleet. Based on their reading of Mahan, Japan realized early on that any potential conflict with the United States would take place largely at sea, so the navy developed an offensive strategic plan for war with the United States.<sup>87</sup> The design of this new offensive was to take advantage of the element of surprise and to neutralize American forces at Pearl Harbor. Attacking Pearl Harbor was essential in order to protect Japan's exposed flank as it moved to secure the Dutch East Indies. Additionally, Japan realized that if there was to be war with the U.S., it needed to cause significant damage to the U.S., and this meant targeting the U.S. fleet at Pearl Harbor.<sup>88</sup> If properly executed, the Americans would be unable to interfere after the start of the campaigns to expand southward from which Japan would ultimately achieve an unbeatable position within her recently secured Western Pacific perimeter.<sup>89</sup>

In the mid-1930s, the Japanese fleet was in a comfortable position in the Western Pacific. It had many well-suited naval bases and was a well-balanced and splendidly trained force. The newer Japanese ships often had better fighting qualities than did the British and American ships.<sup>90</sup> Another interest of Japan's armed forces was the development of foreign armed services, and the observations of Japanese military agents in Europe during World War I sharpened Japan's interest in naval aviation. Naval operational air doctrine integrated these developments, which were consistent with Japanese strategic

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>88</sup> Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 151.

<sup>89</sup> Boyd, "Japanese Military Effectiveness," 147.

<sup>90</sup> W Prak, "Problems of the Pacific: Causes for War." In *Proceedings*, Vol. 61 (July, 1935), 923.

goals in the Western Pacific.<sup>91</sup> These early developments in naval aviation helped Japan in their expansion of the aircraft carrier force after the Washington Treaty.<sup>92</sup>

The technological developments that rapidly occurred after the Washington Conference enabled Japanese naval tactics to stay abreast of the demands of operational doctrine and strategic objectives. In 1930, by the time Japan gained a great deal of experience with their new large carriers, the *Akagi* and *Kaga*, navy aviators started to develop dive-bombing as a new method of attack. The pilots realized that sighting was easier in dive bombing because the angle of the attacking aircraft and the target were in line. Additionally, this method of attack enabled the bomb to release much closer to the target than during high-level bomb attacks. The development of a sight for accurate dive bombing and extensive training increased the tactical effectiveness of Japanese naval aircraft decade before the summer of 1941.<sup>93</sup> The development of new armor-piercing bombs and extensive pilot training improved the tactical effectiveness of naval high-level bombing by the summer of 1941.<sup>94</sup> The Model 93 torpedo also greatly enhanced Japanese tactical effectiveness. The “Long Lance” torpedo, which was far more superior to foreign torpedoes, was useful at night in lieu of opening an engagement with gunfire.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, the Japanese could avoid the risk of revealing its own position with the flash from firing the first and probably inaccurate salvo. Japanese night battle doctrine became very effective as they used torpedo strikes to highlight enemy targets in an effort to enable Japanese battleships to fire extremely accurate initial salvos.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars, Vol. 1* (New York: Walker, 1968), 245.

<sup>92</sup> Boyd, “Japanese Military Effectiveness,” 153.

<sup>93</sup> Great Britain, Admiralty. *Development of British Naval Aviation*, Vol. 1 (1954), 60.

<sup>94</sup> Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York: Penguin, 1982), 158.

<sup>95</sup> Paul S. Dull, *A Battle History of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1941-1945* (Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 2007), 60.

<sup>96</sup> Boyd, “Japanese Military Effectiveness,” 160.

Japan's military continued to develop, and by 1939, the Japanese armed forces were stronger in manpower, morale, experience of war, and reserves of munitions than ever before in its history.<sup>97</sup> The military climate in 1939 caused leaders to espouse a militant assertiveness that favored war to accomplish political objectives. Consequently, the U.S. perceived that there was an imbalance, Militarily, and this forced America to rely on Diplomatic and Economic pressure in an effort to rebalance its DIME construct.

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<sup>97</sup> F.S.G. Piggott, *Broken Thread: An Autobiography* (Aldershot, England: Gale & Polden, 1950), 206.

