Introduction

HILARY CONROY AND HARRY WRAY

IN the nearly fifty years since Pearl Harbor, there have been dozens of books on the subject but no definitive study. The closest is the work of Gordon Prange, published posthumously by his former students, Donald M. Goldstein and Katherine V. Dillon. In the preface to *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* (New York, McGraw Hill, 1981), the first volume of Prange's projected tetralogy, his editors refer to the author's "magnificent obsession" with the subject. It was indeed that. Prange and his editors deserve credit for making his immense and indefatigable research available to general readers and scholars alike. However, as his editors admit, "even in the context of a multivolume study, Prange never nourished the illusion that his would be the last word on the subject" (*At Dawn We Slept*, p. xiii).

This is certainly true, for in his "magnificent obsession" Prange incorporated a few minor obsessions that color his work. One is a tendency to become friends with all the Pearl Harbor actors, especially the Japanese perpetrators. Prange's is a problem characteristic of military history. In his enrapturement with the chesslike strategy and tactics of war, Prange failed to reflect sufficiently on its terrible cost in terms of human life and property and on the tremendous importance of the avoidance of war and the need to explore why leaders and governments fail to achieve it at memorable military crossroads.

Prange assumed the inevitability of the war, but, were Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War in fact unavoidable in the context of the times? The question is a crucial one, and, although the present volume is not entirely an exercise in peace research, it nonetheless approaches the Pearl Harbor-Pacific War problem from a broad perspective. We hope that this collection will shed the light of half a century's research by more than a dozen scholars on the various aspects of an elusive problem.

The essays that follow reexamine Japanese and American diplo-

macy in view of the Pearl Harbor attack, including to some extent the involvement of other nations. This reexamination seeks to answer such questions as the following: Were American and Japanese policies before Pearl Harbor realistic in terms of the problems and needs of the respective nations, or were they unrealistic, biased, mismanaged, or even absurd? Were they prudent or imprudent? Could U.S. and Japanese leaders have avoided or delayed the war if they had altered their positions? A great deal? A little? Why did they fail to do so? Were there those in the American and Japanese governments at the time who recommended wiser policies than those taken? If so, why were these policies not pursued? Or are these "wiser policies" only available by hindsight? What role did domestic politics or relations with other nations—Britain and China for the United States, Germany and Italy for Japan—play in limiting the freedom of diplomatic maneuver of the principals?

Harry Wray begins by providing a general historical perspective. Following Wray's analysis of Japanese-American relations and perceptions from 1900 to 1940 is an essay by Akira Iriye, which emphasizes that domestic conditions limited the range of Japanese policymakers far more than that of their American counterparts. Such issues as oil supply and relations with China were much more vital to Japan than to the United States. Iriye suggests that American leaders missed many opportunities to influence domestic conditions in Japan and to promote a climate for peaceful resolution of the issues of the time. In the third essay Gary Dean Best carries this critique of American policy further by arguing that President Roosevelt from the beginning, and in disregard of some of his more knowledgeable advisors, elected to stress his "ancestral connection with China" in favoring China in Sino-Japanese relations, and that Secretary of State Hull was a "mediocrity" who was "on the defensive" in the Roosevelt cabinet and who toadied to Roosevelt's predilections on matters of East Asian diplomacy.

John K. Emmerson, who was living in Tokyo as a young career diplomat and was in close touch with Ambassador Joseph Grew there in the pre-Pearl Harbor years, agrees with this critical view of the FDR-Hull attitudes in his, the fourth, essay. He argues that Grew, the American expert on Japan, insofar as there was one, was not listened to, whereas Stanley Hornbeck, "whose only experience in Asia had been a teaching stint in China," gave the advice that was followed. This included a vetoing of a proposed Pacific summit between Presi-

dent Roosevelt and Premier Konoe, even though, Emerson says, quoting Grew, that Konoe in a secret meeting with Grew had "conclusively and whole-heartedly" accepted Hull's principles.

Ikei Masaru, Japanese scholar, also feels that American diplomacy was "mismanaged" in the 1930s, beginning with the Manchurian (Mukden) Incident of September 18, 1931, to which he traces developments leading to the Pacific War. Diplomacy was too soft in 1931 when "the United States did not recognize the seriousness of the [Mukden] incident," but it was too hard in 1941 when a "more cautious attitude toward Japan" might have postponed or avoided war.

