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## Conditional Surrender—Conflict Termination in the Pacific, 1945

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## CONDITIONAL SURRENDER

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### Conflict Termination in the Pacific, 1945

*Richard J. Shuster and Takuya Shimodaira*

*Should we continue to fight, it would not only result in an ultimate collapse and obliteration of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.*

EMPEROR HIROHITO, 15 AUGUST 1945

With the statement above, Emperor Hirohito announced to his people that Japan had accepted the terms of the Potsdam Declaration, bringing to an end the savage fighting in the Pacific. Two weeks later aboard the battleship *USS Missouri*, as General Douglas MacArthur, Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, and a host of other senior Allied leaders looked on stoically, the Japanese military and civilian leadership signed the Instrument of Surrender officially terminating hostilities. The three and a half years of fighting between the United States and Japan had been particularly ruthless and bloody, with an estimated 110,000 U.S. military personnel killed in the Pacific theater. Casualty figures for Japan were staggering, with over two million military personnel and civilians killed, while entire sections of major Japanese cities had been reduced to ashes.<sup>1</sup>

Although the United States remained focused throughout the war on planning and executing campaigns and operations to defeat both Germany and Japan, it also spent critical time planning how best to terminate the conflict—on terms favorable to American interests. Although by August 1945 the United States had established military ascendancy, casualties had continued to mount with each successive operation. The unprecedentedly grim numbers of casualties for combatants and civilians combined that were projected for an invasion of Japan easily would surpass those of previous campaigns, so it was essential to avoid them if at all possible. Furthermore, Allied statesmen hoped that all the war's military and civilian casualties would not have been in vain but would lead to a postwar world free of German and Japanese militarism, and authoritarianism in general. How and why this global conflict reached its conclusion in the Pacific as it did, and the

nature of that conclusion as seen from the perspective of both the United States and Japan, will be the subject of this article.

This study focuses on the military aspects of conflict termination but does not ignore the higher-level, political influence on terminating military operations. In general, a combatant seeks to terminate hostilities so as to make peace on terms that are aligned with its national interests over the long term. In the Pacific in 1945, the question of the future of the emperor was a key facet of both military and political aspects of termination; agreeing to a compromise of unconditional surrender that allowed continuation of a role for the emperor influenced Japan's decision to surrender and helped set conditions for the longer-term development of democracy in Japan, as well as the stability of U.S.-Japanese relations.

Conflict termination is the formal end of major combat operations.<sup>2</sup> The process of terminating a conflict can be more difficult than initiating combat actions. Often civilian and military leaders must address numerous complex challenges if they are to terminate conflict and create conditions conducive to successful postconflict operations. In other words, starting a war is much easier than ending one.<sup>3</sup> How the critical transition from high-intensity conflict to termination of hostilities and then to postconflict operations is accomplished has a direct impact on whether operational victory can be transformed into strategic success. Consequently, political and military leaders face key planning considerations in terminating conflict.

The challenge of conflict termination is not simply to accomplish the discontinuation of hostilities at any particular point in time but to transition from combat to postconflict operations effectively. In essence, successful conflict termination should set the conditions for successful stability operations and lead directly to the achievement of the strategic objective. Normally, the strategic leadership of the victorious side in a conflict sets the terms and conditions of termination, but—as with everything else in war—the enemy certainly has a role. The cessation of hostilities cannot be a unilateral process, as ultimately the losing side decides when to terminate conflict. In World War II, both Germany and Japan continued to fight long after any reasonable expectation of attaining their objectives had vanished. In short, conflict termination can be a disorderly process. Setting the stage for a continued military and civilian presence after the termination of major combat operations is critical to any long-term success in a region. In other words, theater- and operational-level planning should not focus on ending hostilities at the expense of what comes next.

Despite the combatants' strategic and operational focus on achieving military victory, the process of considering how to terminate the U.S.-Japanese conflict in the Pacific did not begin in 1945 but as early as mid-1943, after the United States had assaulted Saipan, Guam, and Tinian in the Mariana Islands. Notwithstanding

the intense fighting between the combatants up to that point, with even larger and more-costly operations to follow, the strategic political and military leadership on both sides began to see the inevitability of a U.S. victory over Japan. Consequently, each combatant began to study how to bring the war to an end on terms favorable to its own national interests. The United States pushed relentlessly for unconditional surrender, while Japan sought to force a negotiated settlement.

In planning for the termination of hostilities and the transition to postconflict operations, U.S. strategic planners feared the worst: revenge, retaliation, and insurgency.<sup>4</sup> Fighting in the Pacific was particularly brutal, perhaps matched in its utter ruthlessness and racial overtones only by the four years of carnage between Germany and the Soviet Union. Yet the outcome of Japan's defeat ended up having a much different postscript: a peaceful transition to a new world order and the development of strong relations between the former enemies.

An examination of conflict termination in the Pacific in 1945 reveals three major themes: (1) its shaping by America's relentless offensive operations aimed at defeating Japanese military power and obtaining political leverage; (2) a comprehensive U.S. understanding of the operational environment that helped frame detailed planning and termination criteria; and (3) the Japanese emperor's ultimate embrace of the peace faction, upon realizing the futility of continued fighting. In the end, the victory came about through a conditional surrender that set the conditions for a smooth transition to postwar stability in Japan.

#### EFFECTIVE PLANNING AND EXECUTION, 1943–45:

##### THE RELENTLESS PUSH TO THE END

The essence of *conflict termination* is “political leverage borne of battlefield success,” and the Pacific theater in World War II provides the perfect illustration of this truth.<sup>5</sup> The United States, after declaring that it sought nothing less than the unconditional surrender of Japan (and Germany), dedicated its offensive capabilities to destroying the Japanese armed forces to a point at which the United States could enforce its will over the defeated nation. For its part, Japan aimed to inflict high casualties on U.S. forces to precipitate a conditional peace. Consequently, even after the final outcome became obvious to all, Allied offensive operations and strikes continued—right up until the final seconds of the war. In fact, both sides' continued fierce fighting in ongoing operations and their planning of future operations for the remainder of 1945 and beyond were characterized by an acceptance of the likelihood of staggering casualties, to position themselves better to support their national interests.

Although the United States had stated clearly its strategic priority in the overall war effort as the defeat of Germany, it never lost sight of the ultimate strategic objective in the Pacific: the defeat of Japan. Only destruction of the Japanese armed

forces could prevent Japanese aggression in the Pacific and restore U.S. national interests in the region. From President Franklin D. Roosevelt's initial December 1941 call for "absolute victory" to the more comprehensive January 1943 declaration of the goal of "unconditional surrender," the United States transitioned from an initial strategic defensive into an all-out offensive to destroy Japan's war-making capability and enforce its will on a defeated enemy.

At a higher level, America's desired end state is more difficult to determine than the concise declaration of "unconditional surrender" communicates. Discernible from the war aims listed in the Cairo Declaration of November 1943 and other strategic-level policy statements, the desired end state of the Allies amounted to the restoration of Japanese-occupied territories, the creation of conditions that would prevent Japanese aggression against peace and security, and the emergence in Japan of a government that respected the international world order.<sup>6</sup>

By the start of 1943, the tide of war in the Pacific had turned decidedly in favor of the United States. American forces had halted Japanese advances in New Guinea and extended their own lines of operation along its coast, while gaining a critical base of operations on Guadalcanal. Toward the end of January 1943, at the Casablanca Conference, President Roosevelt and British prime minister Winston S. Churchill agreed that the Allies would seek a more definitive strategic objective in both Europe and the Pacific: the unconditional surrender of both Germany and Japan. The two leaders were determined to bring peace "to the world only by a total elimination of German and Japanese war power," with "the simple formula of placing the objective of this war in terms of an unconditional surrender by Germany, Italy, and Japan." Instead of destroying the "populace" of the enemy nations, they advocated destroying the "philosophy" that was based on "conquest and subjugation."<sup>7</sup> In other words, the strategic objective had two major elements, military and political, that amounted to the destruction of enemy armed forces and the development of democratic governments that aligned with the Allies' national interests.

