

The Specter of Revolution: Reconsidering Japan's Decision to Surrender

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Existing studies of the Pacific War tend to focus on the adverse military situation in explaining Japan's decision to surrender. Special emphasis has been placed on both the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet entry into the war. Although these are no doubt critical to understanding the end of the Pacific War, they fail to tell the whole story. This paper seeks to broaden the scope of the scholarly debate by focusing on Japan's domestic situation as a major factor behind the decision to surrender. It argues that a near-obsessive fear of social revolution among Japan's conservative ruling elite played an important role in prompting Japanese elites to make the decision to end the war.

Keywords: Japan; Pacific War; surrender; Second World War; war termination

Japan took a bold gamble in launching the Pacific War. Though initially successful in conquering a large portion of the region, in the long run this gamble failed to pay off. By 1943, it had become clear that the Japanese Empire could not muster the wherewithal to match the U.S. war machine. But Japan persisted in the war until a large portion of the home islands were destroyed and the nation's industrial capacity was crippled. It took an intervention by Emperor Hirohito in mid-August 1945, after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet declaration of war against Japan, to bring about the decision to surrender.

With such military power arrayed against Japan, it is no wonder that scholarly treatments of Japan's decision to surrender highlight the adverse military situation. Special emphasis has been placed primarily on military issues, including the strategic bombing campaign, the atomic bombings, and the shock of the Soviet entry into the Pacific War. Even Robert J.C. Butow's seminal work, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, which has long been regarded as the traditional interpretation of war's end, implicitly emphasizes the military dimensions of the political decision to surrender.¹ Butow argues that the worsening military situation divided the wartime ruling elite into a hardliner faction that wanted to fight to the finish and a peace faction that pressed for a prompt end to the hostilities. It took the atomic bombings and the Soviet entry to create an atmosphere where the Emperor could intervene to end the war.

After Butow, studies continued to focus on the military causes behind the decision to surrender. Since the surrender was tied to the use of the atomic bombs, U.S.-based political scientists and diplomatic historians led the vanguard of the history of war's end. Much research dealt with U.S. high politics and the decision to use the bomb. Those who used Japanese sources understandably limited themselves to the vast record translated into English. Thus, much of the research focused on why the United States dropped the atomic bombs and whether it was even necessary to do so.² It was only from the mid-1990s that historians began the serious study of Japanese-language sources. Yet the conclusions drawn by this new generation of historians similarly highlight the military situation. Sadao Asada and Richard B. Frank have both written persuasive analyses on the role of the atomic bombs in imperial Japan's downfall.³ Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, on the other hand, forcefully argues that the Soviet entry convinced Japanese leaders to surrender.⁴ And a recent book that is supposed to provide reinterpretations also holds fast to the traditional debate of whether the surrender was caused by the atomic bomb, the Soviet entry, or both.⁵ These interpretations shed much light on the decision to surrender. But by focusing on the external dimension of the political decision to end the war while excluding a broader analysis of the domestic dimension, Butow and others only tell one, albeit critical, portion of the story.

The military dimension, after all, was not the only important issue in war termination. It constituted but one of many factors that drive decision-makers to end military conflicts. A U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey report, published in 1946, emphasized this fact:

But while defeat is a military event, the recognition of defeat is a political act. The timing of the political recognition of the military realities is only partly determined by the actual situation of the fronts. The international situation, the domestic balance of power, the interests and antagonisms of relevant political groups - they all weigh heavily when the grim realities of the armed contest have to be translated into the blunt language of capitulation.⁶

By 1945, as the war became a desperate struggle for Japan, many key decision-makers perceived that they were fighting a losing battle on two fronts: international and domestic. On the international front, the military's fighting power and discipline steadily deteriorated in the face of Anglo-American might. The only way to counter the steady stream of military losses, military leaders reasoned, was through a final decisive battle for the homeland. On the domestic front, elites were increasingly worried about both a Communist fifth column waiting to destroy the *kokutai* (national polity) from within and a deteriorating national morale that could be mobilized for the same purpose.⁷ The only means of dealing with fears of social revolution was to arrest increasing numbers of subversives for 'dangerous thoughts,' but this had the unintended effect of increasing a state of alarm and wariness of domestic unrest. Scholarly works that deal with Japanese leaders' concerns for the foreign front abound. Conversely, the fear of Japan's domestic situation as a motivating factor for capitulation has been left relatively unexplored. Although pieces of evidence supporting the argument advanced here are scattered through the works of historians working on Japan, they have not pulled these pieces together into a strong argument that links the specter of domestic unrest with the decision to surrender. This paper, then, explores the degree to which a near-obsessive fear of social revolution among Japan's conservative ruling elite prompted the decision to end the war.

The specter of revolution

Scholars have written in great detail about fears of domestic upheaval in Japan. In fact, it might be argued that the conservative Japanese elite's anxiety over social revolution is an important theme of Japanese history.⁸ This fear ironically did not change with Japan's modern revolution, the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Despite its revolutionary implications, the Meiji Restoration facilitated the emergence of a conservative polity that had a considerable stake in maintaining the new order. Staying true to the tenets of modern conservatism, elites continually worked to forestall or anticipate social revolution. As the pre-war political system developed and expanded, policy-makers proved no less fearful of the social dislocations and psychological strains of the modern era.⁹ The spread of Communism after the Russian Revolution gave these fears a new face. And as John W. Dower and Janice Matsumura demonstrate, well into the Pacific War fears of imminent Communist revolution proved surprisingly strong, despite the decimation of the Japanese Communist Party in the 1930s. Dower has even shown that a specter of revolution re-emerged in the immediate post-war era.¹⁰ Despite scholarship on the specter of revolution in pre-war and its re-emergence in early post-war Japan, scholars have yet to provide a strong argument linking this specter of revolution with the decision to end the war.¹¹ No doubt, this speaks to the hegemony of military affairs in understanding the Pacific War endgame. But there is much reason to believe that growing fears of internal dissent and revolutionary desires led Japanese leaders to end the war. After all, what could be more frightening to a conservative elite than the destruction of the polity from within?

Fears of internal dissent were strong even before the attack on Pearl Harbor. Evidence of domestic fifth-column activities became widely known with the arrest of the infamous Sorge spy ring in October 1941. Japanese authorities arrested respected journalist Ozaki Hotsumi, German journalist and Nazi Party member Richard Sorge, and others for engaging in espionage. For eight years, Ozaki and Sorge transmitted sensitive information to the Soviet Union. The most important of these messages included a 1941 message notifying Moscow that it was safe from a Japanese attack. The Japanese secret service, which intercepted many of the messages, arrested Sorge and Ozaki in October 1941 and hanged both for treason in 1944.¹²

Over time, perceptions of internal insecurity grew to such an extent that they created what Janice Matsumura describes as a 'self-perpetuating cycle' of fear of threats to the nation. Anxieties about Communists and subversives spurred on police efforts to uncover hidden leftists and internal threats. Accordingly, methods were changed to ensure that leftist threats would be found. Whether they actually existed was immaterial. The purported discovery of such conspiracies, in turn, substantiated and intensified fears of a growing threat to the nation.¹³ An archetypal example of this occurred with the Yokohama Incident. The Yokohama Incident began in 1942 with the arrest of journalist Hosokawa Karoku for publishing purportedly pro-Communist articles. It lasted to the end of the war and led to the arrest of dozens of journalists and political thinkers in Japan under trumped-up charges. The murky details surrounding the interrogations of those detained reveal it as a set-up. Most of those falsely arrested for spying, attempting to restore the Communist Party, and spreading leftist propaganda signed confessions only after being physically and psychologically tormented.¹⁴

Despite its dubious origins, the Yokohama Incident further engendered fears of subversion from within. Surprisingly, even though the Communist Party had been decimated in the 1930s, policy-makers remained apprehensive of widespread Communist or subversive fifth-column activities. This concern became more acute after the defeat at Midway. The Tōjō Hideki administration tightened controls on the press, and issued an alarming statement in a secret cabinet meeting on 7 July 1942. 'Communist agents in conservative guise,' the statement read, 'continue to use lawful tactics skillfully to infiltrate and secretly maneuver within different organizations and groups . . . Particularly, most recently they have infiltrated government offices, self-governing bodies, schools, and other public organizations; and some are trying to lead the state toward communism from within.'¹⁵ The Tōjō cabinet operated under the assumption that former thought-control offenders formed the core of this group. Accordingly, it passed a measure in July 1942 that prohibited former offenders from employment in public office.¹⁶