### Chapter 3

#### **Analysis of U.S. Strategic and Operational Decision Making from 1939-1941**

The strategic and operational decisions that the United States made between 1939 and 1941 were ineffective in attempting to thwart Tokyo's drive into China. Japan's main goal during the interwar period was to achieve economic self-sufficiency and success in China was one step in the direction of accomplishing its goal. American policy intended to uphold the Open Door Policy in the Far East; however, it was unable to accomplish its objectives because it did not have the necessary military might to back its demands. Therefore, the United States resorted to implementing a policy of escalating deterrence in an effort to stop Japanese expansion.

Understanding how state actors respond when there is a perception of an imbalance in their DIME construct is critical in analyzing America's strategic and operational decision making with imperial Japan from 1939-1941. The weakness of the United States' military limited its actions to only a few areas of national power. Diplomatically, American policy intended to uphold the Open Door Policy in the Far East; however, its foreign policy was weak because it did not have the necessary military might to enforce its demands. President Roosevelt took action and abolished the Japanese-American commercial treaty of 1911, but this treaty did not end trade, as Washington remained reluctant to enforce rigid economic embargos during the Great Depression. The U.S. ambassador to Japan, Joseph C. Grew's talks with the Japanese foreign minister in the fall of 1939 did however result in a pledge by Japan to curtail brutalities against foreigners, but failed to secure U.S. trading rights in China.<sup>98</sup> These efforts by President Roosevelt and Ambassador Grew were attempts to strengthen America's diplomatic aspect of its DIME construct; however, the United States resorted to economic pressure because these efforts proved to be ineffective.

The U.S. then implemented a policy of escalating deterrence using economic embargoes to stop Japan's drive further south into China. Japan knew that the accomplishment of its strategic and

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<sup>98</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 151.



operational objectives hinged on the need to provide its military with the essential materials and resources needed to carry on the fight. Therefore, the Imperial Army launched a great new offensive in the spring of 1940 in order to seize Ichang as a continuation of the army's obsession with achieving its objectives.<sup>99</sup> In July, 1940, President Roosevelt signed legislation restricting the export of gasoline of 87 octane or higher and lubricating oil, tetraethyl lead, and number-one heavy melting scrap iron and steel.<sup>100</sup> Japan decided to pursue a more aggressive strategy with a southern advance into Indochina in September, 1940. As a result, America enforced a full embargo on all iron, steel, nickel, copper, zinc, and other strategic goods by the end of 1940. Finally, in July, 1941, the Roosevelt administration executed its final economic deterrent to Tokyo's military expansion by ending petroleum shipments to Japan.<sup>101</sup> This resulted in the economic pressure becoming too great because oil was the one major category of commodities Japan could not make up and that the Japanese civilian sector could not live without. The Roosevelt administration observed Tokyo's actions and perceived them as being threatening to America's strategic objective of upholding the Open Door in China. Therefore, America's reciprocal action was the decision to use economic force in order to balance their DIME construct.

Budgetary restraints kept the armed forces small during the interwar period and this proved to constrain decisions and responses made by both military leaders and policy makers. For example, maintenance of the Philippines was the key operational objective for the United States. The U.S. perceived that the Philippines would provide a foothold in Asia, enabling it to project power in the Pacific from forward bases on the islands. However, because the United States did not place an emphasis on building a strong navy during the interwar period, policy makers and navy leaders were skeptical about the success of achieving this operational objective. Brigadier General Stanley Embrick, chief of the War Plans Division in the mid-1930s, had long experience in the Philippines and argued that America should

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<sup>99</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 158.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

push back its line of defense to the triangle formed by Alaska, Hawaii, and Panama. His reasoning for this was the significant distance to the U.S. naval base in the Philippines. This distance was the reason for the failure of the U.S. since 1898 to secure a port in the Philippines. That meant that shortly after the commencement of hostilities, Japan would deny the U.S. a base in the region. The assumption was that Japan would enjoy local superiority and seize the Philippines at the start of the war.<sup>102</sup> Embrick stated that, “The Philippines were indefensible, and an indefensible base was an invitation to disaster.”<sup>103</sup> Colonel Walter Krueger, Embrick’s chief planner, agreed with General Embrick and argued that the Philippines were of no great military, economic, or political benefit to the United States and that attempts to maintain American interests and the Open Door in China were outdated and unachievable.<sup>104</sup> Despite such arguments, army and navy leaders continued to plan for the defense of the Philippines. Even though military leaders knew that defense of the Philippines would be difficult with a weak military, they continued their plan because national policy and prestige seemed to require it.<sup>105</sup> America was not going to lose the opportunity, again, to secure a port in the Philippines.

