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Hirohito

The last God emperor

A former judge with a passion for history, **Jean Sénat Fleury** was born in Haïti and currently lives in Boston. He wrote several historical books.



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HIROHITO
THE LAST GOD EMPEROR

JEAN SÉNAT FLEURY

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Introduction

Hirohito, the eldest son of Emperor Yoshihito, was born on April 29, 1901 in the royal palace in Tokyo, Japan. On the death of his father in 1926, Hirohito became, at the age of twenty-five, the 124th emperor of Japan. His accession to the throne marked Japan's entry into the Shōwa Era, meaning "Radiant Peace."

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The structure of the Meiji Constitution placed Hirohito at the top of the state. He was the supreme commander of the army and navy. In addition to being the ruler of a state and the commander-in-chief of the Japanese Imperial Forces, his divine status made him, the symbol of the state, cultural identity, and unity of the Japanese people. Emperor of Japan from 1926 until his death in 1989, he was the longest-reigning historical Japanese emperor and one of the longest-reigning monarchs in the world. The new Constitution of 1946 made him the last god emperor in Japan.

Chapter One

A Prince Was Born

Japan's longest-reigning monarch, Emperor Hirohito, was born Michinomiya Hirohito, on April 29, 1901, in the Aoyama Palace in Tokyo. Hirohito was the first grandson of Emperor Mutsuhito and the first son of Crown Prince Yoshihito (later Emperor Taishō) and Princess Sadako (later Empress Teimei).¹ Being the first male child in the family, Hirohito was destined to carry on the tradition of an imperial line whose descent is traced in legend from Amaterasu Omikami, the sun goddess in the pantheon of Shinto.²

According to Japanese tradition, the imperial line began in 660 BC with the legendary Emperor Jimmu, considered as a direct descendent of the sun goddess Amaterasu. Around the third century AD, this “imperial clan” defeated rival chieftains and first asserted dominance over central and western Japan. The imperial institution survived for more than 2,600 years despite some individual emperors being deposed and others murdered from court intrigues. For the next several hundred years, power shifted to various aristocratic and military clans. In 1868, the leaders of what is now called the Meiji Restoration claimed the reestablishment of direct imperial rule.³ Japan became a centralized nation-state with the emperor as the symbol of national unity; loyalty to him was expected to be a sacred duty and a patriotic obligation. Assuming the position of highest priest of the Shinto cult and claiming to be of divine ancestry, the Japanese emperor presented himself with an aura of sacred inviolability.⁴

Hirohito was born into this 2,600-year lineage. Upon his birth, scholars of the imperial court sought an appropriate name for him. They found a passage written by Confucius in the year 500 BC, about instructions given by a Chinese emperor to his young brother that said, “Make yourself broad-minded and let people live

in comfort.” The Chinese character that Japanese pronounce “*hirō*” was taken from the classic Chinese rendering of the word “broad-minded” and was combined with the word “*bito*” meaning “benevolence,” which is part of the personal name of every Japanese emperor.⁵

Mutsuhito was still emperor when Hirohito was born in 1901. Following imperial custom, the emperor chose to have his grandson raised not by his parents but by a surrogate family that could teach him the merits of honor and discipline. Therefore, while only a few months old, Hirohito was taken to the residence of ex-navy minister and former vice admiral, Count Kawamura Sumiyoshi.⁶ When Kawamura died three years later, in November 1904, at age sixty-seven, Hirohito and his younger brother Chichibu-no-miya Yasuhito Shinno (born in 1902) rejoined their parents at the Togū-gosho, the crown prince’s palace in Akasaka. On January 3, 1905, Hirohito’s second brother, Takamatsu-no-miya Nobuhito, was born.⁷

The Crown Prince’s Education

After Kawamura died, Count Maresuke Nogi, an illustrious warrior of the Japan military, a hero of the First Sino-Japanese War and the war with Russia, became one of Hirohito’s tutors.⁸ By then, Nogi was an old soldier and the headmaster of a school for the sons of the aristocracy. He taught Hirohito the traditional spirit of Bushido and the way of the samurai.⁹ To Hirohito, Nogi personified the virtues of patriotism and the samurai ethic of personal austerity and devotion to duty, which constituted part of the legacy of Tokugawa to Meiji Japan. In addition, Nogi emphasized physical fitness, ‘the habit of diligence,’ punishment for misbehavior, no leniency in grading, plain living, and military training.¹⁰ Thus schooled from an early age to military principles, Shintoism and respect for the *Daigensui*, this was effectively a military education.

A firm believer in Confucianism, Bushidō, and the precepts of Zen, Nogi favored a strict military-style education for Hirohito.¹¹ Under the routine he established; the young prince had a very difficult schedule. He awoke early in the morning for prayers to

honor the sun goddess and Emperor Meiji. Then he attended lessons. He was instructed in many subjects considered important for the education of an emperor: math, physics, economics, calligraphy, language (French, Chinese, and Japanese), ethics, martial arts, and natural history. All were part of *teiōgaku*, the making of an emperor.¹² Before the Meiji constitution, monarchs in Japan were educated in subjects such as abstract Confucian philosophical texts and practiced reciting Shinto prayers.¹³ Hirohito's education as the future emperor was well prepared and meticulously oriented. First, he attended the Gakushūin Peer's School, from 1908 to 1914, and was tutored by the special institute established for the crown prince's education. An academy called Tōgū-gogakumonsho took over his tutelage from May 4, 1914 until late February 1921.¹⁴

From 1914 to 1921, Dr. Hirotarō Hattori became Hirohito's teacher of natural history and physics. Under Hattori's guidance, Hirohito read Darwin's theory of evolution as interpreted by the popular writer Asajirō Oka, whose book *Shinkaron kōwa* (Lectures on evolution) was published in 1904.¹⁵ Hirohito developed at this early age an interest in marine biology.¹⁶ Hattori remained his mentor and chief scientific collaborator for more than thirty years.¹⁷ He accompanied him on many collecting expeditions and also served as his scientific proxy.¹⁸ He wrote to European naturalists and distributing specimen collections on the emperor's behalf.¹⁹

Hirohito's regular military teachers at the Ogakumonjo School included the president of the peer's school, Ōsako Naoharu. Ōsako, the older brother of General Naomichi, was a general in the early Imperial Japanese Army, and expert on the Russo-Japanese War. Capt. Satō Tetsutarō, who served as a lieutenant in 1892, as chief navigator aboard the gunboat *Akagi*, delivered lectures to Hirohito on the American admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan's theories of naval power, especially those explained in his first two books: *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, and *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793–1812*.²⁰

From Mahan's theories, Hirohito learned "how having a strong presence on the seas is one of the biggest factors that help a country win wars and become an influential world power." According to Mahan, control of the sea by a large fleet of battleships was key to successful expansionist.²¹ Satō also lectured Hirohito on Western and Japanese military history (including the Battle of the Sea of Japan, [May 1905] in which the combined Japanese fleet with large British-made battleships under Admiral Tōgō destroyed the Russian Baltic squadron, effectively ending the Russian-Japanese War).

Prince Fushimi Hiroyasu, Hirohito's uncle, supervised the first stage of his royal nephew's naval training, which started in July 1916. Hirohito's army lecturers were generals Ugaki Kazushige and Nara Takeji. Ugaki was sent as a military attaché to Germany from 1902 to 1904 and again from 1906 to 1907. In 1910, he was promoted to colonel, and in 1915 was promoted to major general. In 1917, he participated in planning the Siberian Expedition to stop the spread of the Russian Revolution into that region.²²

During Hirohito's last year at the Tōgū-gogakumonsho Academy, Nara drafted a seven-point guideline for the Crown Prince's continued education, stating that he should emphasize military affairs and take a deep interest in commanding the country's army and navy. Nara prepared him for the different role he was to play as an emperor, taught him the nation's history, which combined elements of nationalism and racism in the myth of his descent from the gods.²² Under Nara's direction, Hirohito mastered horsemanship and practiced firing weapons.