In a 1 February 1943 address to the Imperial Diet, Prime Minister Tōjō again expressed his fear of a possible revolution from within. 'Defeat,' he argued, 'can only come in two ways. One is if our imperial army and navy are defeated. Of this I have no fear. The other is if our country breaks from within. To counter that danger, we shall act thoroughly to stop any speech or action which might harm our internal unity.'¹⁷ Such fears did not emerge in a vacuum. In addition to being informed of the aforementioned incidents, the Tōjō cabinet received numerous reports from the Home Ministry that outlined imminent threats to Japan's wartime industries and the *kokutai*. According to secret reports of police chiefs, Communist activities in Japan aimed at obstructing the war effort and instigating civil war. To accomplish these aims, Communists sought to subvert the masses and sabotage war production.¹⁸ These fears were outlined in a 1943 report on peace preservation measures:

the infiltration of Japanese, Communist, and Independence elements, by gradually insinuating themselves into various legitimate fields and by taking advantage of the dissatisfaction and discontent of the working masses, will strive to arouse antiwar and antimilitary sentiments . . . and thus gain their subversive ends in one stroke. This is a matter which requires the utmost vigilance. Also some circles of the reform camp are cooperating consciously or unconsciously with the left-wing groups or are carrying out strenuous activities to educate the working classes to socialist or caste ideas . . . To be watched especially closely is the infiltration of left-wing elements . . . disguised as other groups.¹⁹

Similar to the 1943 report, in January 1944 a police chief's conference also dealt with fears of subversive activity. The 'Explanation on the State of Public Peace,' which police officials presented at the conference, used the Yokohama Incident as its paradigm for assessing domestic security.²⁰ Not only did the testimonies from the bogus Yokohama Incident confirm the existence of leftist elements, they also substantiated fears of a Communist threat to the domestic order. The report asserted:

In the course of the present year, with the deteriorating military and domestic situation, the Communist movement has progressed and gone from a preparatory stage to a stage of active resistance. That is, the Communists are trying to organize their scattered groups into an illegal, radical vanguard organization. In the meantime, they have formulated a plan to encourage popular discontent by drawing attention to those problems which, under the present strained domestic situation, are directly affecting the living conditions of the people. They are attempting to prompt outbursts of this discontent in every sector of society.²¹

We should not discount statements like this simply because they were informed by testimony from the Yokohama Incident. After all, discontent among the Japanese populace existed in a variety of forms. Wartime quotas on food rations constituted a major grievance among both rural and urban populations. And dwindling food rations led to starvation and triggered a variety of anti-war public graffiti and anti-establishment statements.²² By 1943, this discontent was visible to government officials and citizens alike. Liberal journalist-critic Kiyosawa Kiyoshi noted in a 27 May 1943 diary entry that a food famine could possibly spark off revolution. 'The Russian Revolution,' he worried, 'occurred because of a food famine. The same is true of Germany during the First World War. If the same fate came to Japan, is there any guarantee that riots would not occur? Whatever the case, revolutionary changes will not be avoided.'²³ By 1945, owing to famine conditions that affected soldiers and citizens alike,²⁴ such a statement would have seemed prophetic to Japan's wartime ruling elite.

This was just the tip of an iceberg of grievances and resentments, brought on by wartime controls, poorly rationed food supplies, continued wartime mobilization, and dangerous jobs in a setting of increasingly effective Allied bombing campaigns. This led to an increase in subversive activities, particularly graffiti and public statements. People with Communist sympathies wrote much of the graffiti, but many statements by those without leftist sympathies even railed against the Emperor and the *kokutai*.²⁵ An August 1945 report assembled by the Home Ministry's National Police Agency stated that the content of such blasphemous statements and graffiti 'are progressively getting worse.' Included in the report were the following examples of public writings. One person wrote: 'I curse the emperor, who brought the tragedy of war upon the people.' Another person wrote: 'After defeat, [since his] war responsibility is obvious, the emperor should bear responsibility for war!'²⁶ Other reports depict how the Emperor was belittled as a fool, an idiot, a spoiled child, a figurehead, or even an expensive rubber stamp.²⁷ Moreover, in a number of spur-of-the-moment flare-ups, members of the rural populace defiled the Emperor's portrait and even made threats on his person.

Thought Police reports reveal that the numbers of these anti-establishment incidents increased yearly. A police report in 1945 states the following:

Recent rumors, scribbles and [other] manifestations are numerically increasing . . . They say that the Japanese war leaders, or the leading circles, are responsible for the decisive battle against Japan proper, for intensified air raids, shortage of foodstuff, acute inflation, etc., all of which have made people's lives hard. This indignation against the ruling class was shown in criticisms of military strategy and misrepresentation of the attitude of military circles. Others speak ill of government measures and government communiqués. They explicitly assume a hostile attitude toward government circles. Some dare to speak of class antagonism.²⁸

Members of the conservative ruling elite were privy to these and other reports of the worsening domestic situation. The Home Minister received reports from the Thought Police and maintained a secret line of communication with the commanding officer of the military police. The Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Kido Kōichi, the Emperor's trusted advisor, also had frequent contact with the commanding officer of the military police and the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.²⁹ Knowledge of these reports, combined with the impact of the above-mentioned incidents, no doubt fueled fears of public disorder or revolutionary intent. Granted, as historian Herbert P. Bix points out, such revolutionary intent did not

exist - most Japanese clung to hopes of victory and maintained the will to fight on.³⁰ But it makes no difference whether domestic unrest actually existed. The important point is whether Japanese leaders believed the public was on the verge of revolutionary collapse. By 1945, many had come to fear that the strain of defeat in the Pacific War could create conditions necessary for a leftist revolution. In the minds of many key figures, the specter of revolution had become both very real and very frightening.

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Sensing a looming threat to the *kokutai*, multiple figures between 1942 and 1945 became convinced of the need to terminate the war. The Yoshida Anti-War Group (*Yohansen*) constituted the first coalition that sought to end the war to prevent revolution from within. This group engaged in a number of political intrigues between 1942 and 1944 before presenting the Emperor a last-ditch, direct petition in February 1945. Although the Yoshida group ultimately failed, they anticipated and continually called attention to the worsening domestic situation. Over time, a growing section of Japan's conservative political elite (including the Emperor's adviser, Kido Kōichi) began to share such concerns. Official policy documents by June 1945 warned of impending social revolution. And by August 1945, those elites who wanted to end the war to avert domestic unrest, like those who sought to end the war for military reasons, turned to the Emperor to make his final imperial decision to terminate hostilities.

The Yoshida Anti-War Group was a loose coalition that represented a microcosm of Japan's conservative political elite. Yoshida Shigeru, a Foreign Ministry bureaucrat and former Ambassador at London, founded the group in 1942 and served as its nominal head. Over time, the group took on court officials, military leaders, politicians, influential journalists, and prominent industrialists who opposed the war. Although associations within the Yoshida Anti-War Group reached across the spectrum of the conservative political elite, the core was relatively small, made up of six individuals: Yoshida, journalist and political commentator Iwabuchi Tatsuo, businessman and former Finance Ministry bureaucrat Ueda Shunkichi, former Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, Major General Obata Toshirō, and General Mazaki Jinzaburō.³¹

Though the group desired an expedient end to the war, their motives were deeply conservative in character: they sought to end the war to protect the *kokutai* from revolutionary upheaval at home. The basis of such fears rested in a conspiracy theory to which Yoshida and other members of the anti-war group subscribed. In essence, the theory held that many top militarists in the military's Control Faction (*Tōsei-ha*) were in fact secret Communists who were deliberately using the war crisis to promote state control over the economy and turn Japan Communist from within.³² At the same time, the war had sparked revolutionary trends both at home and abroad, trends that threatened to crack the foundation of the traditional Japanese state. The Yoshida group sought to terminate the war before these threats came to pass. This necessitated the removal of Prime Minister Tōjō and the Control Faction from positions of power. The only group that stood a chance of doing so, however, was the military's Imperial Way Faction (*Kōdō-ha*), which had been purged from positions of influence in 1936 owing to its role in the abortive February 26

Incident.³³ Once the Control Faction was ousted from power, the new government would immediately sue for peace. Failure to accomplish this, Yoshida's group believed, would put Japan's national polity in danger of being unraveled from within.³⁴

The Yoshida group initially sought to achieve these aims through backstage politicking. At first, they planned to have influential members of the Imperial Way Faction (or someone sympathetic to the cause) establish a new cabinet. Once in power, the new Prime Minister would remove the Control Faction from positions of power and would negotiate an end to the hostilities. From December 1942 until October 1944, the Yoshida group embroiled itself in three failed attempts to create a new cabinet. A December 1942 plan surrounding General Ugaki Kazushige fizzled out when Ugaki refused both to return to active duty and to purge the Control Faction members from government. After Prime Minister Tōjō's fall from power in July 1944, the Yoshida group had a more promising chance to form a cabinet around Admiral Kobayashi Seizō. But this plan fell flat when Konoe failed to nominate Kobayashi at an 18 July 1944 meeting of senior statesmen to select the next premier. A final attempt centering on Admiral Suzuki Kantarō in October 1944 met with Suzuki's stubborn refusal.³⁵

With the failure of these behind-the-scenes maneuvers, Yoshida's group decided to force the issue with a direct appeal by Konoe to the Emperor on 14 February 1945. Both Yoshida and Konoe calculated that a forceful appeal to the Throne might move the Emperor enough to quit the war before the domestic situation came to a head. This appeal, which is known as the Konoe Memorial to the Throne, mirrored reports Konoe had obtained from police officials, and explained in detail that Japan was on the verge of a leftist revolution. The memorial represented the definitive version of the fear of a Communist threat to the *kokutai*.