During the 1920s, there was a complete lack of communication and coordination between political and military leaders and because of this, military leaders felt themselves to be powerless to change policy. For example, the military proposed the establishment of a coordinating agency in regards to foreign and military affairs. Representative Richmond P. Hobson of Alabama introduced a bill which called for the establishment of a Council of National Defense that would include the Secretaries of War, State, and Navy, the chairman of the House and Senate Military and Naval Affairs committees, and the professional heads of the army and navy.<sup>106</sup> The bill did not pass due to a culture of isolation that

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<sup>102</sup> Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 41.

<sup>103</sup> Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 34.

<sup>104</sup> Walter Krueger, “Our Position in the Philippines.” Oct. 28, 1935, WPD 3417, Record Group 165, National Archives.

<sup>105</sup> Spector, “The Military Effectiveness of the U.S. Armed Forces, 1919-1939,” 82.

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Congress, House Naval Affairs Committee, *Hearings on Council of National Defense*, 62<sup>nd</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., pp.2-12.

separated the military from the civilian directors of policy.<sup>107</sup> In 1922, the military services proposed to Secretary of State Charles Evans that representatives from his department and the Joint Board and its planners meet to provide guidance on national policy. Hughes rejected this idea because of his concern that this would lead to undue military influence on foreign policy.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, the lack of communication and coordination between the services and the State Department remained a problem.

Even though the 1930s was a period of naval expansion for the United States, the navy was still unable to secure a force the size and capability necessary to wage war against Japan in the Western Pacific. An example of the navy's limited ability to sell its operational ideas to the civilian leadership is the issue of the Guam naval base. By the late 1930s, the Washington Treaty restriction on naval bases expired and naval leaders argued emphatically that the United States could no longer delay the decision to establish an operating fleet base in the Western Pacific. These leaders perceived Japan as being a threat through their aggressive shipbuilding programs aimed at achieving parity with the United States and Great Britain. Japan also threatened our strategic objective of upholding the principles of the Open Door in East Asia as they engaged in a full-scale war with China in 1937. In 1938, Rear Admiral Arthur J. Hepburn and his board recommended for the development of Guam into a fully equipped naval base. He and his board agreed that a fleet base established at Guam would enable the navy to protect the Philippines, block Japanese moves into Southeast Asia, and ward off any Japanese attempt to strike east at Hawaii or Midway.<sup>109</sup> Congress remained unconvinced and a year after the outbreak of war in China and following a long and heated debate, Congress voted against the establishment of a naval base in the Western Pacific.<sup>110</sup> If there had been adequate communication between political and military leaders

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<sup>107</sup> Greene, "The Military View of American National Policy 1904-1940," 356.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>109</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Report on Need of Additional Bases to Defend the Coast of the United States and Its Territories and Possessions, 76<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. H. Doc. 65.

<sup>110</sup> Morton, *Strategy and Command*, 42.

during the early years of the interwar period, then the military may have reached the required force size and structure needed to achieve its operational goals.

After the bombing of Nanking in 1937, President Roosevelt perceived that Japan's action created an imbalance in America's DIME construct. According to his observations and the developed orientation, he perceived Japan's aggressive action as a diplomatic threat to America's strategic objective of upholding the Open Door Policy in China. Therefore, the president and his administration pondered the decision to act. It was apparent that the president was upset about the Nanking bombing, and in a forceful response, he declared:

“It would seem to be unfortunately true that the epidemic of world lawlessness is spreading. When an epidemic of physical disease starts to spread the community approves and joins in a quarantine of the patients in order to protect the community against the spread of the disease.”<sup>111</sup>

The president did not call for any specific measures and he did not mention Japan by name; however, he did not rule out pressure beyond moral persuasion. The State Department blasted the Nanking attack as “unwarranted and contrary to the principles of law and humanity.”<sup>112</sup> Several leaders also entertained the idea of an economic boycott against Japan designed to end the Far East conflict. Hornbeck and Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau led a vocal minority that argued that a boycott carried twin advantages. It demonstrated America's moral resolve and it damaged Japan's ability to carry out aggression.<sup>113</sup> Convinced that Japan was near its financial end and was able to continue fighting only by exporting ever-greater amounts of its gold, Morgenthau stated that peace in Asia might come if the West refused to provide hard currency in exchange for Japanese gold.<sup>114</sup> Herbert Feis, head of the State Department's economic affairs office, conceded however that crippling Japan's ability to convert gold into exchange would make Tokyo's task of conquering China more difficult but not

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<sup>111</sup> Roosevelt to Leahy, 22 August 1937, Roosevelt Papers, PSF, DEC, Box 78, Navy.