Planning at the theater and operational levels of war had a significant impact on termination of the conflict in the Pacific on terms favorable to U.S. national interests. In essence, planning is where battlefield success begins. The overall strategic plan for the defeat of Japan was to advance westward and northwestward, along two main axes of advance from the central and southwest Pacific, respectively, with the two campaigns conducted at a mutually supportive distance from each other. Campaign plans developed by the planning staffs of the two major theater commanders, General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz, employed U.S. forces in a series of logical steps toward the ultimate objective: the Japanese mainland. MacArthur's forces in the Southwest Pacific Area would advance

northwest from New Guinea to the Philippine Islands, while Nimitz's forces in the Pacific Ocean Areas would advance west through the Solomon, Gilbert, Marshall, and Mariana Islands before supporting MacArthur's forces in the Philippines in October 1944. Both MacArthur's MUSKETEER plans to seize the Philippines and Nimitz's Campaign Plan GRANITE, which laid out the sequence of island-hopping assaults in the Pacific for 1944, illustrate the two theater commanders' mastery of the application of operational art to achieve theater strategic objectives. By the end of 1944, the success of these two prongs would destroy the bulk of Japanese naval and air power, pushing Japan to the brink of defeat by the spring of 1945.

By mid-1943, when Nimitz's forces still were fighting for control of the Solomon Islands and MacArthur's forces were continuing to fight in New Guinea, the U.S. Joint Staff planners had developed an accurate assessment of Japanese intentions and capabilities that would be instrumental in planning for Japan's defeat. In short, the Joint Staff knew that Japan's ability to "establish undisputed control of an area in East Asia and the Western Pacific" and to be "self-sufficient economically" even then was slipping away. Japan was now on the strategic defensive, with any hopes for achieving victory resting on (perceived) Allied war weariness. American planners understood that Japan's sea lines of communication (SLOCs) had become vulnerable to attack, and that "ultimately greatly superior forces can be directed against her."<sup>8</sup>

But even in mid-August 1943 the Combined Chiefs of Staff—the Allies' strategic planning staff that oversaw all operations in the war—still had some differences of opinion with regard to how to end the conflict with Japan. Together they were optimistic that termination of the conflict in Europe would allow a "reorientation" of Allied forces to the Pacific.<sup>9</sup> While agreeing that the overall strategy to defeat Japan required retaining China as an ally, destroying Japanese naval and air power, blockading Japan, and conducting large-scale strategic bombing of the homeland, American and British planners disagreed on the details. Britain thought the target date of defeating Japan one year after Germany was too optimistic, and pushed for Nimitz's central Pacific campaign to be the main effort, as opposed to the mutually supporting campaigns of Nimitz and MacArthur that the U.S. Chiefs of Staff advocated.<sup>10</sup> But these differences were worked out in short order—building a consensus in planning for the defeat of Japan that, while difficult to achieve, was a necessary condition for a lasting victory.

By the end of 1943, the United States and Britain had agreed on how best to defeat Japan. A Combined Chiefs of Staff report entitled "Overall Plan for the Defeat of Japan" laid out a clear strategy to achieve victory, and it drove all subsequent planning at the theater level of war. No longer disagreeing about whether the campaigns of Nimitz and MacArthur had to be mutually supporting, but instead acknowledging that the central Pacific drive could result in "a

more rapid advance toward Japan and her vital lines of communication,” the United States and Britain agreed to conduct intensive bombing and to establish an air and sea blockade of Japan, thereby setting the conditions for an assault of the Japanese mainland, if necessary. The result would be the destruction of the Japanese fleet and air force, the isolation of Japan, and the conduct of carrier-based attacks on the home islands. The two allies also agreed to take advantage of any Soviet intervention in the Pacific War. The planners still hedged their bets with regard to plans for future operations, stating that a major assault would take place in spring 1945 in the Formosa-Luzon-China area.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, Nimitz’s Campaign Plan GRANITE was the clear result of the Combined Chiefs guidance, and the admiral and his staff sequenced all subsequent operations in the central Pacific (including in the Marshalls, Carolines, and Marianas) “to force the surrender of Japan.”<sup>12</sup>

As U.S. operations throughout 1944 successfully swept up from the southwest Pacific and central Pacific, strategic planners wrestled with what should come next. The critical question was whether to seize Formosa or Luzon on the way to Japan. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) believed that a key to the defeat of Japan lay in China; the United States planned to launch an “overwhelming air offensive” from bases there, and eventually to seize a port in China.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, seizing Formosa was a strategic priority, because doing so would cut the SLOCs between Japan and its Southern Resource Area, provide a base from which to bomb Japan, and establish a supply route to China.<sup>14</sup>

Differences of opinion between Nimitz and MacArthur over what would contribute most to the defeat of Japan led to a meeting with President Roosevelt in July 1944 to resolve the issue. MacArthur argued decisively that Luzon offered the greater advantages, both militarily and politically, while Nimitz favored bypassing Luzon for Formosa. Nimitz eventually would change his mind, after the Japanese seized coastal areas in China in September 1944. By December, the JCS directed MacArthur to assault Luzon and Nimitz to execute his planned assaults of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Interestingly, the JCS never officially terminated planning for Formosa; in the end, events simply would make the point moot.<sup>15</sup>

Once the decision to strike at Luzon was made, the major question that remained in the Pacific—which drove heated discussions through the spring of 1945—was whether the United States could defeat Japan through blockade and bombardment or instead would have to conduct an actual massive assault on the industrial heartland of Japan. The joint planners still hedged their bets at the start of 1945; they believed an assault on Kyushu would help intensify the blockade and air bombardment of Japan, as well as set conditions for a follow-on assault on Honshu.<sup>16</sup> The Joint Chiefs knew that difficult fighting remained and warned that such an invasion might have to wait until 1946. In fact, the British Chiefs of



Staff now feared that it would take up to two years after the defeat of Germany to force unconditional surrender on Japan.<sup>17</sup>

The key to defeating Japan was to destroy Japanese military and economic power by advancing closer to the home islands incrementally. By the beginning of 1945, the United States had cut the critical SLOCs between Japan and the Southern Resource Area, established bases closer to Japan for follow-on operations, and all but destroyed the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) as an effective fighting force. The series of campaigns and operations that seized decisive points throughout the southwest and central Pacific, through the Philippines, and toward Japan itself had established the necessary conditions for a final assault on mainland Japan. The penultimate stage of the war included the seizure of Iwo Jima and Okinawa, two more decisive points along the main line of operations toward the ultimate objective. The capture of Iwo Jima gave the United States a forward air base at which to refuel B-29s from the Marianas and from which to provide fighter cover for the attacks on the main islands, as well as to act as a sanctuary at which damaged aircraft could make emergency landings.<sup>18</sup>

Despite the plethora of military successes at the operational and theater levels in the Pacific, the United States still expected prolongation of the conflict. In May 1945, as Germany surrendered to the Allies only after a titanic battle in the streets of Berlin, the Joint Chiefs feared that Japan too would fight on at any cost to prevent the invasion of the home islands. They understood that “the prospect of the Emperor and the Imperial Family being in the hands of a foreign invader is repulsive and unthinkable to the Japanese.”<sup>19</sup> Wary that the Japanese might sue for peace to prevent an actual occupation of Japan and fearful that the American public’s war weariness would lead to acceptance of such a conditional surrender in the Pacific, the Joint Chiefs reemphasized that their objective was unconditional surrender.<sup>20</sup>

To compel Japan to surrender, the United States continued to conduct strikes and attacks throughout the summer of 1945, right up to the final moments of the war. Once Okinawa fell to U.S. forces in June 1945, continued bombing by the Strategic Air Force in the Marianas, the Tactical Air Force on Okinawa, and the Third Fleet intensified pressure on Japan. Strategic bombing, especially by B-29s conducting incendiary and low-level attacks, devastated Japanese cities and industrial areas, killing thousands of civilians in the process. Offensive mining, conducted under the aptly named Operation STARVATION, continued to isolate Japan from its critical SLOCs.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the blockade of Japan through the destruction of its merchant shipping and naval fleet by air attacks and submarines cut off Japan from essential imports such as oil, coal, and iron ore.<sup>22</sup>