Regrettably, defeat is already inevitable . . . according to the principles of maintaining the *kokutai*, we should not be as concerned with defeat itself as with a communist revolution that would accompany defeat . . . I feel that at the present time, both conditions internal and external to Japan are rapidly progressing toward a communist revolution.³⁶

Konoe continued, discussing the threat in greater detail:

There is already a significant danger that the Soviet Union will interfere in Japan's domestic affairs . . . and I feel that if one looks at the domestic situation, one can see that day by day all the conditions necessary to achieve a communist revolution are being prepared. Namely, there is impoverishment, an increase in the voice of labor, a rise in hostility toward America and England being expressed alongside a friendly attitude toward the Soviet Union. There are also reformist movements of a ring in the military elite, a movement of 'new bureaucrats' that have jumped on the military bandwagon, and leftist elements that secretly attempt to pull the strings from behind the scenes.³⁷

Konoe's memorial outlined the major components of a Communist conspiracy - both international and domestic. Internationally, the Soviet Union was making great military gains, and Moscow's Communist allies threatened to intervene in Japan and incite a Communist uprising among the populace, causing a veritable revolution from below. Domestically, Communism was ripe among Japan's right-wing military, bureaucratic, and political leaders. Many of these elites, Konoe argued, were using the war to enact leftist reforms and to incite to action Japan's disillusioned and poverty-stricken populace. The combination of these internal and external spheres

made revolution both from above and below a distinct possibility. And however revolution came to pass, it would result in the destruction of the emperor system and the traditional Japanese polity.

The concerns that Communist influences had penetrated the highest reaches of the military and bureaucracy may seem like mere paranoia or even an ideological barb used as part of an elite power struggle. Both are true to a certain extent. But fears of Communist influences had deep roots in the events of the 1930s and 1940s. The war in China brought about rapid social, economic, intellectual, and institutional change in Japan. Intellectuals, reform bureaucrats, and members of the military threw their combined weight behind plans to restructure the economy and to create a national defense state. The state extended control over industry through the promotion of mergers between massive corporations like Mitsui, Daiichi, Mitsubishi, and Daihyaku. Granted, government never exercised complete control over industry. But by 1943–4, it was plausible to see the acceleration of Tōjō's plans for economic centralization and rationalization as the capstone of an effort to subvert the economic structure of the state from within. These facts, combined with the thousands of arrests of Communist subversives and numerous police reports that described Communist infiltration at the highest levels, created a genuine fear of an internal threat that could undo the very fabric of the Japanese state. The Konoe memorial both reflected and epitomized those fears.

Available evidence indicates that Emperor Hirohito was initially intrigued by Konoe's assessment. Upon the completion of the memorial he invited Konoe to discuss his ideas in greater detail.³⁸ The Emperor told Konoe that he was shocked, for he did not realize that Communist influence had spread so far.³⁹ Additionally, Hirohito maintained that Konoe's statement directly contradicted the views of the Imperial Headquarters, which felt that Japan had no choice but to continue the war while seeking Soviet support to negotiate an end to the war. The Emperor then requested Konoe's opinion on whether Japan should sue for peace. Konoe responded that Japan should accept the Allied war aims and surrender unconditionally.⁴⁰

There is no alternative but to make peace with America. Even with unconditional surrender, I do not think that America would change the *kokutai* or get rid of the emperor system. Perhaps Japanese territory will shrink in half, but even then, if our citizens would be saved from the miserable havoc of war, the *kokutai* would be preserved, and the security of the Imperial House planned for, we should not be inclined to shun unconditional surrender ...⁴¹

In short, surrender unconditionally and possibly save the *kokutai*; continue to fight and suffer the possibility that a domestic revolution would lead to its eradication. The Emperor appeared to concur with this assessment, for after listening to Konoe's response he stated, 'I agree.'⁴² But once Konoe emphasized the importance of using Imperial Way Faction generals (either Ugaki or Mazaki) to control the military and sue for peace, Hirohito fell silent. This has been viewed as an expression of his disapproval for using the same group that had attempted a coup d'état in 1936.⁴³ Eventually, however, the Emperor let it be known that the war would continue. He stated: 'It would be difficult [to end the war] without first improving the military situation.'⁴⁴ Hirohito thus sided with Tōjō's Control Faction; Konoe left the meeting despondent. Nonetheless, Konoe's appeal had an impact on the Emperor. Later that afternoon, Hirohito reaffirmed this newfound worry over

the domestic situation in a comment to his aide-de-camp: 'If we hold out in this war I'm certain of victory, but I worry whether the people will be able to endure.'⁴⁵

The Emperor gambled on foreign policy rather than domestic policy to save the *kokutai*. But chances for military gains continually eluded Japan's grasp. By early June 1945, U.S. forces had retaken the Philippines and virtually won the bloody battle for Okinawa. Total defeat in war appeared near at hand. This fact, in conjunction with a projected poor harvest for 1945 and an increasingly effective strategic-bombing campaign, increased the conservative elite's concern with domestic conditions. At the same time, Hirohito still accepted the wartime strategy outlined by military hardliners. He viewed a military victory as a prerequisite to any negotiations for peace. This led him to formally sanction the 'Fundamental Policy for the Conduct of the War' on 8 June 1945.

The Fundamental Policy was a military position paper on the future prosecution of the war. It was submitted alongside two supporting policy documents, 'The Estimate of the World Situation' and 'The Present State of National Power.'⁴⁶ Together, all three documents committed Japan to concentrate its forces and repel the Allied powers by any means available. Instead of surrendering, Japan should be prepared to fight to the finish. But while submitted to buttress the Fundamental Policy, 'The Present State of National Power' actually depicted the dire straits of Japan's domestic situation. According to the policy paper, Allied campaigns disrupted war production and transport across both land and sea. Combined with an intensifying food shortage, meeting the material requirements of total war had become increasingly difficult. Making matters worse, the report discerned an increasing dissatisfaction with the government and military. It stated: 'The people are losing confidence in their leaders and there are omens that public morale is collapsing.'⁴⁷ The authors even asserted the existence of leftist elements that sought to undermine the very fabric of the Japanese state. 'There is evidence,' the report worried, 'that some are taking advantage of these conditions and infiltrating [society] with their revolutionary schemes.'⁴⁸

The reports submitted with the Fundamental Policy left a strong impact on Kido Kōichi.⁴⁹ Notably, Kido had already sensed a domestic crisis, either through his access to police reports or through his contacts with Konoe and other members of Yoshida's anti-war group. By April 1945, Kido told Rear Admiral Takagi Sōkichi that he was 'most afraid of the people turning away' from the government.⁵⁰ On June 8, the same day the Emperor endorsed the Fundamental Policy, Kido further recorded his unease over the prosecution of the war and the toll the Allied bombing campaign was taking on the country. He noted that the battle in Okinawa would likely 'result in a miserable fiasco,' and that 'The Present State of National Power' had convinced him of the futility of continuing the war.⁵¹ More importantly, Kido worried about the effects of strategic bombing, and predicted shortages in food and supplies. 'From the latter part of the year,' he noted in his diary, 'an extreme shortage of provisions and foodstuffs will sweep the country. This will cause serious unrest among the people at large. And, in consequence, the situation will be beyond salvation.'⁵²

Kido noted that the only alternative would be to use the good offices of the Soviet Union to begin peace negotiations. The irony is striking. To save Japan from domestic turmoil and revolution, Kido sought help from the very nation that Konoe and others felt was trying to foment social revolution in Japan!⁵³ He immediately prepared a 'Draft Plan for Controlling the Crisis Situation,' which was meant to be a

countermeasure to the Fundamental Policy. Kido based this countermeasure on a naive hope that peace negotiations through the Soviet Union would provide Japan added leverage in its dealings with the United States. In Kido's mind, a negotiated solution would allow Japan to quit the war before the domestic situation got out of hand. Nonetheless, the plan was quite vague in character. The only provisions Kido addressed were that Japan would relinquish control over occupied territories and would disarm to the minimum level required for national defense.⁵⁴ Regarding the specifics, Kido would let the experts fill in the blanks.