Hosoya Chihiro then elaborates on the hard-liner, soft-liner issue in American diplomacy in the months preceding Pearl Harbor. He argues that the "hard-liners," led by Stanley Hornbeck, hoped and expected to "deter" Japan with oil and trade embargoes and other "hard-line" policies but miscalculated the "psychology of the Japanese people and especially of the middle echelon military officers" associated with the "samurai do-or-die spirit." There was a "predisposition to make critical decisions in the face of taking extremely great, even illogical risks . . . [i.e.,] death rather than humiliation."

Lest we begin to think that all the essays fault the United States, it should be noted that Jonathan Utley, Michael Barnhart, and Alvin D. Coox defend Roosevelt, Hull, and even Hornbeck for being "realistic" about Japan's warlike intentions. Utley argues that Hull's actions, not his words, should be attended to; they indicate that Hull was indeed a realist. Utley observes that Hull's eyes were on Southeast Asia more than on China and that he was not merely enamored with "saving" China. In fact, he realized that the Japanese were bogged down there, and he hoped the strain of the war in China would bring down the militarists in Japan. War did not come because Hull was too legalistic or moralistic, says Utley, but because Japan and the United States had "irreconcilable differences."

Michael Barnhart argues that "Hornbeck was right" in his hard-line assessment of Japan. Although cables from the American embassy in Tokyo (Ambassador Grew) pleaded for caution and softness in U.S. diplomacy, Hornbeck "saw things differently. The [Japanese] military had risen to power not out of some dark conspiracy or temporary aberration but because all Japanese political leaders, including civilians, agreed with the military's aims. . . ." The United States had to "put up or shut up." Hornbeck's policies, where they were followed, "served American interests well."

Alvin D. Coox defends Roosevelt, Hull, and other U.S. leaders against the charge that they invited the Japanese attack as a "back door" into the war in Europe. "After all," he says, "it was Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku, the Japanese Combined Fleet Commander, who devised the Pearl Harbor raid in utmost secrecy, not Roosevelt." Japanese scholar Fujiwara Akira emphasizes in his essay that Japan deliberately entered the Pacific War "as the clear-cut nation's will." Pearl Harbor was planned, and the coming of the war was not accidental or something that grew out of incidents or skirmishes, as was the case with Japan's involvement in China. "Even a summit conference" would only "postpone" war.

Traditional interpretations of this period have argued that the prospects for peace with Japan were permanently dashed by Japan's signing of the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy on September 27, 1940. This pact recognized Japan's leadership in greater East Asia and a future world dominated by the United States, Russia, Germany, and Japan. Ikei Masaru maintains that the United States overreacted to it. Akira Iriye, Hata Ikuhiko, Norman Graebner, and Conroy agree that the signing of the Tripartite Pact had great repercussions, but they differ in their assessments of its import. Hata maintains that its signing was "a point of no return on the road to Pearl Harbor." Graebner and Iriye conclude that after its signing Americans saw a linkage between the wars in Europe and East Asia. In that context, China became an ally who, in Graebner's cynical words, could not be allowed to suffer any longer the consequences of appeasement. In his view Japan was now left with only two alternatives: to terminate the war on U.S. terms or to fight an endless war on the mainland. Graebner argues that the American decision to support China even to the point of justifying war in the Pacific was a departure from the pre-1940 policy of the United States.

On another point Professor Utley is in sharp disagreement with several essayists, particularly Tsunoda Jun, dean of Japanese diplomatic historians and an adviser to several Japanese prime ministers on foreign policy matters. The issue is the value of a summit conference between Prime Minister Konoe and President Roosevelt, which had been requested by the former on August 9, 1941. Utley defends Hull's veto of a summit by saying it could accomplish nothing but mischief.

One of the major reasons American policymakers failed to take Japanese peace proposals seriously is that they had already concluded

that the Japanese were treacherous and insincere. To be accused of insincerity is a grievous insult in the Orient. In his essay Tsunoda Jun angrily argues that Prime Minister Konoe's bid was completely genuine. Konoe was willing to stake his very life on a summit. Professor Graebner's paper also argues for the view of Ambassador Grew (our representative in Japan) that Washington should have been more flexible on such things as agreeing to a Roosevelt-Konoe meeting.