<sup>112</sup> Peter Lowe, *Great Britain and the Origins of the Pacific War* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 21.

<sup>113</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 121.

<sup>114</sup> Henry Morgenthau Jr., *Morgenthau Diaries*, entry of 1 October 1937.

impossible. He also mentioned that this step would require the complete cooperation of all countries because an independent American refusal to accept Japanese gold would be ineffective. Hull agreed with Feis' logic and decided not to pursue the proposal.<sup>115</sup>

Other leaders wanted to avoid direct conflict with Japan all together; Maxwell Hamilton was one of those leaders. As Hornbeck's successor at the Far Eastern Division, Hamilton counseled patience when he stated that, "Vigorous steps would drive Japan's warlords only to further madness; and "If, on the other hand, Tokyo could be offered a chance for economic security and protection against Soviet attack, Japan's drive toward imperialism might perhaps be defused."<sup>116</sup> Grew supported Hamilton's analysis and argued that Japan's leaders were not barbarians and sought outlets for trade, investment, and even surplus population. He stated that, "If Japan could meet these needs in parts of China, it might well return to its "natural" place within the Anglo-American sphere."<sup>117</sup>

The Roosevelt administration came very close to considering distinct pressure on Japan, but backed off during the Brussels Conference, which was a conference of several nations regarding Japan's aggression in China. This pattern would repeat itself during the *Panay* Incident. As the powers met in Belgium, the Imperial Japanese Army drove for Nanking on December 13, 1937. As the lead elements reached the city, Chiang Kai-Shek had already fled to Hankow. As part of the exodus, the *Panay*, an American gunboat, escorted three tankers from the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company. Japanese planes attacked the tankers and sank the *Panay*, which killed several Americans in the process.<sup>118</sup> Immediately after the incident, Roosevelt instructed Hull to convey shock and concern to Japan's ambassador, Saito Hiroshi. In the interim, Roosevelt consulted Morgenthau who favored striking both Japan's liquid assets

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<sup>115</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 122.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>117</sup> Moffat, Journal entry of 28 October 1937, Moffat Papers, Vol. 39.

<sup>118</sup> Grew, Diary entry of 13 December 1937, Grew Papers, Vol. 85.

in the United States as well as its total reserves of foreign exchange.<sup>119</sup> Once again, as the president observed and oriented on the situation, he perceived that the sinking of the *Panay* further upset the balance in America's DIME principles. As the president considered his courses of action, the weakness of the military again restricted his possibilities. Diplomatically, America's effort to achieve its strategic objective of upholding the Open Door Policy was failing. Militarily, the U.S. could not achieve its operational objectives because it was not strong enough to compete with Japan. Therefore, as Japan plunged deeper into China in 1938, the Roosevelt administration initiated new measures.<sup>120</sup>

First, the United States purchased Chinese silver and then gave them dollars with which to buy American military equipment. Second, America imposed an embargo on the sale of aircraft to Japan. Third, the U.S. helped to improve the Chinese transportation system by extending technical assistance. Fourth, the U.S. Navy increased its strength by two new carriers and the doubling of naval airplanes. Fifth, the U.S. occupied several Pacific islands as potential staging bases for naval operations. Lastly, the Roosevelt administration sent a secret naval emissary to London to discuss different contingency plans in the event of war in the Pacific.<sup>121</sup> These methods intended to deter the Japanese from continuing their drive into China, improve China's infrastructure, and strengthen their armed forces as well as the naval forces of the United States. However, these actions did not deter the Japanese. By the end of 1938, Japan controlled all major Chinese seaports, established exploitative development companies, and began to instill a puppet Chinese regime.<sup>122</sup>

As war threatened Europe in the summer of 1939, President Roosevelt felt that he had to take stiffer actions in order to temper Japan's onslaught in China. He abolished the Japanese-American commercial treaty of 1911; however, this treaty did not end trade. Because of the depression, Washington

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<sup>119</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 126.