On 9 June 1945, Kido brought the plan to the Emperor. It is unknown whether Kido's views of a domestic threat to the *kokutai* convinced the Emperor of the necessity to end the war. But since Kido was the main advisor to the Throne, his analysis carried much weight. Whatever the case, the Emperor stated that he had been worried for some time about Japan's domestic situation, owing to the effects of both continued bombings that destroyed the defenses of most of Japan's cities and the forthcoming provisions crisis that would hit Japan hard in the coming fall. He was reportedly 'deeply satisfied' with Kido's recommendations, and gave Kido permission to discuss the plan with other key figures in order to obtain their support.⁵⁵

During the course of Kido's discussions with members of the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War (Supreme War Council, also known as the Big Six), Japan's key decision-making group from 1944–5,⁵⁶ it became clear that Kido and Hirohito were not the only ones who worried about Japan's domestic situation. Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa and Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō both agreed that Japan was in dire straits, with Suzuki even making the prescient remark that Japan would be defeated by August. Suzuki offered his full support for Kido's plan to end the war in order to preserve the *kokutai* and protect the imperial family.⁵⁷

Even hardliner Army Minister Anami Korechika and other military leaders did not object to Kido's peace plan. However, they stated that although they would allow Kido to pursue peace negotiations through the Soviet Union, the military would continue its policies regarding the decisive battle for the homeland.⁵⁸ Convinced of the utility of Kido's efforts but unwilling to impede any chance to exit the war on favorable terms, the military tolerated peace negotiations and focused their efforts on a military solution that would bring the Allied powers to the negotiating table.

To confirm this dual-track policy, the Emperor acted upon Kido's advice and summoned another Imperial Conference on 22 June 1945. The timing of this conference is critical, as it was called on the day Okinawa fell. The Emperor sought to solidify the pre-existing policy of a decisive battle for the homeland. But more importantly, the fact that this conference was called - on Kido's advice, and less than two weeks after Kido began to take seriously fears of social upheaval - is suggestive in itself. Whatever the case, the Emperor's ambiguous opening comments point to domestic conditions as also pressing on his mind. 'Conditions internal and external to Japan,' he asserted, 'grow tense and the war situation is very difficult, and will likely become more difficult as air raids intensify in the future. Though the decision made the other day at the meeting of the Supreme War Council can be left as is, I expect that all efforts be made promptly to terminate the war.'⁵⁹ And the Emperor would brook no disagreement. When Army Chief of Staff Umezu Yoshijirō showed passive resistance by seeking to ensure that Japan was careful in its peace maneuvers, Hirohito snapped: 'Of course it is necessary to be careful, but do not miss any opportunity [to end the war].'⁶⁰

The meeting ended with a decision to pursue peace negotiations through the Soviet Union. But no consensus emerged about acceptable peace terms. Without a guiding framework for negotiations, Japan had little to offer other than vague promises.⁶¹ Thus followed a series of officially sanctioned, yet half-hearted, attempts to end the war through Soviet mediation.⁶²

The decision to end the war

It soon became clear that Moscow had no intention of helping Japan. But Tokyo continued to pursue the dual-track policy of preparing for a final battle for the homeland while waiting for Soviet mediation to end the war. Policy-makers held fast to hopes of Soviet intercession through early August, and decided to 'ignore' the surrender terms outlined in the Potsdam Declaration.⁶³ Yet by 9 August, Japan's state of affairs had drastically changed. The United States had used atomic bombs on both Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Soviet Union had declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria. Suddenly, Konoe's nightmare scenario of a Communist threat to the *kokutai* seemed dangerously near at hand. U.S. airpower had weakened Japanese morale and convinced Tokyo that the United States need not invade the mainland in the near future.⁶⁴ In addition, with the Soviet Union overrunning Manchuria, it appeared that the Soviets would be poised to strike at Japan ahead of the United States. If this eventuality came to pass, the U.S.S.R. or pro-Soviet sympathizers could make use of the sharply declining morale to mobilize the populace in support of a Communist revolution.

The fear of a crisis in Japan's domestic situation became a key factor in the decision to surrender. Of course, fear of social upheaval was not the only issue on the minds of the principal decision-makers. The military situation was daunting in itself. Inaction could invite disaster. Early in the morning on 9 August, Japanese leaders met to consider whether to accept the Potsdam Declaration's demands and surrender unconditionally. Present at the meeting were the members of the Supreme War Council: Prime Minister Suzuki, Foreign Minister Tōgō, Navy Minister Yonai, Army Minister Anami, Navy Chief of Staff Toyoda Soemu, and Army Chief of Staff Umezu. Prime Minister Suzuki commenced the meeting with an announcement that the dual shocks of the atomic bomb (the Nagasaki bombing would occur later that day) and the Soviet intervention made it essential to end the war. Suzuki then asked for opinions from the Supreme War Council. Silence ensued. Yonai finally broke what felt like an interminable silence with a statement that framed the ensuing debate:

It's useless to remain silent. If we are to accept the Potsdam Declaration, are we to accept it innocently with no conditions, or should we present some terms we desire to attain? Either way, if we decide to attach some desired conditions, we should discuss the following: first, the protection of the *kokutai*; following that, the main items outlined in the Potsdam Declaration, including the punishment of war criminals, methods of disarmament, and the problem of a military occupation.⁶⁵

With that, the other members of the Supreme War Council began to state their views, and gradually split into two opposing camps. On the one hand, Tōgō advocated the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration under the singular condition that the imperial system be preserved. Both Suzuki and Yonai declared their support for his proposal. On the other hand, hardliners Anami, Umezu, and Toyoda stood

doggedly opposed to Tōgō's single-condition surrender. Granted, they concurred with the necessity of preserving the imperial system. But they also sought the inclusion of three additional conditions: (1) no Allied occupation of the Japanese mainland; (2) Japan would disarm and demilitarize itself; and (3) Japan would punish its own war criminals. Were these conditions rejected, hardliners would press for a final, decisive battle for the homeland. The two sides stood locked in a tense debate for hours, and the meeting ended in early afternoon before a consensus could be reached. Since the Supreme War Council governed by unanimity, as long as the deadlock persisted no concrete decision could be made. If a unanimous decision were possible, it would have to be reached at the cabinet meeting that was set to begin at 2:30 p.m. Divisions within the Supreme War Council, however, made any such decision highly unlikely.

But Kido, Konoe, and former Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru planned a countermeasure to exploit the deadlock. Konoe met with Kido at 1 p.m. - just after the break-up of the Supreme War Council meeting - to request an imperial decision endorsing Tōgō's single condition surrender plan. Since such a request broke with the long-established tradition of imperial decisions being arranged by the Cabinet, Kido was initially reluctant to do so. Undeterred, Konoe called on Shigemitsu to convince Kido of the necessity of breaking with tradition and independently arranging for imperial arbitration. Shigemitsu met with Kido at 4 p.m. and declared: 'If we decide on the four conditions, a breakdown [of the peace process] is inevitable.'⁶⁶ He continued:

We cannot overturn the army's wishes [for the additional three conditions]. The only way to overturn them is by means of an imperial decision. If we had more time, we could gradually do so, but in today's case the end is already at hand. This could decide Japan's fate. We would like you to appeal to the Emperor to do what the Cabinet is unable to do: change Japan's fate. We want to have you tell His Majesty that the fate of Japan hangs in the balance. If there is anything else that needs to be done in the government, Konoe and I will do it. Please make a direct appeal to the Emperor.

Shigemitsu's argument persuaded the reluctant Kido to request an audience with the Emperor to arrange an Imperial Conference and an imperial decision to end the war.⁶⁷

It is unknown whether Prime Minister Suzuki was involved in this covert effort. Perhaps he was, for he ultimately chose to circumvent the deadlock and make the historic request to bring the matter before the Emperor.⁶⁸ And perhaps the covert effort extended to other moderates in the wartime ruling elite. Prior to the Cabinet meeting, Tōgō told Suzuki that since the Cabinet was unlikely to reach a consensus, the only possible solution was for Suzuki to request an imperial decision.⁶⁹ Furthermore, after the breakup of the Cabinet meeting at just past 10 p.m., both Yonai and Minister of State Sakonji Seizō attempted to convince Suzuki to do the same. Rear Admiral Takagi Sōkichi, Navy Minister Yonai's aide - wrote the following regarding their effort to bring about an imperial decision:

In the middle of the night on [August] ninth, before the Imperial Conference was called, Minister of State Sakonji whispered to the Navy Minister that a majority decision in the face of opposition could lead to future problems. He advised the Navy Minister to have the Prime Minister ask for an imperial decision (*seidan*). The Navy Minister agreed, and after leaving the meeting, Sakonji told [his plan to] the Prime Minister.