Sugiura Shigetake, an ultranationalist Confucian educator, lectured Hirohito on the principles that should guide his behavior. In his lectures, Sugiura named several great men in world history whose lives illustrated the value of knowledge. Among them were Jean-Jacques Rousseau, for his philosophy of education and independence of thought; George Washington, for his sense of justice and fair play; and Thomas Robert Malthus, for his ideas on population growth and economic change.²³ Another fundamental point was that Hirohito had to respect all the rules contained in

Meiji's "Charter Oath of Five Articles" (1868), which included the statement, "Knowledge shall be sought throughout the world so as to strengthen the foundation of Imperial rule" and the "Imperial Rescript on Education" (1890).²⁴ Sugiura regarded the "Charter Oath" as an important document for political reasons. The document stated that deliberative assemblies shall be widely established and all matters decided by public discussion, and that "all classes, high, low, shall unite in vigorously carrying out the administration of affairs of state."²⁵ Sugiura pointed out that the Meiji constitution had endorsed that vision by providing for an elected lower house of representatives, as well as an appointed upper house of peers. Together, the charter of oath and the constitution signified that the Japanese monarchy had reached a new stage in its historical evolution that of constitutional monarchy.²⁶

Sugiura's lectures to Hirohito illustrated a crucial link between domestic reform and maritime expansion, while demonstrating a debt to the new ideologies of Japanism and liberalism. His teachings revealed a distinctive strain of colonial thought that envisioned people on the periphery of a unified Japan, from Ōmi merchants to social outcasts, as central agents of expansion.²⁷

Chapter Two

Dynasty

Emperor Meiji died on July 30, 1912. His son, Crown Prince Yoshihito, Hirohito's father, became emperor, and Hirohito was formally named Crown Prince in a special national ceremony that was held on November 2 that year. He was eleven years old. Eight years later, Hirohito attained the ranks of major of the Imperial Japanese Army and lieutenant commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy. A year later, after graduating from the Ogakumonjo School, he began a six-month trip to England and Continental Europe on March 3, 1921. Dressed as a naval officer, he boarded the 16,000-ton Japanese battleship *Katori* off the coast of Hayama. Several nobles accompanied him, including some cousins and his uncle, Gen. Prince Naruhiko Higashikuni. While for many years, Japanese soldiers and sailors had gone abroad to observe and train, Hirohito's trip was the first time a member of the royal family had left Japan. Two-thirds of the way there, the battleship *Katori* passed into the Red Sea, then through Egypt's Suez Canal, and stopped at Cairo where the British Lord Allenby gave a garden party. Prince George of England (later King George VI) met Hirohito at the island of Malta and took him to a performance of *Otello* by an Italian opera company. On April 29, 1921, near Gibraltar, at the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, Hirohito celebrated his twentieth birthday. At Gibraltar, he visited Britain's naval base and attended some horse races. He arrived in England at Portsmouth's naval base on May 9th. Again, dressed as an admiral, he inspected the crew of a British battleship.

On May 10, 1921, a second member of the British royal family, Prince Edward, known as the Prince of Wales, son of the reigning King George V and Queen Mary, greeted Hirohito. King George invited the Crown Prince and his entourage of eighteen people to stay at Buckingham Palace. In the following days, Prince Edward

ushered him through a series of receptions, banquets, and parades. Hirohito visited the British Museum and enjoyed the exhibits. He went to the Bank of England and visited Oxford University. He met Britain's Prime Minister Lloyd George. On May 21, Hirohito and his entourage went to Scotland. There, he met Sir John George Stewart-Murray, Marquis of Tullibardine and 8th Duke of Atholl. Returning to England, he visited the industrial city of Manchester, touring factories, meeting and shaking hands with shipyard workers.

On May 30 Hirohito traveled to France. Arriving in Paris, he visited the Louvre Museum. Marshal Henri Philippe Pétain showed him the battlefields of the war's Western Front. The following day, France's President Alexandre Millerand, previously prime minister, gave a reception for Hirohito at the Elysée Palace. The next day, he visited the Palace of Versailles, France's principal royal residence from 1682 to the beginning of the French Revolution in 1789.

Thus, from March 3 to September 3, 1921, Hirohito and his accompanying relatives and officials toured Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Italy as the first royal member to have gone abroad. This trip in Europe informed and educated the future emperor about the Western world beyond Japan, its politics, alliances, technological powers, and empire aims.²⁸ Under the guidance of Baron Chinda Sutemi, one of the most experienced diplomats in Japan, he learned to appreciate the importance of international peace. "War is a terrible thing," he said, looking over the ruins of the Battle of Verdun in France, where more than two million soldiers had killed each other, on orders of their superiors, only a few years earlier. Hirohito considered his visit to King George V and the British royal family as the most valuable lesson of the trip. As he said many decades later, "George V intimately explained to me the British constitutional monarchy as it ought to be. Ever since, it has been always on my mind, and I have been constantly thinking about how a monarch under a constitutional monarchy should behave."²⁹

On November 10, 1921, Hirohito at twenty years old was appointed Prince Regent of Japan (Sesshō) to carry on the imperial

functions of government because of his father's debilitating mental illness. It was a difficult task for the young Prince Regent as future emperor. The same year, Britain refused to renew the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and a few months later, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that Japanese were ineligible to become U.S. citizens. These decisions angered the Japanese people and encouraged the creation of many secret societies funded by the army, such as the Black Dragon Society, a prominent paramilitary, ultranationalist group in Japan founded by martial artist Uchida Ryochei, which made public threats against anyone who did not follow the precepts of "good Japanese citizenship." In 1923, Hirohito was promoted from major to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Imperial Japanese Army. In 1924, he married Princess Nagako Kuni. And in 1925, he was promoted from the rank of lieutenant commander to that of captain in the Imperial Japanese Navy.

As an officer in both the army and navy, Hirohito received many years of military training during the Siberian Expedition. During these years of training, he was witness to several political and social "events" in Japan. The Imperial Japanese Army was required to exert "brutal force" against its own citizens. For instance, in the wake of Russia's "Bolshevik Revolution" against Tsar Nicholas, riots erupted throughout Japan in the summer of 1918. The government mobilized approximately sixty-thousand soldiers to put down the riots. They were the most violent strikes in Japanese history, more brutal than the Tokyo Artillery Arsenal and the Kamaishi iron mine in 1919, the Yawata Steel in 1920, the Ashio copper mine in April 1921, and the Kawasaki-Mitsubishi shipyards strikes in Kobe in July 1921. During the Kobe strikes, thirty-five thousand shipyard workers demonstrated for autonomy in the workplace, better wages and working conditions. The Mayor of the city called in the army. More than three hundred workers were wounded and some two hundred and fifty arrested.³⁰

Japan, in the 1920s, was a country of intense ideological and cultural conflicts and collisions. Several social protest movements that surged during World War I gained in force after the end of the war. Labor strikes, union organizing, and an incipient student

movement were the most notable. The Japanese protested labor inequities, political injustices, treaty negotiations, and Japanese involvement in World War I. The number of labor strikes rose from 108 in 1914 to 417 strikes in 1918. At the outset of the war there were forty-nine labor organizations; by the end of the war, there were 187, with a total membership approximately a hundred thousand. A movement for women's suffrage was started soon after.³¹ The country's early women's organization advocated overturning of Article 5 of the Police Security Act that had prevented women from joining political groups and actively participating in politics. The movement also challenged cultural and family traditions as women entered the workforce in greater numbers and sorted their financial independence.³²

This spectrum of critical social issues had accumulated and burst upon post World War I Japan. "Society" wanted to become more "liberal," meaning free, appreciated, enlightened, and advanced. In 1925, the government gave all men over twenty-five the right to vote if they were not indigent. In 1926, the Japanese National Health Insurance Law of 1922 became operative. The Peace Preservation Law was another. It intended to mollify conservatives, particularly those in the appointed, not elected, House of Peers. The law made it illegal to advocate the abolishment of private property, or the creation of a different political structure than the one in place in Japan. It also established military training at universities and high schools.

Despite the general instability that accompanied modernization, the efforts that started with Emperor Meiji in 1860s, continued throughout the Taishō era, which has become known as "Taishō democracy." Slowly, Japan began to want, enjoy, and benefit from a climate of political liberalism after decades of Meiji authoritarianism. In 1874, Katō Hiroyuki, a Japanese scholar, who analyzed the dominance of Western civilization and urged progress for the Japanese nation, wrote the *Kokutai Shenron* "New Theory of the National Body/Structure," which criticized traditional Chinese and Japanese theories of government and, adopting Western theories of natural rights, proposed a constitutional monarchy for Japan.