As the Japanese political and military leadership debated whether to terminate the country’s military operations, U.S. strategic air, carrier-based air, and surface

forces continued to pound targets on the main islands of Japan. On 10 August, Nimitz warned that “the public announcement by the Japanese of counter proposals for the termination of the war must not be permitted to affect vigilance against Japanese attacks” and that “offensive action shall be continued unless otherwise specifically directed.”<sup>23</sup> In addition, on 14 August, General Carl A. Spaatz’s Twentieth Air Force bombed northern Honshu with over eight hundred B-29s, from the Marianas. Even on 15 August, the day on which Japan formally announced its surrender, over a hundred aircraft from Admiral William F. Halsey Jr.’s Third Fleet carriers struck Japanese airfields on Honshu—minutes before Nimitz’s order to “suspend attack air operations” was received.<sup>24</sup>

The United States also leveraged its “information instrument of power” to compel Japan to surrender. Information operations aimed to convince Japanese decision makers and the Japanese people that continued resistance was hopeless. From February 1945 through the end of the war, U.S. naval aircraft and B-29s dropped millions of leaflets on the home islands. With the objective of cracking Japanese morale and pressuring the people to petition the emperor, the leaflets eventually warned civilians that their cities would be destroyed by B-29 raids and informed them of the text of the Potsdam Declaration, the atomic bomb attacks, and Soviet entry into the war.<sup>25</sup>

With U.S. forces occupying Okinawa and preparing for the final assault, Hiroshima and Nagasaki in ruins, and Soviet forces driving deep into Manchuria, Japan’s strategic leadership eventually decided that it could resist no longer. In the end Japan surrendered, even as 2.5 million combat-equipped troops prepared to defend against the American assault forces poised to seize Kyushu and Honshu. Thus, by August 1945 successful U.S. military operations finally had created sufficient political leverage to force Japanese decision makers (both civilian and military) to cease hostilities.

#### **PLANNING FOR CONFLICT TERMINATION AND BEYOND: UNDERSTANDING THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

Thorough understanding of the operational environment played a key role in winning the war in the Pacific and would play a crucial role in winning the peace. Allied intelligence estimates, based on intercepts and decryption of Japanese diplomatic and military communications, allowed the United States to offset Japan’s advantages and exploit its weaknesses. In the final phase of the conflict in the Pacific, the United States developed a comprehensive picture of Japanese capabilities and intentions, which supported Allied plans for the final campaign against Kyushu and Honshu while simultaneously enlightening planners and decision makers regarding the primacy of the emperor to the nation of Japan. With this combination of a clear idea of how the Japanese military was preparing

to defend the mainland and the thinking of Japan's national strategic leadership, the United States was able to conduct thorough planning for the final assault of Japan while concurrently developing termination criteria that not only suited its own national interests but also, eventually, appealed to the emperor and members of his inner circle.

In planning for conflict termination, the United States (and Britain) had developed a comprehensive assessment of the state of Japan's military and political strengths and weaknesses. The Combined Chiefs of Staff had an accurate picture of Japan's intent and capabilities that helped shape planning for the final campaign of the war, as well as termination criteria that fell short of unconditional surrender. They correctly surmised that the Japanese equated unconditional surrender with "national extinction" and understood that the Japanese government in July 1945 wanted to "fight as long and as desperately as possible in the hope of avoiding complete defeat and of acquiring a better bargaining position in a negotiated peace."<sup>26</sup>

In addition, the U.S. State Department had formulated a plan to shape the termination debate and to establish a postwar occupation policy. Acting Secretary of State Joseph C. Grew understood that preserving the institution of the emperor was an "irreducible" Japanese condition for surrender and that trying the emperor as a war criminal or abolishing the throne would lead to "prolonged resistance."<sup>27</sup> His counterpart in the War Department, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, agreed that if the United States acceded to maintaining a constitutional monarchy under the present emperor, then Japan would be much more likely to surrender.<sup>28</sup> These powerful voices would help influence President Harry S. Truman to accept conflict termination on terms short of unconditional surrender.

#### *Planning the Final Assaults: OLYMPIC and CORONET*

The campaigns of Nimitz and MacArthur had set the conditions for the final assault on the main islands of Japan itself. The critical question that remained, however, was whether such an assault was necessary to compel Japan to surrender or the same objective could be achieved with fewer American casualties via blockade and continued bombing.

By April 1945, the Joint Chiefs had come to the conclusion that the invasion of Japan was a prerequisite to forcing unconditional surrender. They feared that bombardment and blockade could lead to a negotiated peace, and that only an assault on the Japanese home islands would force absolute surrender. They also questioned whether Japan ever actually would surrender and argued that the United States was compelled to bring about a "decisive military defeat." The Joint Chiefs believed that only the military instrument of national power would achieve the ultimate objective of defeating Japan: "Unless a definition of unconditional surrender can be given which is acceptable to the Japanese, there is no

alternative to annihilation and no prospect that the threat of absolute defeat will bring about capitulation.”<sup>29</sup>

Additional fighting would not be easy. The planned operations—OLYMPIC and CORONET—were given an end date of June 1946, under the overall cover name DOWNFALL.<sup>30</sup> Casualty estimates were high for both sides; for Operation OLYMPIC alone, casualties for U.S. forces were projected to be 150,000–160,000, including upward of 38,000 killed in action, while Japan was expected to suffer upward of 250,000 combatants and 380,000 civilians killed.<sup>31</sup>

Yet clearly the Joint Chiefs had listened to General MacArthur, who believed firmly that invading Kyushu and Honshu would be necessary. In a communication to General George C. Marshall, the Army chief of staff, MacArthur recommended an attack on Kyushu, to provide land-based air cover for the ultimate objective, “a decisive assault on Honshu.” Dismissing two other courses of action to force Japan’s surrender—continued bombardment and blockade—as being too time-consuming, MacArthur argued that the assaults on Kyushu and Honshu “would permit application of full power of our combined resources, ground, naval, and air, on the decisive objective.” In his estimation, the approach could force Japan to surrender earlier than anticipated. Amphibious assaults had been a staple of successful maritime warfare in MacArthur’s island-hopping campaigns in the Pacific throughout the war, and the general had no intention of dismissing the method that had been perfected over the preceding three years.<sup>32</sup>

While MacArthur wholeheartedly supported an invasion of Japan, Nimitz advocated an alternate course of action. He saw great risk in a major assault on Kyushu and Honshu, for three reasons: Japan’s fighting capability in defensive warfare, the traditional Japanese refusal to surrender, and the use of suicide attacks. Nimitz firmly believed that the defeat of Japan was inevitable and a direct assault rash. In a communication to Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations, Nimitz argued in April 1945 that “unless speed is considered so important that we are willing to accept less than the best preparation and more than minimum casualties, I believe that the long range interests of the U.S. will be better served if we continue during 1945 to isolate Japan and to destroy Jap[anese] forces and resources by naval and air attack.”<sup>33</sup> Thus, the two U.S. theater commanders in the Pacific initially were at odds over how best to defeat Japan and bring the war to an end.

Soon, however, they would be coordinating their efforts in planning for the final assaults on Japan, because on 25 May the Joint Chiefs put an end to any remaining relevant discussion over the invasion of the Japanese home islands. They issued a planning directive to the theater commanders for the assault of Kyushu, Operation OLYMPIC, with a target date of 1 November 1945.<sup>34</sup> The amphibious assault would be the largest in history and would be the first of two major

operations planned to seize Japan and force the enemy to surrender. American strategic leadership believed that success in these final operations would compel the Japanese to terminate the conflict and provide the United States with the utmost leverage to set conditions for long-term stability within the context of U.S. national interests. In a meeting with President Truman on 18 June, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, along with Stimson and Navy Secretary James V. Forrestal, were unanimous in their agreement that Operation OLYMPIC offered the best chance to defeat Japan once and for all.<sup>35</sup>

#### *Planning the Peace: BLACKLIST and CAMPUS*

Although the Joint Chiefs had come to the conclusion that capturing the home islands likely was the only way to compel the Japanese to surrender, they also ensured that contingency plans were drawn up so they could be executed if the Japanese surrendered at any time. On 14 June 1945, the chiefs directed both Nimitz and MacArthur to plan for the “sudden collapse or surrender of Japan” to ensure that the United States could take advantage of such a situation with regard to the subsequent occupation.<sup>36</sup> As a result, both theater commanders drafted contingency plans—CAMPUS and BLACKLIST—that could be executed on Japan’s surrender. Thus, while winning the war was difficult enough, now the United States also would plan to win the peace. Once again, employing the right force at the right time and place would be paramount in translating a military victory into long-term strategic success.

Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur synchronized their efforts in planning for the sudden surrender of Japan. By 3 August, just days before the surrender occurred, the two theater commanders had worked out all major issues.<sup>37</sup> Nimitz developed Operation CAMPUS to have three distinct phases: (1) the “emergency naval occupation of Tokyo Bay”; (2) the “complete deployment of naval occupation forces”; and (3) “amphibious operations connected with the occupation of Japan by U.S. Army forces.”<sup>38</sup> CAMPUS became the naval component of Operation BLACKLIST, detailing the naval and amphibious phases of the overall operation, focused on the rapid occupation of Tokyo Bay and other strategic areas as a prelude to the entry of U.S. Army forces. Its major tasks included conducting the amphibious phases of BLACKLIST and supporting the land phases of the occupation, maintaining the lines of communication to Japan, clearing minefields, ensuring the destruction or seizure of the remaining IJN fleet, and establishing naval and naval air facilities for follow-on operations.<sup>39</sup> The plan also gave American occupation forces the authority to impose “drastic penalties” if they encountered Japanese noncompliance with U.S. postconflict directives. Possible sanctions and reprisals included the forced evacuation and destruction of communities, bombing, the destruction of property, and the taking of hostages.<sup>40</sup>

MacArthur distributed the plan for Operation BLACKLIST on 8 August, one week before the Japanese surrender. The plan acted as a guide for “prompt action upon termination of organized resistance in the areas to be occupied,” including the control of Japanese military forces and civilians and the enforcement of the final terms of surrender.<sup>41</sup> Overall, the plan consisted of a progressive occupation of fourteen areas in Japan (and some areas in Korea) that ensured American control of Japan’s instruments of national power. A key component of the plan was to use existing Japanese military and political organizations. This would reduce the number of U.S. forces required for occupation duty and allow for a degree of stability in the rebuilding process of Japan. Still, the plan called for the occupation of Japan with a total force of over seven hundred thousand U.S. forces. The initial focus of BLACKLIST would be to prevent the resumption of hostilities, including disarming Japanese forces immediately and establishing control over communications.<sup>42</sup> BLACKLIST would go into effect immediately on Japan’s surrender.

#### *The Atomic Bomb and Entry of the Soviet Union into the Pacific War*

Two final factors—the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Soviet Union’s entry into the Pacific War—exerted additional pressure on the Japanese government to surrender and emphasized the point that the United States was still seeking unlimited means to destroy Japan. There were, and would be, few, if any, restrictions on the means pursued and efforts wielded to achieve battlefield success in pursuit of political leverage to affect a postwar settlement.

Historians have written much about the atomic bomb being *the* decisive factor in forcing surrender, somewhat less assessing the overall impact of the Soviet intervention.<sup>43</sup> However, the use of atomic bombs against Japanese cities and the Soviet invasion of Japanese-occupied territory were merely additional, and certainly not the only, factors in forcing the Japanese government to surrender. Asserting any such single or narrow explanation for Japan’s surrender ignores two critical contributions up to that point: the relentless push of offensive operations that already had driven Japan to the brink of military defeat, and a comprehensive understanding of the strategic and operational environments that had allowed the Allies to plan for war termination and to develop effective termination criteria that would lead the Japanese to accede to surrendering. Although these issues still are debated hotly today, the fact that by 1945 the United States had reduced Japanese military strength significantly and had captured key island chains already had established the conditions in which these final two events took place.<sup>44</sup>

The use of the bombs certainly stunned Japan’s strategic leadership, but mostly it reinforced the existing intentions of both the war and peace factions, respectively to continue or terminate operations.<sup>45</sup> The Soviet invasion of Manchuria on 9 August added to Japan’s desperate situation. Earlier in the war, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff had supported Soviet armed intervention against Japan, arguing

that “every effort should be made to bring the U.S.S.R. into the war against Japan at the earliest practicable date.”<sup>46</sup> After Germany surrendered, the Soviets had agreed at the Potsdam Conference in July 1945 to launch an invasion of Japanese-held territory. News of the Soviet invasion of Manchuria stunned Japan’s strategic leadership, but it too essentially reinforced the existing beliefs of both the war and peace factions that surrounded the emperor.<sup>47</sup>

The confluence of ongoing U.S. operations, the use of the atomic bombs, and the Soviet invasion of Japanese territory emphasize the nearly unlimited nature of the war the Allies waged to gain political leverage. One final piece—American willingness to compromise on unconditional surrender—would give Japan’s strategic leadership an olive branch to grasp.

### *Potsdam and Conditional Surrender*

One of the greatest challenges for American strategic leadership in the Pacific War was the transition from war to peace. At the end of a conflict characterized by its brutality, enormous cost in military and civilian lives, and racial overtones, how could the United States establish long-term stability in the region, to ensure that the achievement of the strategic objective of (almost) unconditional surrender would not be ephemeral? By developing and acting on a holistic understanding of the operational environment—particularly the primacy to the Japanese people and leadership of the imperial family—the United States was able to appeal to the peace faction and make inroads into the war faction, enabling it to end the conflict without conducting a bloody assault on the main islands.

The Potsdam Declaration, signed by the United States, Britain, and China on 26 July 1945, made it clear to Japan that continued resistance would be met with a united military response. The Allies offered a simple but blunt choice: unconditional surrender or “prompt and utter destruction.” Continuation of the war therefore promised Japan a grim future. Unconditional surrender amounted to acceptance of the occupation of Japanese territory until Japan eliminated militarism, disarmed its armed forces and industry, and accepted war crimes trials.<sup>48</sup> At this point, there was no specific mention of the fate of the emperor and the imperial system, but it soon became a key sticking point affecting the decision whether to terminate hostilities.

Although unconditional surrender had been the clear American objective for over two years, cracks in its foundation began to appear in 1945. The critical issue that emerged within U.S. (as well as Japanese) strategic leadership circles in the waning days of the war was the role of the emperor in postwar Japan. In fact, short of conducting an all-out assault on the Japanese home islands, achieving a cessation of hostilities in the Pacific depended on it. There were two schools of thought in the United States; those who favored keeping the emperor included Secretary of War Stimson, Under Secretary of State Grew, and Chief of Staff to the

Commander in Chief Admiral William D. Leahy, while those who advocated his removal included Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, Assistant Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson, and former Secretary of State Cordell Hull.

The first group argued that failure to preserve the emperor would prolong the war—in particular, that Japanese forces would recognize only the authority of the emperor with regard to surrender. As early as 1943 Grew had argued that after the war the Japanese throne could “serve as a cornerstone for healthy and peaceful internal growth.”<sup>49</sup> He believed that maintaining the emperor could hasten Japan’s surrender without the need for a bloody assault on the home islands.<sup>50</sup> Stimson agreed that if the United States proposed maintaining “a constitutional monarchy” under the present emperor, then Japan would be much more likely to surrender.<sup>51</sup> Leahy, who as military adviser to the president had considerable influence on this question, warned President Truman that insistence on unconditional surrender would lead to Japanese desperation and increased U.S. casualties.<sup>52</sup>

The second school of thought believed that keeping the emperor—the symbol of Japanese militarism—would encourage the militarists and thereby prolong the war, as well as create political problems back in America. Hull considered that anything short of unconditional surrender was “appeasement,” while Byrnes argued that the United States must set the terms of surrender.<sup>53</sup> In addition, “unconditional surrender” was a powerful motto back home; the majority of Americans supported it and saw the emperor as a war criminal.<sup>54</sup>

In the end, conditional surrender won the day. Sizable Japanese forces still waited in the home islands and others were scattered across China, Southeast Asia, and the Netherlands East Indies. Allied civilian and military leaders understood the critical importance of the emperor as the figure who could order the surrender of fighters who otherwise would be willing to carry on to the death.

Navy Secretary Forrestal’s proposal to keep the emperor in place but follow the intents and purposes of the Potsdam Declaration provided a way out for both combatants. On 10 August, Japan finally agreed to accept the Potsdam Declaration, with the added condition of preserving the emperor. The following day, Secretary of State Byrnes sent a reply through official channels in which the Allies insisted that the authority of the emperor be subject to the authority of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (General MacArthur).<sup>55</sup> In this way an uneasy, and rather vague, compromise to unconditional surrender was worked out. President Truman feared domestic political backlash but agreed to the compromise, stating simply: “They wanted to keep the Emperor. We told ’em we’d tell ’em how to keep him, but we’d make the terms.”<sup>56</sup> Despite contentious debates within American and Japanese strategic leadership circles, the former combatants had found an acceptable solution to end the war in the Pacific.