'Yes, I understand,' [replied Suzuki].⁷⁰

Owing to such a variety of routes leading to the imperial decision and a lack of information apart from the testimonials of the wartime leaders themselves, it is difficult to ascertain the relative importance of, and connection between, each of these schemes. Perhaps such maneuvers occurred independently. But it is also possible that as the deadlock persisted, the moderates among Japan's wartime elite began to work together to push for an imperial decision. Whatever the case, the efforts by Kido, Suzuki, and other moderates bore fruit. At 11:55 p.m. on 9 August, an Imperial Conference was called to decide the matter. In attendance were the Supreme War Council, the Emperor, Privy Council President Hiranuma Kiichirō, Cabinet Secretary Sakomizu Hisatsune, and four others.⁷¹

It was in the presence of the Emperor that the subject of diminishing Japanese morale and the possibility of domestic disturbances was first broached. Anami admitted that defeatism and despondency were spreading among the populace. Hiranuma also hinted at the specter of social unrest. This was not the first time that Hiranuma warned the Emperor of such problems. In a 7 February 1945 address to the throne, Hiranuma cautioned Hirohito that a food crisis was on the horizon and even intimated the existence of dangerous thoughts among the populace.⁷² During the 9–10 August debates, Hiranuma's arguments were very much the same. He made the following comments to Prime Minister Suzuki:

It is essential to maintain domestic order, so what measures do you plan to take in the future? What is your plan regarding the food situation? Things are getting extremely bad. The domestic situation is little by little becoming a source of great concern. We should think about the possibility that continuation of the war will create greater domestic disorder than would termination of the war.⁷³

Unlike Konoe or other figures associated with Yoshida's anti-war group, Hiranuma, who was notorious for his rabid anti-Communism and his vital role in passing the Peace Preservation Law of 1925, ironically did not speak of a grand Communist design. However, his analysis lent credence to the notion that Japanese morale was susceptible to mobilization for revolutionary purposes. Hiranuma ended his speech with an appeal to the emperor to prevent social upheaval from flaring up: 'In accordance with the legacy of Your Imperial Forefathers, Your Imperial Majesty is also responsible for preventing unrest in the nation. I should like to ask Your Majesty to make his decision with this point in mind.'⁷⁴

It is unknown whether Hiranuma's appeal or Anami's concession of spreading defeatism influenced the Emperor in any way.⁷⁵ Likely, the Emperor's opinions were set before the conference even began. When Suzuki finally requested the Emperor break the deadlock and decide which surrender proposal to adopt, Hirohito did not miss a beat. Without delay, he declared in the early hours of 10 August that he had 'given serious thought to the situation prevailing at home and abroad' and had come to the decision that it was time to 'bear the unbearable.' The Emperor continued: 'I swallow my own tears and give my sanction to the proposal to accept the Allied proclamation on the basis outlined by the Foreign Minister [Tōgō].'⁷⁶ In short, Hirohito decided to surrender with the sole condition that the Imperial system be safeguarded. The government, in accordance with this decision, sent out cables on the morning of 10 August 1945 that announced the conditional acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration.⁷⁷

The Emperor's intervention thus effectively broke the deadlock and began the process to end the war. However, the U.S. reply, drafted by Secretary of State James

F. Byrnes, undermined the fragile unity that Hirohito had forged during the previous evening's Imperial Conference. 'From the moment of surrender,' it read, 'the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese government to rule the state shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers who will take such steps as he deems proper to effectuate the surrender terms . . . The ultimate form of government of Japan shall, in accordance with the Potsdam Declaration, be established by the freely expressed will of the Japanese people.'⁷⁸ Such a cautious reply altogether avoided the question of the *kokutai*, neither committing to its preservation nor promising its destruction. It inflamed many Japanese hardliners including Anami, Toyoda, Umezu, and Hiranuma. They declared the Allied reply unacceptable, and resolved to make one last-ditch military effort to end the war on favorable terms. Once again, Tokyo was at loggerheads *vis-à-vis* whether to accept the Potsdam Declaration.

However, a political crisis provoked by a U.S. leaflet air raid helped resolve this dispute. On 14 August, U.S. B29s dropped propaganda leaflets that contained the verbatim text of the Japanese government's decision to end the war. This scared Kido, who feared that popular knowledge of the government's secret negotiations could cause 'the whole country to fall into chaos.'⁷⁹ So he urged the Emperor again to summon an Imperial Conference and reiterate his desire to terminate the war. The Emperor agreed to do so and called for an Imperial Conference, which began shortly before 11 a.m. the same morning. After listening to the dissenting views presented by Umezu, Toyoda, and Anami, the Emperor once more declared his intention to end the war. 'I have studied conditions at home and abroad,' he stated, 'and believe that it is impossible to continue the war.' He continued in a way that would brook no argument. 'Although I have misgivings about the fate of the *kokutai*, I do not believe there are any malicious intentions in the Allied reply . . . and I intend to accept it as is.'⁸⁰

Hirohito thus twice broke the deadlock in the Cabinet and committed Japan to end the war. This very fact heightens his importance in any debate over Japan's motivating factors for surrender. For his part, in addition to referring to the power of the atomic bombs and the inadequate preparations to meet an invasion of the homeland, *the Emperor continually cited the domestic situation as a basic reason for ending the war.*⁸¹ He first alluded to the domestic situation during the 22 July Imperial Conference. But instead of surrendering, the Supreme War Council decided to use the good offices of the Soviet Union to negotiate an end to the war. The Emperor made the same allusion to the domestic situation in both his 10 August and 14 August surrender speeches, in which he stated that serious thought of the 'situation prevailing at home and abroad' convinced him to capitulate. Besides military unpreparedness, which he cared a great deal about,⁸² the Emperor was likely referring to the hardships suffered by the Japanese people and the possibility that social revolution that could arise from those hardships. Of the two, the fear of the *kokutai* being overturned from within undoubtedly took precedence. The Emperor's principal interest, after all, lay in protecting the *kokutai*, which he feared was threatened by increased popular hostility toward both the government and emperor. This assessment of the domestic situation came not only from military position papers and interactions with Konoe (from February 1945), Kido (from June 1945), and Hiranuma (from February 1945); he had also been informed of Home Ministry reports that described multiple sources of internal insecurity. Without a doubt, the public statements that railed against the Emperor and *kokutai* influenced his willingness to surrender.⁸³

But it would be misleading to assume that the domestic situation was Hirohito's only concern. His main loyalties rested above and beyond the Japanese state: with his imperial ancestors and the protection of the three sacred imperial regalia (the mirror, sword, and jewel). If these symbols of the *kokutai* were lost, the *kokutai* itself would cease to exist. The Emperor revealed this disquiet to Kido on 25 July 1945.

If the decisive battle for the homeland occurs, it is possible that the enemy could drop airborne troops in Tokyo and the Imperial Headquarters could be taken prisoner. If that occurs, they could take by force the three imperial regalia, which were entrusted to me by my imperial ancestors. In that case we would not be able to protect either the *kokutai* or the Imperial Family. It doesn't look like I can do anything but endure hardship and press for peace.⁸⁴

Hirohito reaffirmed this concern with the imperial symbols in his post-war 'Monologue.' He stated that the following two factors underlay his decision to end the war:

The first factor that affected my decision at that time was that, in such circumstances, the Japanese race would perish and I would not be able to protect my loyal subjects. Second, Kido and I were of the same opinion about protecting the *kokutai*. Were the enemy to land at the area surrounding Ise Bay, they would gain control over the imperial shrines at Ise and Atsuta. There would be no time to remove the imperial regalia and no prospects of protecting them. If they were seized, it would be difficult to preserve the *kokutai*, so at that time I determined that, even if I must sacrifice myself in the process, we had to make peace.⁸⁵

Hirohito, then, considered surrender as a means to preserve the *kokutai* and its symbols, for if either the Japanese race or the imperial regalia were lost then the *kokutai* would cease to exist as well.

The domestic situation, the military situation, and a responsibility to the imperial ancestors formed the backdrop to Hirohito's historic decision to end the war. Hirohito, like Konoe in February 1945, felt that he had a choice between two repugnant alternatives. Either surrender and have a chance at saving the *kokutai*, or continue to fight and possibly suffer the destruction of the *kokutai* from either without (if the Allies destroyed the country or seized the imperial regalia) or within.