<sup>120</sup> Youli Sun, *China and the Origins of the Pacific War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1993), 134.

<sup>121</sup> Frederick Adams, *Economic Diplomacy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976), 233.

<sup>122</sup> Frederick Adams, *Economic Diplomacy* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1976), 233.

remained reluctant to enforce rigid economic embargos. Ambassador Joseph C. Grew's talks with the Japanese foreign minister in the fall of 1939 did however result in a pledge by Japan to curtail brutalities against foreigners, but failed to secure U.S. trading rights in China. The efforts by President Roosevelt and Ambassador Grew were attempts to strengthen America's diplomatic aspect of its DIME construct. In November 1939, America attempted to strengthen its military again by increasing its naval strength by two more battleships.<sup>123</sup> By this time, World War II began and Japanese-American relations deteriorated. Unwilling to fight over China, the United States had to decide what action it would take if Japan decided to expand beyond China.<sup>124</sup>

In June 1940, Japan's bombardment of Canton quickly revived the debate over the consideration of economic pressure. Hull condemned the attack and called a meeting with his advisors on 10 June. They all agreed that the sale of American bombers and related equipment to Japan was unacceptable, but after that their consensus broke down. J. Pierrepont Moffat, one of the more cautious diplomats, argued that the government should publicly disapprove of all such sales. Others argued for increased economic pressures. Roosevelt believed that the best course was to discourage the sale of aircraft and related equipment by contracting the manufacturers directly.<sup>125</sup> The collective effort between Roosevelt and the civilian manufacturers resulted in the sale of aircraft and aeronautical equipment to Japan virtually stopping by the end of the summer, 1940.

Immediately after the commencement of World War II in Sept 1939, the United States realized that their interests were not only in Asia, but in Europe too. In a radio address, President Roosevelt promised peace for America. He emphasized America's position of neutrality; however, this declaration of peace was short-lived because as the president was pleading with Mussolini to remain neutral in the

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<sup>123</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 151. With the addition of two more battleships, this would bring the total number of battleships to twelve. This is critical to the support of the newly designed strategic plans that called for not only hemispheric defense but also offensive transatlantic operations against Germany and Italy.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>125</sup> J.P. Moffat, Journal entry of 10 June 1938, Vol. 40.

great conflict that was wrecking Europe, he himself was pushing America down the road to war. The French Premier, Paul Reynaud, requested that the president ask Congress for a declaration of war against Germany because he perceived that if Germany defeated France and England, Hitler would almost immediately move against the United States. He suggested that America send its fleet at once to the Mediterranean to influence Mussolini to stay out of the war.<sup>126</sup>

World War II forced the president and the armed forces to consider implementing the Rainbow Plans.<sup>127</sup> However, interservice disagreements and lack of clear guidance regarding U.S. strategy and policy slowed decision making from the outbreak of war in Europe into the early months of 1940. The JPC worked the Rainbow 2 scenario, but considered a Rainbow 5 scenario, which envisioned Britain and France on the verge of defeat by Germany with a resultant threat to the U.S. as a more likely occurrence. In this case, America would project its major forces to the eastern Atlantic, Africa, or Europe to assist Britain and France with a decisive victory over Germany.<sup>128</sup> In April 1940, Hitler's military victories in Europe resulted in the JPC focusing on Rainbow 4 for unilateral hemispheric defense. Roosevelt refused to remain passive in the Far East and launched a series of major initiatives, in both Europe and the Far East, during the summer over army and navy objections.<sup>129</sup> The president did not send the fleet to the Mediterranean as the French Premier requested, but did allow American pilots to fly planes to Halifax and other ports in the Canadian Maritime provinces. The president then urged Churchill to send additional planes to France, but Churchill believed that Britain needed all available aircraft to thwart an expected

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<sup>126</sup> Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 773.

<sup>127</sup> Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 20. The Joint Planning Committee (JPC) developed the Rainbow Plans as a new set of war plans to cover virtually every possible strategic response to a combined Axis attack. The four Rainbow Plans were: (1) unilateral defense of North America above ten degrees north latitude; (2) control of the western Pacific, as rapidly as possible consistent with the defense of North America; (3) defense of the entire Western Hemisphere; and (4) projection of U.S. forces into the eastern Atlantic and Africa or Europe, in a concerted action with Britain and France as rapidly as possible consistent with defense of North America, to defeat Germany and /or Italy.