## THE EMPEROR AND THE INFLUENCE OF THE PEACE FACTION

History is rife with instances in which a combatant facing certain defeat continued to fight on long after there was any chance of achieving his or its objectives. This is particularly true when a nation is confronted with an existential threat to its way of life.

Yet political leverage still can exert a significant influence on conflict termination—even when wielded by the vanquished. The acquisition and retention of political leverage was a primary factor that drove Japanese planning for the final defense of the mainland. The concept was no different from plans Japan had made and executed the previous year, when Japanese forces fought to the death on the battlefield in pursuit of a negotiated settlement to the conflict. By forcing an unprecedented bloodletting on American forces, and at the cost of the lives of hundreds of thousands of its own citizens, Japan sought to exact concessions from the United States to achieve a postwar settlement that fell short of unconditional surrender. The importance of maintaining the emperor became the primary factor that brought the Japanese to a willingness to terminate the conflict.

### *Faction versus Faction*

Once the tide of war turned against the Japanese, political factions emerged in Japan that would help shape its surrender. Throughout the war the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and the IJN held divergent views on the direction of the war, and achieving any reconciliation between them or any compromise on how to terminate the conflict proved as challenging as ever. Hostility between the two services was nothing new in Japan, as it had existed in the years leading up to outbreak of the war. Now, with the military situation leaving Japan in dire straits, the split between the views of the two political factions, including between the services, created difficulties for the emperor. The ministry of the IJN's Security Research Division averred that "the present state is confrontation. The country must become one."<sup>57</sup>

As early as September 1943, former premiers (known as *jushin* [principal subjects]) advocated seeking a peace settlement on favorable terms. They wanted to replace Premier Hideki Tōjō, an IJA hawk, with a more moderate premier. When Tōjō resigned in July 1944 after the devastating loss of Saipan, the *jushin* selected retired general Kuniaki Koiso and retired admiral Mitsumasa Yonai to lead the government (Koiso became premier). However, the Koiso cabinet's stance remained one of "all-out prosecution of the war" because Koiso believed that only a military success could improve Japan's power to negotiate an end to the war on more-favorable terms.<sup>58</sup> Thus, Japan too believed that achieving battlefield success was a prerequisite for exerting political leverage.

By January 1945, with the United States in control of Saipan and the Philippines, the emperor had expressed concern that Japan's hopes for victory were

fading fast. At that point, however, the emperor was in favor of continuing the war, and he approved a directive to defend the homeland against invasion in “the final decisive battle of the war.”<sup>59</sup> But when he met in February with members of the *jushin* to hear their views on Japan’s situation at the time, the emperor discovered that some favored peace, with former prime minister Fumimaro Konoe going so far as to advise the emperor to “end the war as soon as possible.”<sup>60</sup> Continued defeat on the battlefield combined with diplomatic setbacks (e.g., the breakdown of the Soviet-Japanese neutrality pact) forced the resignation of Koiso in spring 1945. Members of the peace faction, however, faced a conundrum. They had to select as a replacement someone who advocated peace yet also would be acceptable to the hawks. Admiral Kantarō Suzuki became the clear choice, and his cabinet, consisting of General Korechika Anami as war minister, Admiral Yonai as navy minister, and Mr. Shigenori Tōgō as foreign minister, would govern from 7 April 1945 through the final surrender.<sup>61</sup>

Upon taking over, Suzuki believed that the emperor wished to reach a settlement of the war, but the new premier advocated continued hostilities until the moment was right for a negotiated settlement. This decision also would help keep his cabinet intact.<sup>62</sup> So even as U.S. forces assaulted Okinawa and B-29s continued to pound Japan’s cities, Japan’s strategic leadership had split into two diametrically opposed factions, and the factors that prevented conflict termination in Japan—insistence on preserving the emperor, the desire to save face, and fear of a coup—remained dominant.<sup>63</sup>

Even as U.S. forces captured Luzon, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa, Japan’s strategic leadership sought to protect its diminished gains by continuing to fight so as to reach a negotiated settlement to the conflict. In June 1945, despite overwhelmingly negative reports from the battlefield, a deteriorating diplomatic effort regarding the possibility of Soviet mediation, and indications of Soviet troop movements toward Japanese-occupied Manchuria, the official policy of the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War on 8 June was “to prosecute the war to the end in order to preserve the national polity and protect the Imperial Homeland.”<sup>64</sup> The military was in the midst of planning the KETSU-GO operation—the final decisive battle to annihilate any Americans who attempted to invade mainland Japan—so as to obtain political leverage for a negotiated settlement.<sup>65</sup> Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal of Japan Kōichi Kido, a key advocate of the peace faction, now conducted a last-ditch effort to appeal directly to the emperor. He aimed to achieve “an honorable peace” with his “Draft Plan of Countermeasures to Meet the Situation,” which warned of the inevitability of mass civilian casualties from Allied bombing and worsening starvation with the coming of winter. At this point, the emperor was moved by Kido’s plan, favoring diplomatic efforts over a decisive battle.<sup>66</sup> However, the opposition faction, composed of

War Minister Anami and the chiefs of the army and navy, believed Japan could secure more-favorable conditions if their services defended the mainland against invasion and inflicted heavy casualties on U.S. forces.<sup>67</sup> In short, political leverage could be bought at the cost of thousands of American and hundreds of thousands of Japanese lives.

The release of the Potsdam Declaration on 26 July had a polarizing effect on the two major political factions. The doves feared that rejecting the terms would lead to serious consequences, while the hawks considered acceptance tantamount to unconditional surrender. This divided stance led to maintaining the status quo in terms of continuing hostilities while clinging to the false hope of either a breakthrough in the pursuit of Soviet mediation or a military success that forced the United States to negotiate. So at this point Japan rejected the Potsdam Declaration. Prime Minister Suzuki claimed that Japan simply would ignore it.<sup>68</sup> However, after reports of the devastation of Hiroshima reached Tokyo on the afternoon of 6 August, Foreign Affairs Minister Tōgō again urged acceptance of the declaration. The emperor finally agreed that Japan no longer could delay the decision to terminate the conflict.<sup>69</sup>

The dropping of the second bomb, on Nagasaki, and the Soviet invasion of Manchuria and northern Japan exposed once again the deep divisions within Japan's strategic leadership. Even as the doves argued that continuing the conflict would lead to the ultimate extinction of the nation itself, the hawks continued to counter that once severe casualties had been inflicted on the expected invasion force favorable terms still would be possible. Eventually the combined effect of recent events proved to be too much for the emperor, however, and he met with the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War on 10 August—a day of reckoning. Tōgō pushed for acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration, with one condition: “the defense of the Constitution.” Yonai, the minister of the navy, and Kiichirō Hiranuma, lord president of the council, supported him. On the other hand, Anami, the minister of the army, demanded a number of conditions: (1) the Japanese, and not the Allies, would disarm all overseas Japanese forces; (2) only the Japanese government itself could prosecute war criminals; and (3) the Allies would not occupy Japan. Despite the fact that insisting on these conditions would mean continuation of the war, General Yoshijirō Umezu, the chief of the army general staff, and Admiral Soemu Toyoda, the chief of the naval general staff, supported the position.<sup>70</sup>

The one issue on which both factions unanimously agreed was the necessity to maintain the emperor, in victory or defeat. The emperor was a sacred figure in Japan, and his wishes were a decisive influence over policy. Finally, at this desperate hour, the emperor forced an uneasy reconciliation of the factions, stating as follows: “I have given serious thought to the situation prevailing at home and

abroad and have concluded that continuing the war can only mean destruction for the nation.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, at 0400 on 10 August, the Supreme Council for the Direction of the War agreed to accept the Potsdam Declaration—with the caveat that the emperor remain as sovereign ruler. Although the political factions continued to argue over interpretations of Byrnes's note, which left the emperor on the throne but under the authority of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, they sensed a coup d'état looming, so they resorted to a final conference with the emperor on 14 August. An emotional emperor reiterated his stance that "it is pointless to continue the war any longer."<sup>72</sup> He finally had broken the deadlock. The ultimate decision to surrender was sent through official channels to the Allies, who accepted promptly, and an imperial rescript was broadcast to the people the next day.<sup>73</sup> U.S. strategic leadership thereby had compromised on unconditional surrender, accepting the continuation of the emperor but under the authority of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers.