Of course, other domestic concerns also weighed on the minds of Japanese leaders. In a November 1945 interview, hardliner Admiral Toyoda downplayed the impact of the atomic bombings and the Soviet entry. He stated: 'I do not think it would be accurate to look upon the use of the Atomic Bomb and the entry and participation of Soviet Russia into the war as direct cause of [the] termination of the war, but I think that those two factors did enable us to bring the war to a termination without creating too great chaos in Japan.'⁸⁶ But Toyoda argued for domestic issues of a different sort. Instead of the specters of domestic unrest or social upheaval, Toyoda linked the surrender to a weakened productive capacity and war materiel losses.⁸⁷

But Toyoda was in the minority. In addition to the Emperor and Kido, members of the Supreme War Council and other elites also pointed to fears of domestic upheaval as the dominating concern. Army Chief of Staff Umezumi mentioned loss of public morale as a reason for surrender both on 10 August and 14 August.⁸⁸ Navy Minister Yonai and his closest aide, Rear Admiral Takagi Sōkichi, shared this view. On 8 August, Takagi told Yonai of his fears of a 'sudden worsening of the domestic situation' by September. 'The issue is not,' he argued, 'whether the enemy invades

mainland Japan or even the timing of such an invasion. The real problem is the collapsing public sentiment.⁸⁹ And on 12 August, in perhaps the clearest statement among members of the ruling elite, Navy Minister Yonai contended that the atomic bombings and the Soviet intervention gave the Japanese leadership a face-saving way to quit the war. The real reason to end the war, he told Takagi, rested in food shortages and the domestic crisis:

I think the term is perhaps inappropriate, but the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war are, in a sense, gifts from the gods. This way we don't have to say that we have quit the war because of domestic circumstances. The reason I have long advocated control of the crisis of the country is neither fear of an enemy attack nor because of the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war. The main reason is my anxiety over the domestic situation. So, it is rather fortunate that we can now control matters without revealing the domestic situation.⁹⁰

Such cynical pragmatism was evident among other political elites. Konoe labeled the Soviet entry into the war as a 'gift from heaven for controlling the army.'⁹¹ Even Suzuki called the atomic bomb a 'most convenient pretext for ending the war.'⁹² Both had a gnawing fear of growing internal insecurity and likely saw both the Soviet entry and the atomic bombings as politically expedient ways to end the war before the growing domestic unrest came to a head.

Conclusion

Elite fears of social revolution must be seen as a key factor behind the decision to surrender. But it only spurred some to take positive action to end the war. While elites affiliated with Yoshida's anti-war group (especially Konoe), the court group (including Kido), and Foreign Ministry bureaucrats pressed for a swift conclusion to the war, hardliners in the military insisted on fighting a decisive battle for the homeland even after two atomic strikes and the Soviet entry into the war. Yet both groups, ironically, pursued these conflicting policies for the same purpose. They both sought to protect the *kokutai*, the source and legitimacy of the Japanese state. On the one hand, a major impetus for the war-termination clique was to save the *kokutai* from troubles at home. To them, surrendering was the lesser evil. Though it would subject the imperial institution to the whims of the Allied powers, the war-termination clique saw the external threat to the *kokutai* as more benign than the internal threats. And they feared the outcome of a decisive battle for the homeland against a vastly superior atomic-armed coalition. On the other hand, military elites such as Anami, Toyoda, and Umezumi remained concerned with events abroad. They perceived the alien Allied powers as greater threats to the *kokutai* than either the domestic crisis conditions or the possibility of social upheaval. Hardliners were thus willing to risk millions of lives to protect the conservative national polity.

Perhaps, then, both the war-termination clique and the military hardliners' actions epitomize the mission of modern political conservatism: not to defeat but to forestall revolutions, not to crush but anticipate them. In 1945, there were two possible revolutions with which the elites had to contend: a revolution from within and one from without. The different groupings within the conservative elite focused on, and worked to forestall, one of these two potential revolutions. The war-termination clique pressed for the acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration to prevent the worsening domestic conditions from sparking a revolution from within. The

military hardliners, conversely, sought to fight to the last rather than risk a revolution from without. They aimed to prevent, at all costs, any forced change to the *kokutai* or the Emperor's status and prerogatives. The irony here is that fears of revolution in some form could be used either to sue for peace or to delay surrender. In the end, the war-termination clique, with the Emperor's assistance, won out. Japan formally surrendered on 2 September 1945.

It is unlikely, however, that the war-termination clique would have succeeded were it not for the atomic bombings and the Soviet entry into the war. The atomic bombs both displayed the overwhelming might of the U.S. war machine and convinced military leaders that an invasion of the home isles was not forthcoming. The Soviet entry crushed any feeble hopes regarding the possibility of a negotiated end to the hostilities. Taken together, the collective impact of the bombings and Soviet entry persuaded hardliners and moderates alike of the futility of existing plans for either a decisive battle for the homeland or a negotiated peace. The military shocks shifted the eyes of many in the ruling elite to the (perceived) deteriorating conditions and public morale at home. And they provided the context in which the Emperor was able to intervene in the policy process. This does not, however, imply that the military front alone was the decisive factor for ending the war. Yet the military situation still dominates scholarly explanations. The truth, however, is not so simple. There can be no monocausal explanation for a decision to surrender. Military realities only weigh partly into such a decision, owing to the multitude of problems that confront political figures near the end of the war. The military situation, the domestic situation, and the extent of leaders' war aims and responsibilities to the nation all play important roles in war termination. While it is difficult to gauge the extent to which it affected the decision, fears of social revolution unquestionably helped bring about Japan's decision to surrender.

Notes

1. See R. J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford, 1954).
2. It is impossible to provide a comprehensive list. But some important works on the end of the Pacific War include G. Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam* (New York, 1965); G. Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* (New York, 1995); B. J. Bernstein, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki Reconsidered: The Atomic Bombings of Japan and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1945* (Morristown, N.J., 1975); R. L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 1982); L. V. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan* (Ithaca, 1988); M. J. Hogan (ed), *Hiroshima in History and Memory* (Cambridge, 1996); J. S. Walker, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of the Atomic Bombs Against Japan* (Chapel Hill, 1997); and M. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon* (New Haven, 1989).
3. S. Asada, 'The Shock of the Atomic Bomb and Japan's Decision to Surrender—A Reconsideration,' *The Pacific Historical Review*, lxvii, no. 4 (1998), 477–512; and R. B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York, 1999).
4. T. Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan*. (Cambridge, 2005).
5. T. Hasegawa (ed), *The End of the Pacific War: Reappraisals* (Stanford, 2007).
6. U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japan's War Economy*, Report No. 53 (Washington, 1946), 57.
7. *Kokutai* is a mystical approach to Japan's imperial system, propagated with the idea of building nationalism and devotion to the state. A more precise definition, however, cannot capture the spirit of the term *kokutai*. It had different meanings for different people. For an excellent analysis its multiple meanings, see Kimijima Kazuhiko,

- “Shūsen kōsaku” to “kokutai” ni kan suru ichi shiron,’ *Tōkyō gakuhei daigaku kiyō*, Dai sanbunmon shakai kagaku, xxxiv (December 1982), 141–76.
8. The following works either directly or indirectly hit on this theme. See A. Gordon, *Labor and Imperial Democracy in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley, 1992); M. Lewis, *Rioters and Citizens: Mass Protest in Imperial Japan* (Berkeley, 1990); R. Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan* (Ithaca, 1976); K. B. Pyle, ‘Meiji Conservatism’, in M. Jansen (ed), *The Cambridge History of Japan* (Cambridge, 1989), v. 674–720; and K. B. Pyle, ‘Advantages of Followership: German Economics and Japanese Bureaucrats, 1890–1925’, *Journal of Japanese Studies*, i, no. 1 (1974), 127–64.
 9. See, for instance, D. Ambaras, *Bad Youth: Juvenile Delinquency and the Politics of Everyday Life in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, 2005); M. Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense* (Berkeley, 2007); G. M. Beckmann and O. Genji, *The Communist Party in Japan, 1922–1945* (Stanford, 1969).
 10. See J. W. Dower, *Empire and Aftermath: Yoshida Shigeru and the Japanese Experience, 1878–1954* (Cambridge, 1979); J. W. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays* (New Press, 1995); J. Matsumura, ‘Internal Security in Wartime Japan (1937–45) and the Creation of Internal Insecurity’, *Canadian Journal of History*, xxxi (1996), 395–411.
 11. One exception is H. P. Bix, but he does not provide a detailed argument to validate this claim. See H. P. Bix, ‘Japan’s Delayed Surrender: A Reinterpretation’, *Diplomatic History*, xix, no. 2 (1995), 197–225.
 12. Chalmers Johnson has written a fabulous analysis of the Sorge spy ring. See C. Johnson, *An Instance of Treason: Ozaki Hotsumi and the Sorge Spy Ring* (Stanford, 1964).
 13. J. Matsumura, ‘Internal Security’, 407.
 14. For more on the Yokohama Incident, see J. Matsumura, *More than a Momentary Nightmare: The Yokohama Incident and Wartime Japan* (Ithaca, 1998).
 15. Quoted in Awaya Kentarō, ‘Chian ijihō jidai no ichi danmen’, *Nihonshi kenkyū*, clxvi (1976), 70.
 16. *Ibid.*, 70.
 17. *Nippon Times*, 2 Feb. 1943.
 18. Quoted in The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japanese Morale* (Morale Division, 1947), 233.
 19. *Ibid.*, 233–4.
 20. Matsumura, ‘Internal Security’, 410.
 21. Quoted in *ibid.*, 410.
 22. Examples of public scribblings that decried the food situation include the following: ‘No rice. End the war’ (June 1942); and ‘How long will the Great East Asian War last? Three and a half years without food. One after another, starvation . . . All the strong ones have perished’ (1943). Public statements that hinted at class antagonism include the following: ‘Since food is no problem for the ministers’ wives, they are fat. The great mass of people don’t have enough food, and their faces are sallow.’ See J. W. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace* (New York, 1993), 125, 128, 137.
 23. Kiyosawa Kiyoshi, *Ankoku nikki: Shōwa jūnana nen jūnigatsu kokonoka—nijūnen gogatsu itsuka* (Tokyo, 1979), 66. 27 May 1943 entry.
 24. This food crisis even affected the army, as the calorie intake of the average soldier dropped from 2,117 kilocalories in July 1944 to a meager 1,355 kilocalories in June 1945. See Torii Tami, *Shōwa 20 nen: Dai 1-bu no 9: kokuryoku no genjō to minshin no dōkō* (Tokyo, 2001), 191–2; 195. It has been estimated that people with low activity levels should have a daily intake of between 1,940 kilocalories (for women) and 2,550 kilocalories (for men). The average Japanese person, however, was highly active during the war, so their daily intake should have been substantially higher. With such famine conditions came an obsession with food among Japanese civilians and military men. For an extended analysis of the food obsession, see Torii, *Shōwa 20 nen*, ix. 145–52, 188–9.
 25. For a list of public scribblings between December 1941 and March 1944, see Dower, *Japan in War and Peace*, 124–8.
 26. Quoted in Yoshida Yutaka, *Shōwa Tennō no shūsenshi* (Tokyo, 1992), 28–9.
 27. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace*, 140.
 28. *Ibid.*, 113, 249.