Sharing Katō's vision, the liberal intellectuals envisioned a political system along the lines of a Western-style parliamentary democracy and wanted to remove the imperial house of Japan completely from politics and government. According to them, the transition from a concept of the monarchy as an institution blessed by the gods to the new image of the sovereign as an emblem of the state under a democratic constitution was a success.

This political change took place in Japan after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. However, it was not being tolerated by traditional conservatives, who insisted on keeping the vision of *kokutai* intact: a concept of national identity in which a personal rule of male emperor has the absolute political authority. The *kokutai* concept required all imperial subjects to support imperial rule. Those who were part of the so-called nationalist/conservative movement would hold to the centuries of Japanese tradition, rejecting any shifts in gender roles or education and military reforms. For the leaders' traditional conservatives in Japan, the *kokutai* was immutable, and that those who tried to turn the emperor into a mere symbol were guilty of *lèse-majesté*.³³

Dr. Sakuzō Yoshino, a Japanese Christian politician and educator, was one of the leading political figures who introduced the term "Taishō democracy." Yoshino graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1904. He had a long career teaching political history and theory in the Faculty of Law at Tokyo Imperial University. There, he began to write a series of articles promoting the development of a liberal and social democratic tradition. He was, currently, one of the most influential advocates of parliamentary government in the country. Without questioning the monarchy system with the emperor as the head of state, he nevertheless called for a "government for the people" (*minponshugi*), insisting that the people's demands to be the basic goal of government. He also advocated universal suffrage, civilian control of the army, the transformation of the House of Peers to a popularly elected body, and the gradual establishment of a socialist state. To materialize these goals, he formed his own party, the Reimeikai, in 1918.

In the preface of his 1916 essay, “On the Meaning of Constitutional Government and the Methods by Which It Can Be Perfected,” Yoshino wrote: “The fundamental prerequisite for perfecting constitutional government, especially in politically backwards nations, is the cultivation of knowledge and virtue among the general population. This is not the task that can be accomplished in a day. Think of the situation in our own country [Japan], we instituted constitutional government before the people were prepared for it. As a result, there have been many failures... Still, it is impossible to reverse course and return to the old absolutism, so there is nothing for us to do but cheerfully take the road of reform and progress. Consequently, it is extremely important not to rely on politicians alone but to use the cooperative efforts of educators, religious leaders, and thinkers in all areas of society.”³⁴

Many Japanese intellectuals at that time were following Yoshino, who wrote that the global trend toward democracy was coming to Japan. The group’s attempt was to make Japan’s national ideology compatible with modern scientific thought, as well as to address the legitimacy of the emperor’s rule and the sort of moral value that he and the imperial system had, or ought to have, in Japanese society.³⁵ The final goal was to reconcile the imperial house with the spirit and logic of Taishō democracy.³⁶

One of the leaders of the rightist organizations, who militate against the concept of liberalism and the spirit and logic of democracy in Japan, was Baron Hiranuma Kūichirō. Son of a low-ranking samurai from the Tsuyama Domain of Mimasaka Province, Hiranuma was the vice president of the Privy Council, which advised the emperor. He graduated with a degree in English law from Tokyo Imperial University in 1888. After graduation, he obtained a posting in the Ministry of Justice. In 1911, he was the prosecutor for the High Treason Incident, the 1910 socialist-anarchist plot to assassinate Emperor Meiji. In 1921, he became chief of the Supreme Court of Japan. Under the second Yamamoto administration, from September 1923 to January 1924, he became Minister of Justice. As such, he advocated the creation of the

Tokkō to combat Communism, socialism, and the spread of what he considered subversive ideologies. In 1924, he became chairman of the House of Peers and was appointed to the Privy Council. In 1926, he was elevated to the title of *danshaku* (baron) under the *kazoku* peerage system. The emperor appointed him prime minister serving for less than a year, from January 5 to August 30, 1939. He returned to the government after his resignation as prime minister, accepting the post of home minister in the second Konoe Fumimaro administration from December 21, 1940, to July 18, 1941.³⁷

During this critical time of intense conflict that emerged between liberals and traditional conservatives in the Japanese society, in 1919, at twenty years of age, Hirohito became Japan's functional leader due to the failing capacities of his father, who was stricken with neurological disorders and mental illness. Emperor Taishō contracted cerebral meningitis at an early age. The ill effects of the disease, including physical weakness and episodes of mental instability, plagued him throughout his reign. Because of his sickness, there was a shift in the structure of political power from the old oligarchic advisors under Meiji to the members of the Diet of Japan. The elected representative officials increasingly gained more and more influence and power. By 1919, Emperor Taishō's illness prevented him from performing any official duties. On November 25, 1921, Hirohito became Prince Regent.³⁸

Chapter Three

The Prince Regent

Hirohito took the role of Prince Regent during a period of economic turbulence in Japan. The Japanese economy of the 1920s went rapidly into a significant regression. After the boom of the First World War, starting in 1919, the economy on the island remained blunt, with low economic growth, mild deflation, and an unsettled financial system. In March 1920, stock prices plunged in Japan as investors anticipated a hard landing for the Japanese economy.³⁹ The next month, Masuda Bill Broker Bank in Osaka failed. The bank had been engaged in the intermediation of interbank transactions, and its customers had included both local banks and large city banks.⁴⁰ Over the next four months, from April to July 1920, operations were suspended at twenty-one banks, either permanently or temporarily. The Bank of Japan extended various types of “special loans” to ease tensions within the financial markets in general and stabilize the markets by relieving specific key industries.⁴¹

At the end of February 1922, Ishii Corporation, a lumber company engaged in speculation, went bankrupt. That affected the bank activities in Kochi Prefecture (in the southwestern part of Japan), and Kansai region (Osaka, Kyoto, and their environs). From October through December 1922, bank activities were interrupted across the country, from Kyushu (the westernmost part of Japan) through Kantō (Tokyo and its environs in eastern Japan). In 1922, operations were suspended at fifteen banks in Japan. The BOJ extended “special loans” to twenty banks from December 1922 to April 1923. By enacting the Saving Bank Act of 1921, the government tightened regulations on small-sized saving banks.

What became known as “The Great Kantō Earthquake” in September 1923 hurt the financial system in Japan much more, damaging the financial assets of banks, as well as their physical capital such as the bank headquarters buildings and branches. The

delays in the repayment of bank loans affected all financial systems on the island. On September 7, 1923, the government promulgated an emergency ordinance, allowing for the postponement of payments in the districts affected. As the situation became worse, the BOJ made special arrangements, including “special loans.” On September 27, the government promulgated the Earthquake Casualty Bills, or ECBs, to indemnify the BOJ for any losses incurred in the re-discounting of bills and certain other papers payable in the stricken areas.

During the period that historians have called “Taishō Democracy,” on January 7, 1924, a new cabinet led by Prime Minister Kiyoura Keigo came to power. At this critical time, the chief figure of the government was a general named Kazushige Ugaki, the minister of war. Ugaki graduated in 1891 at the reformed Imperial Japanese Army Academy and in 1900 from the Army Staff College. A protégé of Gen. Kawakami Soroku and Gen. Tanaka Giichi, as a captain, he was sent as military attaché to Germany. Starting in October 1923, Ugaki served as vice minister of the army. In January 1924, he was appointed army minister by Keigo.

Nominated minister of war, in 1924, Ugaki’s assigned task was to strengthen the army by creating a modern armored force. First, he strove to protect the superior position of the Imperial Japanese Army in Japanese politics. Second, he called for an army of fifty divisions. With the fiscal retrenchment policy practiced by the Katō Takaaki cabinet in May 1925, Ugaki was forced to eliminate four infantry divisions (the IJA 13th Division, IJA 15th Division, IJA 17th Division, and IJA 18th Division), which resulted in the firing of approximately two thousand commissioned officers. He was also forced to shorten the period that conscripts served with the remaining divisions and push many senior officers into early retirement. Those measures to implement modernization into the army represented a struggle for him. He had to navigate between the old Chōshū clan faction who represented the samurai of the past and the new officer class, which had grown up in the Meiji era,

and was largely led by officers who came up through the ranks from the peasantry.