<sup>128</sup> Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 23.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.



German attack.<sup>130</sup> The president and Secretary Hull agreed that with the aid of American supplies, Britain could withstand a German attack; therefore, the U.S. arranged to rush supplies to British ports.<sup>131</sup> When Churchill's requests became more urgent, the president turned to the Acting Attorney General, Francis Biddle, who conveniently ruled that if it would benefit the overall situation, then the Secretary of War had the right to sell surplus war supplies to any nation.<sup>132</sup> Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall thus directed his chief of Ordnance and his Assistant Chief of Staff to survey the entire list of American reserve ordnance and munitions stocks. General Marshall approved the lists of British requests on June 3, 1940.<sup>133</sup> However, this flood of war material reached the Allies too late in their effort to stop the rapid German advance into France.<sup>134</sup>

The Lend-Lease legislation demolished the entire structure of American neutrality when the president approved of aid to Britain at America's expense.<sup>135</sup> In Churchill's eyes, Britain's needs were America's needs because as he saw it, Britain was fighting America's war as well as its own. President Roosevelt agreed with Churchill when he stated in a fireside chat to the American people that aid to Britain was now a question of national security. The president and many of his staff members began connecting the German violation of the Monroe Doctrine to Japan's simultaneous threat to the Philippines. The American System, declared by Monroe, is the declaration of U.S. determination to defend whatever vital national interests it had, or might in the future identify, in the Western Hemisphere.<sup>136</sup> Japan's seizure of the Philippines would prevent America from achieving its operational

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<sup>130</sup> Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 774.

<sup>131</sup> Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 14.

<sup>132</sup> Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 774.

<sup>133</sup> Tansill, *Back Door to War*, 589.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 590.

<sup>135</sup> Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 15. President Roosevelt signed the Lend Lease Act on 11 March 1941, permitting the president to transfer, lease, sell, or exchange war materials to any country that the president felt was a contributing member to the defense of the United States.

<sup>136</sup> Walter A. McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997), 73.

objective in support of its strategic objective in the Far East. The perception was the inability to uphold the principles of the Open Door Policy by allowing nations equal and unrestricted access to trade in the region was a direct threat to vital interests of the U.S.

This first step of pressure on Japan intended to address the outrage over the bombing of Chinese civilians at Canton. However, it did nothing to obstruct Japan's bid for Asian hegemony.<sup>137</sup> Because of this, the United States had to take stronger measures against Japan. President Roosevelt instructed the navy to requisition all the machine tools under contract to foreign governments in order to prepare for the immense program of creating a two-ocean fleet. The need for this measure to strengthen the military aspect of the DIME construct would be obsolete with the building program of 1916, which called for the addition of ten super dreadnoughts and battle cruisers; however, the Harding administration disapproved the program.<sup>138</sup> This is significant because this may have been a strong enough deterrence to prevent German aggression in Europe and Japanese aggression in the Far East. Additionally, with a stronger navy, America's operational objective of maintaining the Philippines may have come to fruition. President Roosevelt applied the next step of pressure by signing legislation restricting the export of gasoline of 87 octane or higher and lubricating oil, tetraethyl lead, and number-one heavy melting scrap iron and steel.<sup>139</sup> Despite complaints that Japan was undermining the intent of the legislation by boosting purchased gasoline above 87 octane with additives, the president refused to extend the legislation to any other petroleum products for the fear of needlessly endangering the Indies.<sup>140</sup> However, the president did indicate that he wanted to halt shipments to Japan if they would not interrupt Britain's supplies. One week after the National Defense Advisory Council (NDAC) worked out the details, Roosevelt made his scrap iron embargo public. Colonel Russell Maxwell, administrator of export control, advised Roosevelt that

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<sup>137</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 130.

<sup>138</sup> Spector, "The Military Effectiveness of the U.S. Armed Forces, 1919-1939," 72.