The decisions of the emperor to intervene to break the deadlock in the council over the direction of the war and to broadcast his resultant surrender decision to the people of Japan were key components of the successful conflict termination. Those actions, combined with an additional imperial rescript on 2 September that directed the people to comply with the surrender demands, showed that the emperor had embraced peace, belatedly but assuredly.<sup>74</sup> Given the emperor's sacred position and authority in Japan, the imperial rescripts exerted a tremendous influence, leading to a successful transition to peace throughout Japanese-occupied territories and in the home islands.

#### *A Key Advocate for Conflict Termination: Rear Admiral Sōkichi Takagi*

To understand the emperor's final decision to capitulate, it is necessary to examine the role of Rear Admiral Sōkichi Takagi, IJN. This respected naval officer wielded a decisive influence within the peace faction.

Takagi's relationship with the Kyoto school was the source of a critical portion of that influence. The Kyoto school was a philosophical and interdisciplinary movement centered at Kyoto University that assimilated Western philosophy and religious beliefs with Japanese philosophy and religious beliefs; in particular, it embraced a synthesis of the Eastern philosophy of religion with Western scientific culture. From early on the Kyoto school had criticized the entire idea of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere as constituting an empty motto, believing it was impossible to establish cooperation in the occupied areas.<sup>75</sup>

Takagi's role in ending the war began in earnest in 1943. Shortly after his promotion to rear admiral, Takagi received a secret order from Shigeyoshi Inoue, undersecretary of the IJN, tasking him with assessing the true situation in the Pacific War. By 1944, Takagi was engaged actively in determining how best to terminate the war, by providing key influence and support to IJN minister Yonai.<sup>76</sup>

At the end of August 1944, Takagi resigned his post as Bureau Chief of Military Education at the Navy Ministry, having been ordered secretly by Minister Yonai and Vice-Minister Inoue to inquire into possible ways to terminate the war. To that end, he frequently moved among senior statesmen, IJA and IJN officers, and imperial family members to collect information and coordinate actions. After months of research, in May 1945 Takagi developed a proposal based on the rapidly deteriorating military situation. The report included the idea of conducting peace negotiations via Soviet mediation, with the intent of terminating the conflict prior to any possibility of a decisive battle on the Japanese mainland. Takagi then worked to influence the positions of the emperor and additional IJN officers.<sup>77</sup> However, when the Suzuki cabinet held its first imperial conference on 8 June, it decided once again in favor of a decisive battle on the mainland, intended to exact concessions from the United States.<sup>78</sup>

With the IJA intent on continuing the conflict to the bitter end, regardless of military and civilian losses, Takagi emerged as an influential moderate. Holding frequent discussions with adherents of the Kyoto school, Takagi helped provide the IJN with a voice of reason. The relationship between the IJN and the Kyoto school produced a combination that emerged as “the only power [that could] control the reckless war expansion of the IJA.”<sup>79</sup> Discussions among members of the Kyoto school and Takagi focused on analysis of the historical background of the war, the current domestic and foreign situations, possible modifications to the national war strategy and policy, and the prospects for ceasing hostilities. With Takagi reaching out to the Kyoto school to produce a body of ideas that could help terminate the conflict in the Pacific, the IJN eventually was able to help modify the war policy of the emperor and the imperial faction that up to that point had advocated the extreme-right nationalism tied to the IJA.

As the Japanese political and military leadership debated how the war in the Pacific should end, Takagi worked hard to influence key decision makers to terminate the conflict and prevent additional devastation and bloodshed. He was not afraid to speak his mind and assess Japan’s situation in objective terms. To counter the IJA’s desire to carry on the fight, Takagi continued to urge the emperor to terminate the war.<sup>80</sup> He criticized the IJA for “madly proclaiming that the time had come to stage a great decisive battle on the homeland that would defeat the enemy.”<sup>81</sup> Takagi continued this work to enlighten other members of the Japanese military and political leadership right up to the end of the war, contributing his objective assessments to the emperor’s cabinet when Japan was in the throes of uncertainty and desperation about what lay ahead. He fully understood the difficulty of terminating a conflict that many in Japan had believed was certain to end in victory. Takagi commented that “there were few people who knew the hardship of the front that was near to the IJA and the IJN, the internal conditions

and destruction; the government and supreme command were desperate, although we hid the truth.”<sup>82</sup>

Takagi, however, was a realist, and he emerged as a critical influence over the emperor in the final phase of the war in the Pacific. By August 1945, Takagi had become an instrumental figure as the “master of war termination,” advocating behind the scenes for an unpopular position: convincing the emperor and key cabinet members to seek an end to the war.<sup>83</sup> Eventually his efforts helped sway the emperor to make a decision amid a factious cabinet. In the end the emperor took the position that Takagi and the peace faction supported.

Takagi, along with the intellectuals of the Kyoto school, was able to influence the IJN in the final phase of the Pacific War, giving the peace faction within the emperor’s cabinet an accurate assessment of Japan’s true situation. Together they provided Japan’s strategic leadership with sound military advice that took into consideration the impact that continued military operations would have on the civilian population. More importantly, they helped shape the emperor’s evolution from war to peace.

The surrender ceremony, held on the deck of the Third Fleet flagship USS *Missouri*, was a solemn affair—punctuated by a clear message to the political leadership, armed forces, and people of Japan. During the signing of the Instrument of Surrender, the United States and its allies demonstrated, in the air and on the sea, their enormous military power. Hundreds of U.S. Army and Navy planes flew overhead, while over 250 ships from the United States, Britain, Australia, and New Zealand filled the expanse of Tokyo Bay.<sup>84</sup> There would be no way for a “stab in the back” myth to arise in Japan; a massive armada had come to the very doorstep of the Japanese mainland to emphasize the vast military power that had defeated Japan and that could be called on again if Japan did not comply with the Instrument of Surrender. Five days later, General MacArthur arrived in Tokyo and raised above the U.S. embassy the American flag—in fact, the very same flag that had flown over Washington, DC, on 7 December 1941 and on the battleship *Missouri* during the surrender.<sup>85</sup>

The American victory over Japan was complete. Not only did Japan agree to terminate its military operations and disarm, but it also pledged to work in good faith with U.S. forces in the occupation and rebuilding of Japan. In signing the Instrument of Surrender, Japan agreed to the unconditional surrender of all military forces and to the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. The emperor would remain in power—under the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers. In essence, the arrangements constituted an unconditional surrender for the military but a conditional surrender for the nation. Setting the conditions for a peaceful occupation, Japan also agreed “to obey and enforce all proclamations”

of the supreme commander (MacArthur) and “to carry out the provisions of the Potsdam Declaration in good faith.”<sup>86</sup>

The transition to a peacetime occupation proceeded remarkably free of conflict. Although U.S. occupation forces were given the authority to impose severe penalties in cases of Japanese noncompliance with occupation directives, the words of the emperor had allowed the Japanese to absorb their shocking defeat and begin to work with their former enemy to rebuild their nation. The United States, however, took no chances. Third Fleet forces, anchored in Tokyo Bay and the Sagami Sea, trained their big guns on targets ashore, while the initial airborne and amphibious landing forces on 30 August were equipped with full combat equipment.<sup>87</sup> Despite a last-ditch coup d'état attempt by a few hard-line IJA officers who refused to accept the emperor's surrender proclamation, Japanese army commanders took steps to surrender their sizable forces in Japan and throughout its overseas empire. General MacArthur was impressed with the level of compliance, reporting that the Japanese in general were “acting in complete good faith.”<sup>88</sup> This level of compliance would last throughout the seven-year period of occupation. Leaving the emperor on the throne, despite an outcry in the United States demanding his removal and punishment, was a critical decision that led to the relatively smooth transition to peace.