Crown Prince Hirohito's leadership was challenged by many events that happened in Japan at that time. In September 1923, an earthquake struck the Tokyo area, killing about 140,000 people and destroying 63 percent of the city's houses. The 7.9 magnitude earthquake occurred near the densely populated, modern industrial cities of Tokyo and Yokohama. The epicenter was in Sagami Bay, just southwest of Tokyo Bay. The earthquake devastated Tokyo, the port city of Yokohama, and the surrounding prefectures of Chiba, Kanagawa, and Shizuoka causing widespread damage throughout the Kantō region. According to the archives, the earthquake's force was so great that it moved the Great Buddha statue in Kamakura over 60 km (37mi) from the epicenter.

That earthquake brought logistics and infrastructural problems, such as cutting off telephone and telegraph lines, rail communication between Tokyo and the rest of Japan was also cut off. For the army and the army-controlled police, the disaster offered an opportunity to settle many old scores. The Koreans who had migrated to Japan since their country had been annexed in 1910, and who had become Japanese nationals, were massacred in the thousands by the police in the confusion of the earthquake and fires. The Kempeitai, the army's special police, used the occasion to wipe out many leftists. Comparable to those of Hitler's Brown Shirts and Mussolini's Black Shirts, the Kempeitai's soldiers were free in this time of natural disaster to murder hundreds of political opponents of the regime.

Three months after the earthquake, on December 27, 1923, Hirohito was on his way to the opening of the forty-eighth session of the Imperial Diet. In downtown Tokyo, at the Toranomon intersection between the Akasaka Palace and the Diet of Japan, a "Communist agitator" named Daisuke Nanba, a young son of a member of the Diet, attempted to assassinate the Prince Regent by shooting into the emperor's horse-drawn buggy. The shot missed the target but wounded one of Hirohito's chamberlains.⁴²

Nanba's attempt to kill Hirohito was motivated by his leftist ideology, and by a strong desire to avenge the death of Kōtoku Shūsui, a Japanese socialist who played a leading role in introducing anarchism to Japan in the early twentieth century. Kōtoku translated into the Japanese society the works of European and Russian anarchists, such as Peter Kropotkin executed on January 24, 1911, aged thirty-nine, for his alleged role in the High Treason Incident of 1910.⁴³ Although Nanba claimed that he was rational, he was proclaimed insane to the public. On November 13, 1924, he was found guilty at an extraordinary session of the Supreme Court of Japan. Sentenced to death, he was executed by hanging two days later.

On January 26, 1924, Hirohito and Princess Nagako Kuniyoshi were married at the Imperial Palace. The Shinto wedding ceremony was performed in traditional fashion, which included the purification ritual where the couple exchanges cups of sake. Seven hundred noble guests, all of them Japanese, attended the ceremony, which was followed by 101 salutes from the battery on Miyake Hill, from the ships in the harbor, and from the guns of the forts all over Japan. Then the couple went on their honeymoon, to the palace of Hirohito's brother, Nobuhito Prince Takamatsu, at Okajima.

Chapter Four

Taking the Throne

The four months from the end of 1921 to the beginning of 1922 were consequential for Japan. On November 4, 1921, a right-wing railroad switchman, Nakaoka Kon'ichi, stabbed to death Prime Minister Hara Takashi in Tokyo station.⁴⁴ Three weeks later on November 25, 1921, Crown Prince Hirohito became Prince Regent, a stand-in position conferred on him by the Diet to allow his rule in place of his ailing father, Emperor Taishō. Three months later, on February 6, 1922, the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Japan signed a treaty in Washington, D.C., mutually agreeing to limit their construction of warships, specifically battleships, battlecruisers, and aircraft carriers.

Japan's delegation, prominently led by Marshal-Admiral Viscount Katō Tomosaburō, Japan's chief commissioner plenipotentiary to the Washington Naval Conference, promised that Japan would withdraw its troops from Siberia and its military forces from Kiaochow Bay (on the Southern side of the Shandong peninsula), and from other regions in northern China. The Japanese agreed to share with the United States the right to establish and maintain cable and radio stations and residences on the island of Yap in the Caroline Islands. In return, the United States consented to Japan's mandate of the Pacific Islands north of the equator that had been granted to Japan at Paris. The British and Americans agreed to build no naval bases west of Hawaii or north of Singapore. According to the agreement, Japan agreed it would have only three big warships for every five for Britain and the United States. It was agreed that no nation would keep aircraft carriers larger than 27,000 tons or that had guns with bores larger eight (8) inches.⁴⁵

In Japan, Takahashi Korekiyo, Uchida Kōsai's successor as prime minister, was very concerned about the influence of the United

States in the Pacific and East Asia. As a tactician, he arranged Japan's participation in the Washington Conference to strengthen the ties with the United States.⁴⁶ Takahashi believed that in order to flourish economically, Japan had to adopt policies that appealed the Americans.⁴⁷ But his political move was not well received by right-wing groups and some Japanese military leaders who railed against the Washington treaties.⁴⁸ They denounced that the United States had drafted the Washington treaties to restrain Japan in China and roll back the advances it had made there during World War I.⁴⁹ Japan's Chief of the Naval Board, Commander Kato Kanji, was so upset that he declared a war between the United States and Japan had begun.

On September 1, 1923, a powerful earthquake and tsunami struck Yokohama and Tokyo. Eight months later, on May 10, 1924, a general election was held. No party won a majority of seats, resulting in a coalition of the two political parties: the Kenseikai and the Rikken Seiyūkai Club that formed the first coalition government in Japan led by Katō Takaaki. On December 27, 1924, a dynamite explosion killed ninety-four people in Temiya Railroad Station, Otaru, Hokkaido. Despite the continuing climate of tension and violence stemming from dissatisfaction from the Washington Naval Treaty, Prime Minister Katō was able to enact significant legislation. The General Election Law of 1925 extended the vote to all male citizens over the age of 25. Up to that time, only were permitted to vote those who were taxpayers. His government also produced the Peace Preservation Law that suppressed leftist political organizations and concluded the Russian Japanese Basic Convention. He also initiated universal military service and strove to reduce government spending.⁵⁰

On December 25, 1926, Emperor Taishō died. On November 10, 1928, at twenty-five years old, Hirohito came to the throne. He became officially the 124th emperor of Japan. This marked Japan's entry into the Shōwa era, meaning "radiant or enlightened peace." According to the 2,600-year-old tradition, the emperor was regarded as a monarch of divine essence, for whom Article 3 of the constitution of February 11, 1889, enshrined the "sacred and

inviolable” character of his person.⁵¹ The structure of the Meiji constitution and the de facto divine status inherited by birth placed Hirohito at the top of the state. He was the nation’s highest spiritual authority and commander-in-chief of the armed forces.⁵² All branches of government, including the Diet and the cabinet, had to refer to him before making any important decision.

One year after he took the throne, a nationwide financial panic was expanded to the country. The debates in the Diet revealed financial difficulties between the Bank of Taiwan and Suzuki & Co. Ltd. This huge trading house based in Kobe was founded in 1874 by Iwajiro Suzuki as a trading house for importing Western sugar. The firm became one of the eight major trading companies in Kobe, specializing in Western sugar and oil. Later, the company added beer, alcohol, flour milling and metal businesses in the Dairi region of Kita-kyushu.