<sup>139</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 191.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

denying scrap iron would increase Japan's orders for pig iron and related products, causing further shortages in America. Roosevelt requested that Hull draft up a proclamation adding iron and steel (including iron ore, pig iron, and ferroalloys) to the legislation. Additionally, Hull added nickel, copper, zinc, and other strategic goods to the restricted list by the end of 1940. The Japanese Planning Board was still able to provide its military with the materials needed to continue preparations for the Southward Advance.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, in July, 1941, the Roosevelt administration executed its final economic deterrent to Tokyo's military expansion by ending petroleum shipments to Japan.<sup>142</sup> The Roosevelt administration observed Japan's actions and perceived them as being threatening to America's strategic objective of upholding the Open Door in China. Therefore, America's reciprocal action was the decision to use economic force in order to balance their DIME construct.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 197.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion

The on-going debate over what to do about Japan's encroachment into China is clear evidence that America's Strategic and Operational Decision Making was ineffective when dealing with Imperial Japan between the years of 1939 and 1941. To Hornbeck, Hamilton's suggestion of offering Tokyo a chance for economic security and protection against Soviet attack was similar to the policy of appeasement. However, he argued that Japan's measure of security should only come after it abandoned its illegal attempt to subjugate China.<sup>143</sup>

When the debate over the consideration of economic pressure against Japan resurfaced, Grew insisted that economic pressure would prove to be ineffective because Japanese leaders would simply find substitutes for the materials America denied them. Hornbeck disagreed with this as he felt that Japan was far more vulnerable than Grew and his allies asserted. However, he explained that economic pressure might accomplish little if the willingness to proceed to military action did not support it. This highlights the fact that a strong military gives decision makers options when considering strategic and operational decisions. China experts Willys Peck and John Carter Vincent maintained that pressure would at the very least have prevented Japan from consolidating gains on the continent. George Luthringer, another one of Feis' assistants, held that pressure might stop Japan's attempt to achieve self-sufficiency and greatly impair the empire's military efficiency. The economic pressure would serve as a balancing agent to bring America's DIME back into alignment and force Tokyo to revise its foreign policy objectives.<sup>144</sup>

The effect of export bans on Japanese Foreign Policy was significant. No one except Hornbeck considered the impact that the ban on scrap iron would have on Japan. Hornbeck observed the rise in American scrap exports to Japan increasing rapidly in the medium and lower-quality grades and believed that if the U.S. banned these grades, the Japanese economy would be hurt because there were no

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<sup>143</sup> Hornbeck memos, 6, 10, 12, and 13, Hornbeck Papers, Box 457, 13 October 1937, Box 318.

<sup>144</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 132.

alternative sources. Hornbeck concluded that if the United States wanted to give concern to Japan's leaders without the threat of military force, a full scrap embargo was in order.<sup>145</sup>

Grew was the only senior level official in the State Department that gave warning to Hornbeck's suggestion of embargoes. He mentioned that Japan might attack Britain in the Far East if the United States ended shipments of oil or other commodities that America possessed in abundance and therefore did not need for defense purposes. This message accurately reflected what many in the State Department were thinking. Firmness was necessary, but measures directed against Japan, and not for American defense could trigger war in the Pacific.<sup>146</sup> Advocates of sanctions against Japan continued to prod Roosevelt and by early 1941, the Roosevelt administration executed its final economic deterrent to Tokyo's military expansion by ending petroleum shipments to Japan. Nearly all of the restrictions were justified as measures necessary for the American rearmament effort. For this reason, the embargoes had a significant impact on Japan's own war economy.<sup>147</sup>

Tokyo's final decision to attack the United States was not due to irrationality or suicidal tendencies. Japan required a minimum of 12,000 tons of oil each day, and because of this, Tokyo viewed America's decision for economic pressure as provocative and life strangling. Japan had a choice of either fighting the U.S. or pulling out of China and no Japanese leader recommended the latter. They knew America's power and industrial potential well enough to think that they had a chance for a negotiated settlement with America. This point illustrates the fact that many in Japan perceived America's military as being weak. Additionally, Japan knew that the focus for the U.S. military was Europe and not for war with Japan in the Pacific. Tojo, who replaced Konoe as prime minister, stated that if there is a slight chance for victory, then a nation must plunge into war.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Hornbeck to Hull, 13 and 19 September 1940, Box 461, Hornbeck Papers.

<sup>146</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 192.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>148</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 184.