Conflict termination in the Pacific in World War II occurred despite the fact that each of the combatants was willing and able to carry on the fight into 1946. Driven by their different strategic objectives—unconditional surrender and a negotiated settlement—each side sought to translate military action into political success, trading lives for political leverage in the postwar period. The United States was ready to conduct a final campaign to seize and occupy the home islands, while the Japanese planned to incur (and suffer) unprecedented casualties to force the United States to negotiate a peace short of unconditional surrender. Fortunately, the strategic leadership on each side was open to compromise. Comprehensive understanding of the operational environment allowed the United States to set the conditions for termination and to understand and appreciate the importance of the emperor's continued authority, while the emperor himself understood Japan's desperate situation and ultimately embraced the peace faction's willingness to end the fighting.

Compelling Japan to surrender without an Allied invasion of the mainland prevented tremendous destruction and the unnecessary loss of countless lives. This represented the epitome of political leverage borne by success on the battlefield. Postwar analysis by the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey concluded the following: “Japan's acceptance of defeat without invasion while still possessed of 2.5 million combat-equipped troops and 9,000 Kamikaze airplanes in the home islands, reveals how persuasively the consequences of [U.S.] operations were

translated into political results.”<sup>89</sup> With clear strategic and operational objectives, U.S. planners had devised and conducted a series of campaigns and operations in a logical sequence that brought U.S. military forces closer and closer to Japan. By 1945, with U.S. forces poised at the doorstep of the Japanese mainland, the United States had set the conditions for terminating the conflict, while the dropping of the atomic bombs and the Soviet invasion of Manchuria provided the final push to capitulation.

Throughout much of the war, the United States had a clear picture of Japanese capabilities and intentions, and this thorough understanding of the operational environment helped shape detailed planning and the development of termination criteria. With U.S. forces preparing for the final assault on the home islands that would compel the Japanese to surrender at great cost, key strategic leaders, such as Stimson and Grew, understood that unconditional surrender, especially the elimination of the emperor, confronted Japan with an existential threat to its way of life that would prolong the conflict. This understanding of the primacy of the emperor to the nation of Japan allowed President Truman ultimately to embrace the idea of a conditional surrender, at least to the extent of maintaining the emperor under the authority of MacArthur. This compromise appealed sufficiently to the emperor and his inner circle for them to accept it.

The ultimate factor leading to the termination of hostilities in August 1945 was the emperor and his decision to embrace the peace faction in Japan. Under the keen influence of Rear Admiral Takagi, a key segment of Japan’s political and naval leadership pushed for termination to avoid additional bloodshed and save the mainland from certain destruction. Despite the splitting of his inner circle into two camps, the emperor finally made the decision to terminate Japanese military operations when it became clear that continued resistance offered far more risk to the nation than the possible reaction from hard-liners in the IJA. In doing so, he accepted the weakening of his authority in postwar Japan under U.S. leadership, but set the conditions for a successful transition to a peaceful occupation and the rebuilding of his nation.

The thousands of U.S. soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen who died thousands of miles from home, as well as the hundreds of thousands of Japanese soldiers, sailors, and civilians who perished right through the waning minutes of the war, are testament to the unprecedented destruction resulting from a global conflict that often did not distinguish between combatants and noncombatants. Only relentless operations and careful U.S. planning that resulted from a thorough understanding of the operational environment finally pushed key Japanese civilian and military leaders to terminate the conflict on terms they once had considered unimaginable. In the end, each side was just flexible enough to seek a compromise, modifying their strategic objectives to set conditions for a better



future. In doing so, hundreds of thousands of lives were spared. The occupation of Japan began immediately, and Japan slowly began to rebuild from the ashes of war. More importantly, the United States and Japan would develop a lasting relationship that has been a foundation of stability in the Pacific for almost seventy-five years.

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#### NOTES

1. John W. Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon, 1986), pp. 297–300.
2. Although there is no consensus on the definitions of the terms *conflict termination* and *war termination* and the terms often are used interchangeably, it is important to note that they are two complementary pieces of the same strategic puzzle. In this article, *conflict termination* will mean the formal end of military operations (directly related to the military strategic objective), whereas *war termination* will mean the political process by which civilian leaders come to an agreement on a defined end state (directly related to the national strategic objective).
3. William Flavin, “Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-conflict Success,” *Parameters* 33, no. 3 (Autumn 2003), p. 95.
4. See, for example, “Summary of Provisions of CINCPAC Plan ‘Campus,’ Pertaining to Naval and Amphibious Phases, ‘Blacklist’ Operations,” annex 5g, in “Basic Outline Plan for ‘Blacklist’ Operations,” 8 August 1945, in *The Occupation of Japan: U.S. Planning Documents, 1942–1945*, ed. Makoto Iokibe (Bethesda, MD: Congressional Information Service, 1987) [hereafter *Occupation of Japan*], available in Eccles Library, Naval War College, Newport, RI.
5. Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning and Execution System (JOPES)*, vol. 1, *Planning Policies and Procedures*, JP 5-03.1 (Washington, DC: 29 September 2006), p. B-14.
6. Final Text of the Communiqué, 26 November 1943, in *The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943*, ed. William F. Franklin and William Gerber, Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), doc. 343; Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Pacific Strategy,” 25 April 1945, in *Occupation of Japan*.
7. President Roosevelt’s Press Conference Notes, 22–23 January 1943, in *The Conferences at Washington, 1941–1942, and Casablanca, 1943*, ed. Fredrick Aandahl, William M. Franklin, and William Slany, Foreign Relations of the United States (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1968), doc. 449.
8. Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Estimate of the Enemy Situation, 1943–44,” Pacific–Far East Asia, Report by the Joint Staff Planners, 4 August 1943, in *Occupation of Japan*.
9. Combined Chiefs of Staff, “Appreciation and Plan for the Defeat of Japan, Memorandum from the U.S. Chiefs of Staff,” 20 August 1943, in *Occupation of Japan*.
10. Combined Staff Planners Memorandum to Combined Chiefs of Staff, “Appreciation and Plan for the Defeat of Japan,” 18 August 1943, pp. 3–5, in *Occupation of Japan*.
11. Combined Chiefs of Staff, “Overall Plan for the Defeat of Japan,” 2 December 1943, in *Occupation of Japan*.
12. Commander in Chief, Pacific Ocean Areas, “Campaign Plan Granite,” 13 January 1944, Strategic Plans Division Records, box 138, Record Group 38, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD.
13. Combined Chiefs of Staff, memorandum by the U.S. Chiefs of Staff, “Specific Operations in the Pacific and Far East, 1943–44,” 9 August 1943, in *Occupation of Japan*.
14. Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1993), p. 4.

15. Ibid., pp. 13–17.
16. Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Operations for the Defeat of Japan,” 19 January 1945, in *Occupation of Japan*.
17. Combined Chiefs of Staff, “Planning Date for the End of the War against Japan,” 13 September 1944, in *Occupation of Japan*.
18. “Naval Operations in the Pacific from March 1944 to October 1945,” on Nicholas C. J. Pappas’s website, [www.shsu.edu/~his\\_ncp/](http://www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/), excerpting from Ernest King [Adm.], “Second Report to the Secretary of the Navy: Covering Combat Operations from 1 March 1944 to 1 March 1945,” March 1945, and “Second Report to the Secretary of the Navy: Covering the Period 1 March 1945 to 1 October 1945,” December 1945.
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20. Joint Staff Planners, “Immediate Demand for the Unconditional Surrender of Japan,” 15 May 1945, in *Occupation of Japan*.
21. Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 77.
22. U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *Japan’s Struggle to End the War*, ed. Walter Wilds [Cdr., USNR] (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1946), pp. 10–13; Robert A. Pape, “Why Japan Surrendered,” *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993), pp. 159–60. Pape argues that the blockade was the primary factor in defeating Japan.
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26. Combined Chiefs of Staff, “Estimate of the Enemy Situation (as of 6 July 1945),” 8 July 1945, in “The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II: A Collection of Primary Sources,” ed. William Burr, National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book 162, *National Security Archive* [hereafter NSA], 4 August 2015, [www.nsarchive.gwu.edu/](http://www.nsarchive.gwu.edu/).
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28. Stimson to the President, memorandum, “Proposed Program for Japan,” 2 July 1945, NSA.
29. Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Pacific Strategy.”
30. Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP), *Reports of General MacArthur*, vol. 1, *The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), p. 395.
31. Richard B. Frank, “Ketsu Gō,” in *The End of the Pacific War: Reappraisals*, ed. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007), p. 78. Herbert Hoover’s memorandum of 30 May 1945 estimated five hundred thousand to one million U.S. deaths in the campaign. See Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2007), p. 187.
32. MacArthur to Marshall, 21 April 1945, in “Nimitz Graybook,” vol. 6.
33. Nimitz to King, 25 April 1945, in “Nimitz Graybook,” vol. 6.
34. Joint Chiefs of Staff to Nimitz, Arnold, and MacArthur, 25 May 1945, in “Nimitz Graybook,” vol. 6.
35. “Minutes of Meeting Held at the White House on Monday 18 June 1945” [hereafter “Minutes of White House Meeting, 18 June 1945”], doc. 8 in “Selected Archival Documents,” app. C in Douglas MacEachin, *The Final Months of the War with Japan* ([Washington, DC]: Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence, December 1998), available at [cia.gov/](http://cia.gov/).
36. Joint Chiefs of Staff to MacArthur and Nimitz, 14 June 1945, in “Nimitz Graybook,” vol. 6.
37. Nimitz to King, 3 August 1945, in “Nimitz Graybook,” vol. 7.
38. Nimitz to King, 27 July 1945, in “Nimitz Graybook,” vol. 7.