After the Great Kantō Earthquake of September 1, 1923, the company was forced to inflate loans from its main bank, the Bank of Taiwan. As the economic climate continued to worsen due to the post-war recession, it eventually succumbed to bankruptcy during the Shōwa Financial Crisis of 1927. The crisis necessitated reforms in the financial sector through large-scale injections of public funds on the market. In January 1927 the Wakatsuki cabinet of the ruling Kensei-kai Party submitted a legislation to the Diet, requiring adjustments of the ECBs. This primary step was to facilitate the final disposition of the bad debts incurred during the Great Kantō Earthquake. The legislation would allow the government to issue bonds, which would be exchanged with the ECBs. On March 14, 1927, Finance Minister, Kataoka Naoharu, declared that the Tokyo Watanabe Bank had failed. This statement set off a financial panic in the regions, particularly in Tokyo and Osaka. On March 23, the Diet approved the legislation, temporarily calming the depositors’ panic.⁵³

This was only for a short period, however, during the first week of April, the cabinet led by Prime Minister Wakatsuki Reijirō drafted an emergency ordinance authorizing the BOJ to send the Bank of Taiwan relief funds, and indemnifying the BOJ for any

losses incurred by this action up to a ceiling of ¥200 million. The Privy Council, instead of approving the emergency ordinance, politicized the cabinet's plan and rejected it on April 17. The Wakatsuki cabinet resigned on April 20, 1927, and financial panic spread nationwide.

On the same day, Giichi Tanaka, of the opposition *Seiyu-kai* Party, took office. Takahashi Korekiyo became finance minister for the fourth time, and the government proclaimed an emergency ordinance imposing a three-week moratorium, effective from April 22 to May 12. The following day, the Diet during an extraordinary session deliberated on measures to dispose of the bad loans and stabilize the financial system. On May 30, 1927, under the governor of the Bank of Japan, Junnosuke Inoue, the new Banking Act was promulgated. Despite all those measures, the Japanese economy continued during the interwar period (1927–1931) to be in chronic crisis. Japan experienced the deepest economic downturn in modern history. From 1929 to 1931, WPI fell about 30 percent, agricultural prices fell 40 percent, and textile prices fell nearly 50 percent. After the Shōwa Financial Crisis of 1927, Japan's economy was facing the challenge of the Great Depression of the 1930s. This worldwide economic collapse had been intensified in the country by the return to the gold standard at the old parity in January 1930.⁵⁴

Chapter Five

Facing Economic Crisis

The stock market crash of October 29, 1929, in the United States, started a worldwide economic crisis called “The Great Depression.” This economic crisis had devastating effects in all countries in the world. Between 1929 and 1932, worldwide (GDP) fell by an estimated 15 percent. Cities were hit hard, especially those dependent on heavy industry. Construction was virtually halted in many countries. Farming communities and rural areas suffered as crop prices fell by about 60 percent. Personal income, tax revenue, profits, and prices dropped, while international trade plunged by more than 50 percent. In some developed countries, unemployment rose as high as 33 percent.

Japan experienced the deepest economic downturn in modern history. Some economic measures taken by the government of Osachi Hamaguchi had major consequences on the economy. The Minsei Party government led by Prime Minister Hamaguchi, Finance Minister Inoue, and Foreign Minister Shidehara deliberately adopted a deflationary policy in order to eliminate weak banks and firms and prepare the nation for the return to the prewar gold parity (fixed exchange rate with real appreciation).⁵⁵ The policy of deflation and return to gold was strongly advocated and implemented by Finance Minister Inoue. Inoue was deeply committed to the policy of deflation and returning to gold. This policy caused severe depression. People became greatly frustrated with the cabinet. Finally, the government (second Wakatsuki cabinet) was removed and succeeded by a Seiyukai government led by Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi who took charge on December 13, 1931.⁵⁶

Japan, contrary to countries in Asia like China, Russia, Malaya, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, and India, because it has few

natural resources, relied almost entirely on foreign trade. When the Great Depression hit the world in the early 1930s, foreign countries no longer imported Japanese luxuries such as silk. The value of Japanese exports dropped by 50 percent between 1929 and 1931.⁵⁷ As soon as the new government was sworn in, Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo completely reversed Inoue's policies. On the very first day, Takahashi ended the gold standard and the fixed exchange rate and floated the yen that had immediately been depreciated. The new government took the two major measures to fight the crisis: fiscal expansion financed by government bonds issues (called "Spending Policy,") monetary expansion, and low interest rates. Despite fiscal pressure, the army and navy pressured for more military spending. Takahashi resisted. For his position, he was assassinated by a member of Ketsumeidan in the League of Blood Incident, on February 26, 1936.

The assassination of Takahashi greatly opened the door to the return of these policies and systems that were deliberately adopted by Japan in the late 1930s through the early 1940s. Tanaka Chigaku, a Japanese Buddhist scholar and preacher of Nichiren Buddhism, orator, writer, and ultranationalist propagandist in the Meiji, the Taishō, and early Shōwa periods, was one of the spiritual leaders of the Kokuchūkai, National Pillar Society, based in Miho. Tanaka was deeply hostile to Taishō democracy. He was a fervent partisan to the expansion of the Japanese Empire. From his nationalist and imperialist convictions, he believed that Japan's 1931 takeover of Manchuria was divinely ordained and part of a divine plan to spread the "true" Nichiren Buddhism throughout Asia.⁵⁸

Tanaka even went as far as to predict that "Nichirenization" would spread around the world. He subordinated everything to the *kokutai*, and asserted that Japan, with its "unbroken" line of emperors, had a unique destiny "to guide and induce every country in the world to become a state ruled by the Way of the Prince."⁵⁹ Only the emperor of Nippon was "unchangeable for good with his origin in Heaven...a God or morality itself," he said. All the emperors had "inherited from the first Emperor Jimmu, his virtues and brilliant work," and "the extraordinary great Emperor Meiji

[had] appeared to become the axis of the world.” This was finding fulfilment in Manchuria, and, with Japan’s help, it would spread to China and the whole world.⁶⁰

In *Bukkyō jūfu ron*, a work dedicated to the imperial family, Tanaka wrote that, while previous sages had spoken of *enbudai no Nippon* (Japan of the inhabited earth), Nichiren had used the term *Nippon no enbudai*, to include the whole inhabited earth in Japan. He claimed that, as a result, the mausoleums of Japan’s imperial deities, Amaterasu Ōmikami and Hachiman, were to become universal objects of worship. Ishiwara wrote that he had believed in Nichiren because he had a completely satisfying view of the *kokutai*, and so had to be the one to unify world thought and faith.⁶¹ This objective was to be realized by *shakubuku*, which means to conquer evil aggressively.⁶² He extended the meaning of *shakubuku* to justify military aggression against China in 1931: “When it is said that the Imperial Japanese Army is an army of humanity and justice, for maintaining justice and building peace, it means that it is a force for compassion. The *shakubuku* of Nichirenism must be like this.”⁶³

Tanaka used his contacts inside the imperial court to make the Nichiren faith as the state religion of Japan, and to introduce the Nichiren philosophy into the army. Ishiwara Kanji was one, who worked hard to implement Tanaka’s vision among the Japanese troops. After graduating from the War College, through his wife’s influence in 1919, Ishiwara joined the Kokuchū-kai (Pillar of the Nation Society) founded by Tanaka. After studying military science in Germany in 1923–1924, Ishiwara joined the staff of the military academy in Tokyo, before being sent to Manchuria in 1928. He later became the chief plotter of the 1931 Manchurian Incident. “He saw Japan’s mission as that of overthrowing the military clique, freeing Asia from domination by the United States and Europe and forming a single economy and combined defense system for Japan, Manchuria and China. He helped to establish the puppet state of Manchukuo and believed that, with the cooperation of China, a model state would develop. However, in 1949, after Japan had been defeated by the Allied powers, Ishiwara wrote to General MacArthur, recognizing he had been wrong in supposing

that the “final” war would be fought between East Asia on the one hand and Western countries on the other. But he still hoped for “a fundamental world reformation” based on new family life, new villages, and government according to *Rissho ankoku*.⁶⁴

As Tanaka, Ishiwara believed that world unity centered on the Japanese emperor and would be achieved when the *Lotus Sūtra* was recognized by the court as the substance of the Japanese polity.⁶⁵ The same perception was shared by Shigeru Honjō, the commander of the Kwantung Army in Manchuria, who was also a Nichiren believer, and also by Ikki Kita who was in contact with many people on the extreme right of Japanese politics. Different governments such as Saitō Makoto, Keisuke Okada, Kōki Hirota, and Senjūrō Hayashi, saw Kita’s ideas as disruptive and dangerous. Therefore, after imposing the *kokutai*, which literally means “national body,” as a unique sense of significance regarding their national community, which is variously expressed as national character, national essence, national substance, state structure, national polity; the next challenge for the ultranationalist groups was to fight the expansion of Communism in the region, particularly in China.