29. Yoshida, *Shōwa Tennō no shūsenshi*, 29.
30. See Bix, 'Japan's Delayed Surrender', 213–14.
31. Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*, 235. In addition to the six individuals Dower notes, the larger group also included House of Peers member Kojima Kazuo, former Home Minister Makino Nobuaki, House of Peers member Kabayama Aisuke, House of Peers member Harada Kumao, Rear Admiral Masaki Katsuji, Home Ministry bureaucrat Morioka Jirō, Imperial Diet member Hatoyama Ichirō, Reserve Admiral and former Foreign Minister Ugaki Kazushige, Reserve Admiral and former Governor-General of Taiwan Kobayashi Seizō, and Admiral Suzuki Kantarō. See Mukoyama Hiroo, 'Minkan ni okeru shūsen kōsaku', Nihon Gaikō Gakkai (ed), *Taihei'yō sensō shūketsuron* (Tokyo, 1958), 100. For biographies of the main members of Yoshida's group, see also Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku* (Tokyo, 1952), 117–31.
32. Ueda Shunkichi felt that Japan's economic policies were particularly dangerous. He thought that the army's centralized economic policies were 'communist economic policies' formulated by a group that studied under Communist teachers in Europe. Ueda stated that if they were fully carried out, 'in the end Japan will not be able to help but turn communist.' See Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 125–6.
33. The 26 February Incident of 1936 was a failed *coup d'état* attempt among young, lower ranking activist officers in the military. The conspirators briefly occupied Tokyo before they were persuaded to surrender.
34. J. W. Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*, 235–7.
35. Mukoyama, 'Minkan ni okeru shūsen kōsaku', 103–6.
36. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 196.
37. *Ibid.*, 197.
38. Japanese historian Hata Ikuhiko, however, contests the idea that Konoe's appeal intrigued the Emperor. He argues that Konoe's 'wild ideas of the bolshevization of the military had the opposite effect' of hardening the Emperor's resolve to fight to the finish. See Hata Ikuhiko, *Hirohito Tennō itsutsu no ketsudan* (Tokyo, 1984), 52. Yet since Hata neglects to explain why or how the Konoe appeal backfired, his statement appears to be little more than a flimsy assumption based on the ultimate failure of the plea to end the war.
39. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 200. Though Hirohito stated that he was shocked, it is likely that he had been informed of Konoe's arguments through Kido, who had been aware of Konoe's views since 1943. Konoe also had additional indirect lines of communication to the Emperor. Former Prime Minister Wakatsuki Reijirō explains that Konoe could indirectly inform the Emperor of his views through the Home Minister, and vice versa. See Wakatsuki Reijirō, *Kofūan kaikoroku: Meiji, Taishō, Shōwa seikai hisshi* (Tokyo, 1950), 427–8. However, it is unclear whether Konoe made use of this indirect communication route to the Emperor before February 1945.
40. The unconditional surrender policy, first enunciated by U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt at Casablanca in January 1943, became the primary statement of U.S. (and Allied) war aims. The policy was created to ensure that the Allied Powers would be able occupy and reform the fascist aggressor states in the post-war era. Konoe felt that Japan had no choice but to accede to the Allied war aims and surrender unconditionally.
41. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 199.
42. *Ibid.*, 199.
43. J. W. Dower, *Empire and Aftermath*, 265. While the Foreign Ministry account only indicates that Konoe recommended Ugaki and Mazaki, other accounts indicate that he also suggested that Generals Obata, Ishihara, and Kozuki would make good candidates to control the military and sue for peace. See Torii Tami, *Shōwa 20 nen: Dai 1-bu no 2: hōkai no kizashi* (Tokyo, 1986), 67.
44. Fujita Hisanori, *Jijūchō no kaisō* (Tokyo, 1987), 66. The dialogue Grand Chamberlain Fujita recorded also appears *in toto* in Nakao Yuji, *Shōwa Tennō hatsugen kiroku shūsei* (Tokyo, 2003), ii. 322–3.
45. Quoted in Nakao, *Shōwa Tennō hatsugen kiroku shūsei*, ii. 323; also in Hata, *Hirohito Tennō itsutsu no ketsudan*, 53; and E. J. Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor: Essays on the Imperial Japanese Army* (Lincoln and London, 1998), 199.
46. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 354–71. See also Bōeicho Bōei Kenshūjo Senshishitsu, *Daihon'ei rikugunbu*, x. 315–24; and Sanbō Honbu Shozō, *Haisen no kiroku* (Tokyo,

- 1967), 259–70, with discussions from 271–9. The policy papers are entitled ‘Kongo toru beki sensō shidō no kihon taikō’, ‘Sekai jōsei handan’, and ‘Kokuryoku no genjō’, respectively. For an excellent, in depth description of the Fundamental Policy in English, see Butow, 92–102.
47. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 357. An outline is also printed in *Daihon’ei rikugunbu*, x. 319.
 48. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 357.
 49. Kido received the documents from Matsudaira Yasumasa on 7 June, the day before the imperial conference at which these documents were sanctioned. See Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 397.
 50. Takagi Sōkichi, *Shūsen oboegaki* (Tokyo, 1948), 21. It is unknown, however, whether he was influenced by the extensive police reports or by Konoe’s continued behind-the-scenes campaign to bring attention to the fact that Japan was ‘bolshevizing’ or ‘turning communist’ from within.
 51. Kido Kōichi, *Kido Kōichi nikki* (Tokyo, 1966), ii. 1208. See also Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 399.
 52. Kido, *Kido Kōichi nikki*, ii. 1208–9; Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 399.
 53. Kido, *Kido Kōichi nikki*, ii. 1209.
 54. Kido, *Kido Kōichi nikki*, ii. 1208–9; Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 399–400.
 55. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 401. Kido reported that Hirohito eagerly read the plan, and without missing a beat told Kido to ‘go for it’. See Matsumoto Shun’ichi, et al. (eds), Henceforth labeled *Nihon gaikōshi*, xxv. *Dai Tōa sensō, shūsen gaikō* (Tokyo, 1972), 155.
 56. Members of the Supreme Council, which was formed on 5 August 1944, included the Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Army and Navy Ministers, and the Army and Navy Chiefs of Staff. Together, the members of the Supreme Council, Kido Kōichi, and Hirohito represented the key figures in late wartime Japan.
 57. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 401.
 58. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 403; *Nihon gaikōshi*, xxv. 156.
 59. Nakao, *Shōwa Tennō hatsugen kiroku shūsei*, ii. 374. There remains a dispute about what the Emperor actually said in the 22 June meeting. Sadao Asada and others quote him as merely stating a desire, ‘that concrete plans to end the war, unhampered by existing policy, be speedily studied and efforts made to implement them.’ See S. Asada, ‘The Shock of the Atomic Bomb and Japan’s Decision to Surrender – A Reconsideration’, 500. However, Admiral Toyoda’s November 1945 interview corroborates the fact that the Emperor cited the domestic situation as his motivation for bringing the war to a prompt conclusion. See the United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials* (Washington, D.C., 1946), ii. 319. In the interview, however, Toyoda confused the date of the meeting. He listed it as occurring on 26 June instead of 22 June.
 60. Kido, *Kido Kōichi nikki*, ii. 1213.
 61. This was immediately apparent, with Konoe’s attempted mission to the Soviet Union. On 19 July 1945 Moscow refused to receive Konoe with the justification that the purpose of Konoe’s delegation was ‘not specific.’ See Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 467. Japanese research shows, ironically, that the Foreign Ministry and Imperial Army came to an agreement on compromises to present to the Soviet Union. However, this agreement never translated into positive policy. See Nakayama Takashi, ‘Nihon no sensō sakusen shidō ni okeru Soren yōin, 1941–1945’, *Seiji keizai shigaku*, cccxxxiii (1994), 52.
 62. Many scholars that deal with the historiography of the atomic bombings assert that Japanese peace initiatives began much earlier than June 1945. Specifically, Gar Alperovitz used MAGIC intercepts to illustrate that peace maneuvers began as early as July and August 1944, shortly after the fall of the Tojō administration. Alperovitz asserted the ‘peace feelers’ picked up pace after the fall of Germany in May 1945, and continued to the end of the war. See Alperovitz, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, 23–30, 292–3, 295–7. While some MAGIC intercepts give the impression that the Japanese government desired peace from mid-1944, the weight of evidence directly contradicts the idea that the Japanese government desired true peace negotiations. Tokyo launched negotiations with the Soviet Union in May 1945, but it was kept secret from the Emperor and the talks were centered on promoting an extension of the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact. This was hardly a strong push to terminate hostilities. As Arima Manabu correctly notes: ‘It is clear that these peace maneuvers which sought to use