Sachiko Murakami's contribution is from her doctoral dissertation on "Japan's Thrust into French Indochina, 1940-1945" (New York University, 1981). Her untimely illness and death prevented her from focusing her very interesting conclusions on the main question of this volume, "Was the Pacific War inevitable?" However, we present an edited version of her conclusion to bring about such focus with minimal reconstruction. The body of her dissertation, which presents a huge amount of evidence of Japanese ambivalence, internal argument and disagreement, and worried hesitation with regard to Indochina, is somewhat ambivalent on the question of whether the Pacific War was inevitable.

One of her chapters (Chapter 2), entitled "Don't Miss the Bus," shows how newspaper sensationalism, reporting of German victories in Europe in the spring of 1940, and the propaganda efforts of German Foreign Minister Joachim Von Ribbentrop and the German ambassador to Japan, Eugene Ott, did stir up considerable public pressure on the Yonai cabinet to get on "the omnibus of German victory," but the rest of her dissertation indicates that this by no means made Japan's "thrust" into Indochina a foregone conclusion. Despite this she states in her concluding paragraph: "It can be said in the last analysis, therefore, that French Indochina was caught in the inevitable collision of the opposing policies of the United States and Japan concerning China and the Pacific." This is quite emphatic. However, since Murakami's subject is the Indochina phase, we shall regard it as conclusion only in saying that more, indeed much more, than Japan's Indochina incursion was needed to make the Pacific War inevitable, if indeed it was.

What emerges from these essays are four major debates. One is about whether war could have been avoided. A second controversy centers on the latest date at which a solution was possible; some of the essayists argue that war could have been avoided up until November 26, 1941. A third issue is whether responsibility for the deadlock lay with the United States, the Japanese, or our allies. The fourth is

about whether Hull acted wisely in assuming that Japan could not be deterred from her expansionist course. On the latter point both Graebner and Conroy show that Admiral Nomura Kichisaburō accepted his appointment as ambassador to the United States in January 1941 only after he had been assured by Konoe that the highest naval authorities sincerely sought improved relations with the United States. They support their contention by noting that the second Konoe cabinet resigned on July 12, 1941, for the specific purpose of replacing pro-Axis Foreign Minister Matsuoka Yōsuke with Admiral Toyoda Teijirō, an opponent of the Axis alliance. Despite these actions, however, Hull stubbornly persisted in the view that Japan was committed to aggression.

Norman Graebner's essay argues that China, not Southeast Asia, was the stumbling block but that Japanese efforts to negotiate resulted only in the continued assertion of principles by the United States. In contrast to Utley, Graebner believes that Japanese actions in Southeast Asia were undertaken not to obtain Southeast Asia but to achieve Japan's will in China. American embargoes only drove the Japanese deeper into Southeast Asia to block U.S. aid to China and to obtain desired raw materials. For this reason Japan always showed a willingness to return to pre-July 16, 1941 conditions if the United States would end its trade embargo of that date.

Graebner argues that, whereas the Japanese kept coming forth with proposals, the United States refused to engage in any pragmatic horse trading. For example, on November 20, Special Ambassador Kurusu and Ambassador Nomura presented a formal proposal, a *modus vivendi*, that Graebner maintains had the effect of repudiating the Tripartite Pact. The two ambassadors offered a Japanese withdrawal from southern Indochina and an eventual withdrawal from all of Indochina if the United States would resume normal trade relations and adopt a hands-off policy toward China.

It is regarding this point that the essay by David Klein and Hilary Conroy adds significantly to the essays by Graebner, Utley, and Tsunoda. The Klein-Conroy paper maintains that American interpretations of British and Chinese messages on November 25–26 regarding the American *modus vivendi* on November 24 dashed the prospect of avoiding war. They indicate that the Roosevelt administration's decision to scuttle the *modus vivendi* and to issue a general note by Hull emphasizing principles may have killed the last opportunity for peace. Time had run out. November 26, 1941, was the last

day allocated by the Tōjō government for peace efforts. A point of no return had been reached.

In the final essay Waldo Heinrichs gives a “global” reason for this, namely that FDR and Hull, from the midsummer of 1941 on, were stalling on Japanese peace overtures while tightening the embargo on Japanese oil. Why? So that Japan would not dare attack the Soviet Union from the Siberian side, thus allowing Moscow to use Siberian forces to hold off Hitler in Europe.

Obviously these are complicated matters. Let us proceed, therefore, to the essays before attempting to answer whether the Pacific War was inevitable, a question to which a definitive answer may not be possible.

Pearl Harbor Reexamined