Chapter Six

Fighting Communism

By the fall of 1916, Russia had been at war for more than two years with the Central powers: Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire (modern-day Turkey). The Russian Empire's involvement in World War I began in 1914 when Austria-Hungary issued an ultimatum that threatened Serbian sovereignty in the aftermath of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austrian throne. Russia, as an ally of Serbia, mobilized its armies. France and Great Britain as Russia's allies in the Triple Entente also went to war with the Central powers.

Russia suffered a disastrous defeat at the Battle of Tannenberg in the first weeks of the war, resulting in 78,000 Russian soldiers killed and wounded and 92,000 captured by the Germans. After the defeat, Tsar Nicholas II assumed direct control of the army as commander in chief. Over three years, nearly 2 million Russian soldiers were killed in battle and another nearly 5 million were wounded. The Russian people blamed the Tsar for entering the war and for getting so many citizens killed.

In February 1917, the Bolsheviks Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin and a group of revolutionaries had started with the peasants and working-class people of Russia revolting against the government. The revolution began when several workers decided to strike. Tsar Nicholas II ordered the army to suppress the protesters. However, many of the soldiers refused to fire on the Russian people, and the army began to mutiny against the Tsar. After a few days of riots, the entire army turned against the Tsar, who was forced to exile. A new government that was run by two political parties: the Petrograd Soviet (representing the workers and soldiers), and the Provisional Government (the traditional

government without the Tsar), took over. Over the next several months, the two sides ruled Russia. In October 1917, Lenin who led the main factions of the Petrograd Soviet and the Bolsheviks took full control of the government issued from the Bolshevik Revolution. Russia became the first Communist country in the world.⁶⁶

In Japan, the beginning of the Shōwa era was the years of the “Red Scare.” Japanese officials feared more than anything the expansion of Communism in Asia, particularly in China, where Vladimir Lenin intended to spread the Bolsheviks revolution with Mao Zedong as an ally. The officials in Japan believed that invading China was the only solution to set limits to the expansion of Communism in the region. Also, responses to the Russian Revolution were therefore for Japan to occupy the entire countries in the Pacific and East Asia in order to eliminate the harm of Communism.⁶⁷

Chapter Seven

Hirohito: A Warrior Monarch

The structure of the Meiji constitution placed Hirohito at the top of the state with a wider range of authority and influence that made him the most powerful political figure in Japan. He had the authority to enact constitutional amendments, determine administrative organizations, grant pardons, and determine military organization. Chief priest of the nation, he could issue imperial ordinances without legislative check. He could conclude treaties and no parliamentary consent was required. He was able to declare war and make peace, and the Diet was not allowed to intervene. As stated in, Article 11 of the constitution, the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy were under the emperor's direct control.⁶⁸ Articles 11 to 13 took away matters from the civilian government and placed them under the responsibility of the emperor. The military was outside of the authority of the civil government, and consequently before any action or operation by military troops, the emperor was to be advised most notably by the Chief of the General Staff Office of the Army and the Chief of the Naval Staff Board.⁶⁹

At the head of an increasingly powerful army, Hirohito drove his country to war and expansionism in violation of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. On August 27, 1928, Japan became a signatory to the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War, known as Kellogg-Briand Pact. France and the United States presented this treaty to Japan in the spirit of international reconciliation endorsed at the Washington Conference. The fifteen nations that primarily signed the pact at Paris (France, United States, United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, India, Belgium, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy, and Japan) renounced war

“as an instrument of national policy” and promised to settle all disputes by peaceful means.

In the first of the two articles of the Pact, the signatories pledged “in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.” In the second article, they agreed to resolve “by pacific means... all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin...which may arise among them.”⁷⁰

The Tanaka cabinet accepted the terms of the treaty and sent Privy Councilor Count Uchida Kōsai to Paris to inform the United States and other powers of Japan’s special position in Manchuria. Uchida tried to convince the Western powers to accept that Manchuria would be exempted from the obligations imposed by the treaty. Although Minseitō and Seiyūkai politicians agreed to the ratification of the Pact, Hirohito, advised by Sakutarō Tachi, his teacher of diplomacy and international law, backed off from the treaty. Sakutarō mentioned the problem posed by Article 1, (“assuming the principle of popular rather than monarchical sovereignty, and convincing that the term was inconsistent with the *kokutai*.”) In early 1930, Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi clashed with the navy general staff over the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact. Three years later, on February 25, 1933, Japan withdrew from the League of Nations.

In the early 1930s, in order to spread Japan’s hegemony in the Pacific and Southeast Asia and defeat the United States’ agenda looking to destabilize the monarchy he had inherited, Hirohito launched his country into war. In 1931, Japan invaded and occupied Manchuria. It has been said that, Hirohito was not aware of the highly complex operation known as the “Mukden Incident.” Honjō’s diary had shown that the emperor was informed on the incident. On April 18, 1931, Honjō wrote:

When His Majesty found out that the
Kwantung Army had crossed the Luan River

and was rushing into China proper beyond the borders, he summoned me and asked: "Can the Kwantung Army be ordered to cease its advances?" He seemed to be concerned that Japan's integrity was being undermined by the movement of Japanese troops toward Peking and Tianjin... I requested His Majesty to postpone issuing such an order... I was overwhelmed by his graciousness in readily agreeing to my request.⁷¹

The question is, if Hirohito was truly hostile to the operation of invading Manchuria, why he did not use his discretionary powers to stop military maneuvers or even punish Col. Kanji Ishiwara who led the attack with several members of the "Cherry Blossom Society"? ⁷² Japanese forces captured Changchun, north of Mukden, on September 19, 1931, and Kirin on September 21. Japanese planes based in Korea were used from September 19 onwards to bomb Chinese troops. On September 22, 1931, a Japanese brigade, based in Korea, returned to southern Manchuria. The version that indicated that Hirohito was not aware of the "Mukden Incident" is not correct when we look at all the facts. On September 19 a message from the commander of the Kwantung Army, Lt. Gen. Shigeru Honjō, was sent to Lt. Gen. Senjūrō Hayashi of the Chōsen Army of Japan in Korea to send in reinforcements. A detachment of Japanese planes at Pyongyang departed for Mukden. Troops from the 20th Division at Seoul and Pyongyang were ordered to the Korea-Manchuria border to await further instructions. Hayashi wired Tokyo, requesting imperial orders to move into Manchuria. To stop the conflict, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a strong protest to the Japanese government and called for the immediate withdrawal of the Japanese army in Manchuria. The authorities in China appealed to the League of Nations. On September 21, 1931, elements of the Chōsen Army crossed the Yalu River into Manchuria. Gen. Yoshihide Hayashi, Commander of the Korean Army, who became in August 1937, part of the planning team for Operation Chahar in

northern China, on his own authority, ordered the troops to cross the border while the cabinet of Prime Minister Wakatsuki Reijirō was still meeting.⁷³

Nara's diary entry for September 22 related a conversation between Hirohito and the chief of staff, Gen. Hanzō Kanaya:

In the afternoon, when I was summoned by the emperor, he asked me whether I had warned the chief of staff [Kanaya] not to broaden the action. I replied, "Yes, I did warn him, but even without my warning, he understood very dearly both the Cabinet's intention and your Majesty's will, and he is already addressing each part of the problem in turn. Regrettably it is touch-and-go with the outlying army, and they often go their own way." [Later] At 4:20 P.M. Chief of Staff Kanaya had an audience with the emperor and asked him to approve, post facto, the dispatch of the mixed brigade from the Korean army. I heard the emperor says that although this time it couldn't be helped; [the army] had to be more careful in the future.⁷⁴

As Prof. Herbert P. Bix in his book, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, wrote:

Having now understood the need to reinforce the vastly outnumbered Kwantung Army's forward units, Hirohito accepted the situation as a fait accompli. He was not seriously opposed to seeing his army expand his empire.