It was Japan's large-scale attack of Nanking in 1937, the subsequent *Panay* Incident, the bombardment of Canton in 1940, and Japan's seizure of southern Indochina in 1941 that set the stage for a collision between Washington and Tokyo. Additionally, four days after French representatives permitted Japanese troops to occupy northern Indochina, Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy. Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka's intention for the Tripartite Pact was to deter the United States from intervening in the Atlantic or the Pacific, and to facilitate reconciliation with the Soviet Union, who still aligned with Germany through the Nazi-Soviet Pact. President Roosevelt observed the developing situation and perceived that the signing of the Tripartite Pact would offset America's DIME. Therefore, as President Roosevelt oriented on the situation, his reciprocal action was to extend the existing embargo, which was on aviation fuel and top-grade scrap iron, to all scrap metals. The president, however, kept the oil flowing to Japan. President Roosevelt also initiated measures that enabled China to purchase military equipment and helped improve the Chinese transportation system by expending technical assistance. The intention here was to aid England while avoiding conflict in the Pacific, which an oil embargo would likely bring about.<sup>149</sup> The purpose for the pattern of the gradual escalation of embargos was to buy the United States time in retaliation for Japanese expansion.

Japan's determination to hold China and to expand further south hurt any diplomatic efforts made by the United States. In response, Roosevelt froze all Japanese funds when Japan seized southern Indochina in late July, 1941. French Indochina was critical for Japan because from there, they would be able to accomplish their operational objective of seizing the Dutch East Indies with a direct thrust into Sumatra, Java, and south Borneo.<sup>150</sup> This freeze stopped all trade with Japan, including oil. Japan required 12,000 tons of oil each day, and America would not lift the oil embargo unless Tokyo respected China's

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>150</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 160.

sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>151</sup> This provocative act was life strangling for Japan, and after months of discussion, Tokyo decided to go to war with the United States if Washington did not lift its embargo.

The American military was weak during the interwar period, and because of this, the only alternative that the United States had was to implement a policy of escalating deterrence. The weakness of the United States' military limited its actions to only a few areas of national power. Diplomatically, American policy intended to uphold the Open Door Policy in the Far East; however, its foreign policy was weak because it did not have the necessary military might to back its demands. Therefore, the United States resorted to economic pressure. It implemented a policy of escalating deterrence in an effort to stop Japanese expansion. However, many policy makers who advocated harsher sanctions on Japan did not understand the impact that export bans would have on Japanese foreign policy. The scrap embargo of 1940 had a significant impact on the Japanese economy because it affected the ability of the Imperial economy to function effectively in the later years of the Pacific War.<sup>152</sup> The oil embargo, on the other hand, was a mistake. Hull and Roosevelt both agreed that an oil embargo would provoke Tokyo to attack the Dutch East Indies. Additionally, except for aviation gasoline, the U.S. could not provide a sound argument for the need to conserve oil for its own defensive efforts.

The link between economic pressure and the needs of the U.S. arms program seriously hindered American Foreign Policy with imperial Japan. The United States enforced embargoes in an effort to provide its military with the necessary materials and resources to sustain itself in the event of war. Japan viewed these sanctions as unnecessary for the American war effort and directly intended to cripple them. If the U.S. allocated enough funds during the early years of the interwar period to strengthen its armed forces, then this would not have been a problem. American policy makers did all that they could do with the situation that they had. Escalating economic pressure was the appropriate course of action, but this proved ineffective because the United States did not have the necessary military might to back-up its

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<sup>151</sup> Thomas G. Paterson, J. Garry Clifford, Shane J. Maddock, Deborah Kisatsky, and Kenneth J. Hagan, *American Foreign Relations*, 183.

<sup>152</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 196.

foreign policy demands. The economic pressure became too much when the United States deprived Japan of oil. This was the one major category of commodities Japan could not make up, and that the Japanese civilian sector could not live without. When the Roosevelt administration finally ended petroleum shipments to Japan, this forced Japan into a corner and its timing of the step ensured that earlier American predictions about the impact on Japan's military became a reality.<sup>153</sup>

In today's strategic environment, it is important to realize that the way nations strive to keep their DIME principles in alignment is consistent with how the U.S. conducted its strategic and operational decision-making with imperial Japan from 1939-1941. Having a strong military assists in enforcing efforts made in other areas of the DIME construct, and this is just as important today as it was in 1939. Applying soft power without having hard power to enforce it is counterproductive in reaching a nation's desired aims. Therefore, focusing on building a strong army will provide nations with the flexibility needed to gain leverage in today's era of persistent conflict.

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<sup>153</sup> Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War*, 197.



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