39. "Summary of Provisions of CINCPAC Plan 'Campus.'"
40. Ibid.
41. "Basic Outline Plan for 'Blacklist' Operations."
42. SCAP, *The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific*, vol. 1 supplement, *MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation; Military Phase* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 2, 10.
43. For recent assessments of these issues, see Hasegawa, *The End of the Pacific War*; Tamon Suzuki, *Shusen no Seijishi 1943–1945* [Japan's road to surrender: Political history, 1943–1945] (Tokyo: Tokyo Univ. Press, 2011); and Kanji Akagi and Ryosuke Takita, "Syusenshi kenkyu no genzai: Genbakutouka Sorensansen Ronso to Sonogo" [Japan's decision to surrender: A historiographical review], *Keio Univ. Graduate School of Law Journal of Law, Politics, and Sociology* 89, no. 9 (September 2016).
44. In its postwar analysis the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey argues as follows: "In all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated." U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *Japan's Struggle to End the War*, p. 13. Historians have criticized this analysis roundly; see Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, pp. 82–85.
45. Pape, "Why Japan Surrendered," pp. 191–92.
46. Combined Chiefs of Staff, "Memorandum by the United States Chiefs of Staff," 2 September 1944, in *Occupation of Japan*.
47. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, "The Atomic Bombs and the Soviet Invasion: Which Was More Important in Japan's Decision to Surrender?," in *The End of the Pacific War*, ed. Hasegawa, p. 114. Hasegawa argues that the Soviet assault was more influential than the atomic bombs in convincing Japan to surrender but admits that "neither the atomic bombs nor Soviet entry into the war served as a 'knock-out' punch that had a direct, decisive, and immediate effect on Japan's decision to surrender."
48. The text of the Potsdam Declaration can be found in Richardson Dougall, ed., *The Conference of Berlin (the Potsdam Conference)*, 1945, Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960), vol. 2, pp. 1474–76.
49. Hal Brands, "Who Saved the Emperor?," *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (May 2006), pp. 274–75.
50. Leon V. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1988), p. 88.
51. Stimson to the President, "Proposed Program for Japan."
52. "Minutes of White House Meeting, 18 June 1945," p. 207.
53. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, pp. 127, 250.
54. Barton J. Bernstein, "The Perils and Politics of Surrender: Ending the War with Japan and Avoiding the Third Atomic Bomb," *Pacific Historical Review* 46, no. 1 (February 1977), p. 5.
55. Ibid., pp. 3–7.
56. Brands, "Who Saved the Emperor?," p. 287.
57. Kaigunsho Chosaka [The Navy Ministry's research section], "Touron Tekki" [Discussion summary], *Kaicho Kenkyushiryō (Toku) P Dai 2gou furoku* [Navy research material (special) no. 2 supplement].
58. SCAP, *Reports of General MacArthur*, vol. 2, *Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), pt. 2, pp. 669–71.
59. Imperial General Headquarters Navy Order 37, 20 January 1945, in Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, p. 291.
60. James D. Hornfischer, *The Fleet at Flood Tide: America at Total War in the Pacific, 1944–1945* (New York: Bantam Books, 2016), pp. 377–78.
61. SCAP, *Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, pt. 2, pp. 677–79.
62. Ibid., pp. 673–80.
63. U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *Japan's Struggle to End the War*, pp. 4–5.
64. SCAP, *Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, pt. 2, p. 687.
65. KETSU-Go Directive, 8 April 1945, in Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, pp. 295–96.

66. Kort, *The Columbia Guide to Hiroshima and the Bomb*, p. 64.
67. SCAP, *Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, pt. 2, pp. 693–96.
68. Hornfischer, *The Fleet at Flood Tide*, p. 434.
69. Frank, *Downfall*, p. 272.
70. SCAP, *Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, pt. 2, pp. 709–10.
71. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 269.
72. Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 1954), pp. 207–208.
73. Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish*, p. 272.
74. SCAP, *Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, pt. 2, p. 758.
75. Sōkichi Takagi, *Taiheiyosenso to Rikukaigun no Koso* [The Pacific War and struggle between navy and army] (Tokyo: Keizaioraisha, 1982), pp. 190–91.
76. Takagi emerged from humble beginnings to become a successful naval officer and a key advocate for peace. Born in Kumamoto Prefecture on 9 August 1893 to a life of poverty, he worked diligently to receive a degree in physics from Tokyo Imperial University before graduating from the IJN Academy in 1915, ranked twenty-seventh out of ninety-six. After Takagi was commissioned an ensign he was assigned to the cruisers *Chitose* and *Akashi*. Graduating from Japan's Naval War College in 1927 before serving as naval attaché to France until 1930, Takagi served as a secretary to the navy minister for two years and then as an instructor at the Naval War College from 1933 to 1936. In the following year Takagi was promoted to captain and became chief of the Navy Ministry's research section, where he began to exchange opinions with outside experts, including Dr. Kitarō Nishida of Kyoto University. Concerned with the direction of the IJN, he organized a "brain trust" of private intellectuals that played an active part in intelligence, policy making, philosophy, politics, and diplomacy. After the war, Takagi became deputy cabinet secretary in the Higashikuni cabinet in September 1945. In addition, he lectured about war guidance in the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) Staff College for eighteen years, from 1958 to 1975, always seeking to advise the younger students. He died in 1979 at the age of eighty-five.
77. Takashi Ito, *Takagi Sōkichi: Nikki to Joho Ge* [Sōkichi Takagi: Diary and information] (Tokyo: Misuzu Shobou, 2000), pp. 856–61.
78. SCAP, *Japanese Operations in the Southwest Pacific Area*, pt. 2, p. 687.
79. Tetsuro Mori, *Kyoto Tetsugaku Sensyo Dai Juikknan Nishida Kitarō, Nishitani Keiji hoka Sekaishi no Riron* [Kyoto Philosophy Selection No. 11, Kitarō Nishida, Keiji Nishitani et al., Theory of world history] (Tokyo: Gentosha, 2000), p. 280.
80. Taisyu Fujioka, *Kaigun Syosyo Takagi Sōkichi: Kaigun Ryoshikiha Teitoku no Syogai* [Rear Admiral Sōkichi Takagi: Life of IJN commonsense group admiral] (Tokyo: Kojinsya, 1986); Ito, *Sōkichi Takagi*, pp. 896–900.
81. Hornfischer, *The Fleet at Flood Tide*, p. 422.
82. Kaijojieitai Kanbugakko [JMSDF Command and Staff College], "Kaigun no Naibu" [Inside IJN], *Takagi Sōkichi Bunko* [Sōkichi Takagi Library].
83. Haruo Morimoto, *Aru Syusen Kosaku* [A certain movement how to end the war] (Tokyo: Chuokoronsya, 1980), p. 161.
84. SCAP, *The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific*, p. 455; "Ships Present in Tokyo Bay during the Surrender Ceremony," app. 2 in *Report of Surrender*.
85. "Naval Operations in the Pacific from March 1944 to October 1945."
86. Instrument of Surrender (Japan), 2 September 1945, available at [www.archivesfoundation.org/](http://www.archivesfoundation.org/).
87. *Report of Surrender*, p. 13.
88. SCAP, *The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific*, p. 453.
89. U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, *Japan's Struggle to End the War*, p. 1.