If that involved a brief usurpation of his authority, so be it – *so long as the operation was successful.*⁷⁵

Not only was Hirohito not indignant by the behavior of the Japanese troops, but he backed up the actions of Gen. Jirō Minami, the Governor-General of Korea, Lt. Gen. Senjūrō Hayashi, the commander of the Chōsen Army, and Lt. Gen. Shigeru Honjō, the commander of the 10th Division of the Kwantung Army. Those three officers to the benefit of their career were rewarded by the emperor for their actions. Hirohito honored or promoted a total of 3,000 military and civilian officials for their deserved services during the occupation of Manchuria and the capture of Shanghai. Kanji was promoted to general. Hirohito called Shigeru to his side in 1933, making him his first aide-de-camp, (from this position, Shigeru became one of the most powerful officers of the Imperial Army). Col. Seishirō Itagaki was promoted to the rank of general and became minister of war in 1939. Shortly after the “Mukden Incident,” the commander of the Japanese troops in Korea, Gen. Senjūrō Hayashi, first became minister of war and then, briefly, prime minister of Japan in 1937. Shigeru Honjō, respectively, commander of the Kwantung Army, became later minister of the army, minister of the navy, and was elevated to the rank of baron by an imperial order.

The “Mukden Incident” was called for duplicity not only by the generals and colonels who were the instigators, but also by Hirohito himself, who, behind the scenes, had encouraged the operations. Indeed, the conspiracy was mounted on such a colossal scale, mobilizing such resources, that it proved impossible that it took place without the consent of the authorities at the highest level in Tokyo, including the Imperial Palace. As Richard Storry noted, it was likely that an imperial proclamation “aimed at restraining the army in Manchuria or later China would have been obeyed by the vast majority of officers.” This imperial proclamation never fell within the emperor’s plan for a rotten situation.⁷⁶

Six years after the invasion of Manchuria, in 1937, with Hirohito’s endorsement, the Second Sino-Japanese War was

launched. Japanese troops invaded China on July 7, 1937, and perpetrated atrocities on the people of Nanking. The Second Sino-Japanese War became the largest Asian war in the twentieth century. More than 10 million Chinese civilians and over 4 million Chinese and Japanese military personnel died from war-related violence, famine, and other causes. The war has been called the “Asian holocaust.”

As time passed, Hirohito became more involved in Japanese politics throughout the 1940s.⁷⁷ On April 13, 1941, after the short Soviet-Japanese Border War, the Japanese decided to violate the Japanese-Soviet Non-aggression pact signed by Foreign Minister Yosuke Matsuoka and Ambassador Yoshitsugu Tatekawa for Japan; and, on the other side, by Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov for the Soviet Union. The treaty between the Soviet Union and Japan ensured the neutrality between the two countries during World War II. It allowed them to avoid fighting on multiple fronts. For Stalin, this decision was based on the belief that if Germany had launched an attack against his country, the Soviet Union would be only preoccupied with fighting Germany, and not too worried about fighting at the same time with Japan. For Hirohito, this non-aggression pact would make Japan feel less threatened by any possible Soviet invasion of Manchuria, and would allow Japan to have enough provisions and capabilities to start a war with the United States and Great Britain.

Personally, Hirohito gave the green light to the plan to attack the Soviet Union after Hitler invaded this country in June 1941. With 134 divisions at full fighting strength and 73 more divisions for deployment behind the front, Germany troops launched a surprise attack against the Soviets on June 22, 1941. Known as Operation Barbarossa, the invasion is considered as one of the largest military operations in the history of modern warfare. Germany and its allies assembled more than 3,000,000 German soldiers, supported by 650,000 troops from Germany's allies (Finland and Romania), and later augmented by units from Italy, Croatia, Slovakia, and Hungary. Soon after the invasion, German military and civilian occupation policies led to the deaths of millions of Soviet prisoners of war and Soviet civilians.

It is often said of Hirohito's intention to normalize Japan's relations with China.⁷⁸ This was a complete lie. After the October 1931 plot in which Prince Chichibu was involved, the conspirators plotted a "coup" on the model of the "March Conspiracy," but much more deadly, in order to facilitate the nomination of a government more dedicated to enter into a total war with China. The military involved in the coup not only intended to dissolve parliament and force the emperor to choose a military government, but also consider assassinating all the Ministers in place. Dr. Shumei Okawa and Lt.-Col. Kingoro Hashimoto, very active members of the Cherry Blossom Society, were arrested and briefly detained by the Japanese military police. On October 17, 1931, both men were immediately released. Hirohito forced this decision because he knew that his brother, Yasuhito, Prince Chichibu, was among the conspirators. Yasuhito sought to remove the former admiral Tōgō Heihachirō (Russian Japanese war hero, then tutor of the emperor) from his retirement to become prime minister. Having failed in this mission, he then sided with the conspirators.

Hirohito immediately dismissed his brother's idea to replace the government of the day whose prestige was greatly damaged by the blame of the League of Nations after the seizure of power in Manchuria and the March and October plots. On Saionji's advice, he summoned the Seiykai's leader, seventy-five-year-old Tsuyoshi Inukai, to whom he proposed the post of prime minister. As Inukai was an old friend of Chiang Kai-shek, his presence as prime minister, according to the emperor's calculation, could put an end to the scramble between China and Japan after the "Mukden Incident." Hirohito formally instructed Tsuyoshi to establish a lasting peace with China and restrict the power of the military. "The military's interference in domestic and foreign policy," he told Inukai, "is a situation that we must consider with concern for the good of the nation."

Deep down, Hirohito had no intention of crushing the activists and normalizing relations with China. In secret, he torpedoed the peace negotiations initiated by the Japanese government with Chiang Kai-shek. With the collaboration of Prince Kan'in, his great-uncle, "a member of the Fushimi clan," he made sure to thwart any peace project with China and encouraged another reverse movement to damage the prime minister's efforts for

moderation. He left the activists of the Cherry Blossom Society free to conspire at their ease. Worse still, any tendency to reach an agreement with China collapsed in March 1932 with the “Shanghai Incident” still being engineered by the Japanese with the support of the imperial house.

The Shanghai Affair was modeled on the Mukden Incident. It was the basis of a deliberate provocation against the Chinese by Japanese civilians and sailors intended to bring about military intervention. Japanese navy troops attacked Kuomintang’s armies on the outskirts of Shanghai. For several weeks, fierce fighting took place, with the two armies face-to-face. Japanese planes bombed Chinese civilians, killing several thousand people. It all started when, on January 8, 1932, a Korean separatist threw a bomb at what he believed to be the emperor’s carriage, while Hirohito was on his way to a military magazine. The Korean, unfortunately, attacked the wrong carriage. In the territories occupied by the Japanese on Chinese territory, Japanese troops, in a sign of revenge, passed their rage on the civilian population.

At the same period, on the road to war, naval officers presented Hirohito the plan on how to meet the navy’s national defense requirements. Adm. Kanji Kato, the leading opponent of the Washington Naval Treaty, began to pressure him to enlarge the geographic sphere of national defense. Kanji advised him that “the safety of the empire’s homeland required confronting American naval forces deployed in the Western Pacific rather than in waters closer to home as specified in the 1923 policy.”⁷⁹ Hirohito approved Kanji’s report. He accepted the idea to build a big navy with the capacity to win any decisive naval battle against the United States. In terms of the report of the naval chief of staff and vice chief of staff, Adm. Kanji Kato, and Vice Adm. Nobumasa Suetsugu, Japan refused “any limit on the navy’s heavy cruiser tonnage of less than 70 percent of the individual cruiser strengths of the American and British fleets.” Although Washington and London had announced they might form a naval alliance against Japan if it did not comply with the warship ratios worked out at the Washington Conference, the group —Kanji and Suetsugu—getting the support of the emperor refused to accept any limit on the navy’s heavy cruiser tonnage of less than 70 percent of the individual cruiser strengths of the American and British fleets.

Using the situation as a pretext, on December 29, 1934, Japan formally renounced the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922.