- Soviet mediation were not realistic.’ See Arima Manabu, *Teikoku no Shōwa* (Tokyo, 2010), 320. For an excellent discussion of the feeble nature of Japanese ‘peace feelers’ in English, see Frank, *Downfall*, 86–116, 221–32.
63. The Potsdam Declaration, signed by the United States, China, and the United Kingdom on 26 July 1945, outlined the Allied objectives for Japan. The Japanese Empire would be dismantled, the military disarmed, all those designated as war criminals would be punished, and a democratic order would be established.
 64. Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō stated the following in December 1945: ‘The Supreme War Council . . . was making every possible preparation to meet [an American] landing. They proceeded with that plan until the Atomic Bomb was dropped, after which they believed the United States would no longer attempt to land when it had such a superior weapon – that the United States need not land when it had such a weapon; so at that point they decided that it would be best to sue for peace.’ Quoted in R. B. Frank, *Downfall*, 347.
 65. Quoted in Kimijima, “‘Shūsen kōsaku” to “kokutai,”” 157; Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 566.
 66. Kido, *Kido Kōichi nikki*, ii. 1223.
 67. Shigemitsu Mamoru, *Shigemitsu Mamoru shuki* (Tokyo, 1986), 523–4. Also see Shinobu Seizaburō, *Seidan no rekishigaku* (Tokyo, 1992), 307–8. Kido later thanked Shigemitsu for prodding him to get the Emperor involved in ending the war. He was quoted as saying to Shigemitsu, ‘Thank you very much. Your efforts will long be remembered. I appreciate them from the bottom of my heart.’
 68. Suzuki did meet with Kido at 1:30 p.m. to discuss the four-condition surrender. See Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 580. But it is unknown if Suzuki had knowledge of Kido’s meeting with Shigemitsu.
 69. See Tōgō Shigenori, *Jidai no ichi danmen* (Tokyo, 1952), 344.
 70. Takagi Sōkichi, *Takagi kaigun shōshō oboegaki* (Tokyo, 1979), 348.
 71. According to Sakomizu Hisatsune, Hiranuma attended the meeting ‘as a representative of the Privy Council,’ whose authority was required to formally conclude a treaty. His participation in the Imperial Conference, an anomaly that otherwise would not be tolerated, was meant to ensure that any decision to conclude a treaty could be quickly implemented. See Shinobu, *Seidan no rekishigaku*, 308. Further, the other four participants included Navy Military Affairs Bureau Chief Hoshina Zenjirō, Army Military Affairs Bureau Chief Yoshizumi Masao, Director-General of the Cabinet Planning Bureau Ikeda Sumihisa, and the Emperor’s aide-de-camp General Hasunuma Shigeru. See Hoshina Zenshirō, *Dai tōa sensō hisshi: ushinawareta wahei kōsaku: Hoshina Zenshirō kaisōroku* (Tokyo, 1975), 140.
 72. But during his 7 February Memorial to the Throne, Hiranuma failed to suggest any concrete plan to end the war. See Fujita, *Jijūcho no Kaisō*, 47–8; Sotozaki Katsuhisa, *Shūsen no jijūchō: kaigun taishō Fujita Hisanori* (Tokyo, 1988) 114.
 73. Navy Military Affairs Bureau Chief Hoshina Zenshirō - who was present at the conference - recorded this statement. See Hoshina, *Dai tōa sensō hisshi*, 145. Also see *Nihon gaikōshi*, xxv. 230.
 74. Quoted in Butow, *Japan’s Decision to Surrender*, 174.
 75. Toyoda found Hiranuma’s original speech to be tangled and confusing. See *Daihon’ei rikugunbu*, x. 448.
 76. Butow, *Japan’s Decision to Surrender*, 176. Kido met with the Emperor on 25 July 1945, and advised the Emperor to bear the unbearable and promote peace. See Kido, *Kido Kōichi nikki*, ii. 1220. The Emperor’s entire statement is unclear, and depends on the source used. While Butow provides a wonderful approximation of what the Emperor might have said, the individual versions of his statements (which all vary in the language used) can be found in Nakao, *Shōwa Tennō hatsugen kiroku shūsei*, ii. 387–90; *Kimitsu sensō nisshi*, ii. 756; Hoshina, *Dai tōa sensō hisshi*, 147; and *Kido Kōichi nikki*, ii. 1223–4.
 77. The Japanese agreed to surrender as long as the Allies respect the ‘prerogative of His Majesty the Emperor as a sovereign ruler.’ See *Nihon gaikōshi*, xxv. 232, 235.
 78. Second World War primary source homepage, <http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1945/450811a.html> [Accessed 2 Dec. 2011].
 79. Kido, *Kido Kōichi nikki*, ii. 1226.

80. Nakao, *Shōwa Tennō hatsugen kiroku shūsei*, ii. 398.
81. Hirohito also cited Japan's inadequate military preparations, the enemy's scientific power, and even an inability to protect the imperial regalia from the enemy as reasons to end of the war. See Terasaki Hidenari, *Shōwa Tennō dokuhakuroku* (Tokyo, 1991), 84–5, 126–7.
82. For an in-depth look at Hirohito's fear of Japan's military unpreparedness to meet the Allied invasion, see Terasaki, *Shōwa Tennō dokuhakuroku*, 84, 118–20, 125–6.
83. The sources of domestic concern that helped to persuade the Emperor to surrender also paradoxically provoked concern among the elite that even surrender would trigger massive unrest. This apprehension over social unrest convinced court officials of the necessity to broadcast the surrender announcement and include a warning against 'outbursts of emotion' that could lead to 'confusion' in Japan. The warning appeared in Hirohito's Imperial Rescript announcing Japan's capitulation, which was broadcast over the radio on August 15. 'Beware,' the rescript reads, 'of any outbursts of emotion that may cause needless complications.' See *Daihon'ei rikugunbu*, x. 515. See also Nakao, *Shōwa Tennō hatsugen kiroku shūsei*, ii. 400.
84. Terasaki, *Shōwa Tennō dokuhakuroku*, 128.
85. Terasaki, *Shōwa Tennō dokuhakuroku*, 126–7; Nakao, *Shōwa Tennō hatsugen kiroku shūsei*, ii. 384.
86. United States Strategic Bombing Survey, *Interrogations of Japanese Officials*, ii. 320.
87. *Ibid.*, 323.
88. Frank, *Downfall*, 439 (fn.).
89. Gaimushō, *Shūsen shiroku*, 538.
90. Takagi, *Takagi kaigun shōshō oboegaki*, 351.
91. Hosokawa Morisada, *Hosokawa nikki* (Tokyo, 1979), ii. 140. Dated 9 Aug. 1945.
92. Quoted in Asada, 'The Shock of the Atomic Bomb,' 497.