It is impossible to underestimate the significance of this decision. As C. Peter Chen wrote:

The treaty limited Japan to 315,000 in total tonnage of naval strength when the U.S. and Britain were each given a limit of 525,000. The reasons were that the United States had to protect two extended coastlines, and Britain had colonial responsibilities world-wide. Japan refused such reasoning and refused to be treated as a second-rate power. By the end of 1941, Japan would commission the 65,000-ton Yamato... its sister ship *Musashi* was by then already being fitted out in the docks.⁸⁰

The action of personally taking command of the division of the imperial guards to quell the revolt on the night of February 26, 1936, was another example on how Hirohito had strong control on the troops. On the night of February 26, with the assent of Prince Chichibu, two units of the 1st Division of the Imperial Guard in Tokyo, which were to be transferred to Manchuria, revolted and launched an assault on several ministers, the metropolitan police station, as well as, the offices of the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper. Although the rebels succeeded in assassinating several leading officials, including two former prime ministers and in occupying the government center of Tokyo, they failed to assassinate Prime Minister Keisuke Okada and take control of the Imperial Palace. On February 28, 1936, Hirohito issued a decree ordering the rebels to “withdraw as soon as possible” from the occupied areas. The following day, he issued an ultimatum. A few hours later, with the help of tanks and planes, he put an end to the rebellion. During a series of closed trials nineteen rebel officers were sentenced to death and were executed for mutiny and another forty imprisoned.⁸¹

In his book, *Japan's Decision in Surrender*, regarding the emperor's role, Robert Butow states:

As the years passed, the sovereign was no longer allowed in any way personally to direct the affairs of the state or to meddle with the machinery of government. He could question or caution his ministers and advisers on matters within their competence and *jurisdiction*, but he could not override policies formulated by the appropriate organs of state. When there was unanimity in the civil administration and the military command, the emperor could do nothing but approve what was obviously the will of the state. Under no circumstances did the emperor ever assume personal direction of the government.⁸²

In this monumental work, Butow pointed out the nature of the emperor's power:

Although the trend of the decision should be ascribed to the personal preference of the man himself, the real significance of the role of the emperor lies in the influence of the Throne and not in the authority or personality of its occupant. Despite the wording of the constitution, the emperor had never possessed the actual power to decide on war or peace. Even under the pressing circumstances of August 1945, the emperor was only the

instrument, and not the prime mover of Japan's momentous decision.⁸³

In *Tojo and the Coming of the War*, as with many Western scholars, such as David A. Titus, Stephen S. Large, and Peter Wetzler, Butow believed that Emperor Hirohito was personally against going to war with the United States; but as the symbol of the state, cultural identity, and unity of the Japanese people, he could not reverse the unanimous decision for war by the military and the Tōjō cabinet. He remained the passive, withdrawn monarch-scientist, the marine biologist, who was kept inadequately informed of his government's decisions and was in any case unable to control the military, who, while involving the imperial will, in fact imposed their own.⁸⁴

In *the Age of Hirohito*, Daikichi Irokawa shared the same idea of an emperor who was not involved directly in the affairs of the state and allowed the military to act.⁸⁵ On this occasion, there were several violations of the emperor's supreme command. In accordance with the wishes of Gen. Kanji Ishiwara and other planners, the commander of the Kwantung Army, Shigeru Honjō, ordered a general offensive and occupied all of Manchuria on his own authority. Even though Hirohito had been presented with the plan, he had not specifically approved it... These incidents were serious arrogations of imperial authority.

Irokawa painted Hirohito as an emperor who rarely participated in the personal direction of the government. According to this view, the generals, admirals, and nationalist officials who wielded the real power in the government had dictated the bellicose imperial rescripts that accompanied the progress of Japanese arms at every step. Irokawa states:

At times the emperor exercised his authority, on other occasions he did not, according to Sackett's vigorous questioning followed the course of events such as the Manchurian Incident, the Sino-Japanese War, and finally the war between Japan and the

United States. In these cases, the emperor did not exercise his authority and allowed major incidents and acts of aggression. Moreover, rather than punishing those responsible for the crimes of aggression, the emperor repeatedly honored them.⁸⁶

David A. Titus, another scholar, has persuasively demonstrated that the question of the emperor's responsibility in Japan's war engagement is not historically decided, although he is the supreme commander of the army and navy under the Meiji constitution. Titus pointed out several important points that show under the institutional characteristic of imperial Japan, although his role as *daigensui* (commander in chief) must act as a constitutional monarch whose decision is guided by his advisers. First, starting in 1941, with the lord keeper of the privy seal, Kōichi Kido, as a negotiator between the court and the government, the court "provided the all-important negotiation and ratification mechanism at the apex of the political process;" and second, that the emperor did play a role as the ultimate "unifier" of national policies after his officials reached consensus. In Titus' argument, before the emperor ratified any policy, he made sure that the policy had been "thoroughly discussed and represented a genuine consensus among the policy makers." Titus pointed out that the emperor "was kept from active and direct participation in the consensus-making process by formalities and precedents governing his relations with government leaders, individually and collectively."⁸⁷

General MacArthur said in his memoirs, published in 1964, that Hirohito, by renouncing divinity, had assumed for himself "a leading part in the democratization of his people," and that his subjects, who revered him, who had one been forbidden even to gaze upon him, came to respect and admire him.

Contrary to these arguments, for Professor Herbert P. Bix, "Hirohito was at the center of the political, military, and spiritual life of his country in the broadest and deepest sense, exercising his authority in directions that proved disastrous for his people and for the countries that were invaded." From 1937, Bix declared, "Hirohito gradually became a true warlord, influencing the

planning, strategy, and conduct of operations in China.” According to the historian:

Hirohito and his key advisers participated directly and decisively as independent forces in policy making. Acting energetically behind the scenes, Hirohito influenced the conduct of his first three prime ministers, hastened the collapse of political party cabinets, and sanctioned opposition to strengthening the peace machinery of the League of Nations. When resistance to his interventions provoked open defiance from the army, he and his advisors drew back and connived at military aggression.⁸⁸

In his book, *Hirohito: Behind the Myth*, Edward Samuel Behr referred to Hirohito as a “manipulator” capable of decisive and ruthless actions. According to Francis Pike, in *Hirohito's War*:

As for his responsibility for Japan's war crimes in Asia, including mass executions, the use of gas and biological weapons and human experimentation, it seems unlikely that Hirohito was totally unaware of atrocities, particularly in China. However, there is no proof that he was informed about them and certainly no evidence that he was in any way an instigator of policies that in the case of China, where an estimated twenty million civilians died, were in effect genocidal. In international war crimes law, as established at the tribunal at Nuremberg, Tokyo,

Shanghai, Darwin, and elsewhere after World War II, guilt for atrocities was determined merely by dint of responsibility. In other words, ignorance of war crimes was no defense for the senior commanders on trial. On this principle, Hirohito, as Japan's commander-in-chief, would almost certainly have been found guilty and executed if he had been placed before the Tokyo Tribunal.⁸⁹

Prof. Kiyoshi Inoue, a constitutional and legal historian at Kyoto University, in an article *Ho no Ronri Rekishi no Ronri (1948)*, (*The Logic of Law and the Logic of History*) concluded:

This was a man who, with all power in his hands, made the decision [to go to war] after taking into consideration all opinions and ascertaining all information with great care. It was not at all a decision made by a person whose freedom of action was deprived mentally or physically, or who had lost the ability to think.⁹⁰

Several Japanese historians believed that Hirohito could not be held responsible for any of the steps that led to World War II because he was unaware of what was going on behind the scenes and was; in any case, lacking any real power.⁹¹ This opinion according to the facts pointed out by Bix and others seems incredible. Not only did Hirohito endorse Japan's war against China from 1937 to 1945, but he secretly criticized his generals who had misled him by promising him quick victories and were not winning them fast enough. Another important fact was that no major decision promotion or troop movement could occur without the emperor's seal of approval. No decision of even minor importance was implemented without first being scrutinized by him. His seal was needed on any document promulgating any

decision of importance. A member of the imperial family confirmed in an interview that “the emperor always read everything he put his seal to.”⁹² As Tōjō said during the court proceedings at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), “Hirohito was the ultimate arbiter of the situation. No Japanese subject would go against the will of His Majesty.”

Through the imperial household minister, the lord privy seal, the chief aide-de-camp, and the grand chamberlain, Hirohito knew everything that was going on; not only within the privy council, the supreme war command, and the cabinet, but within the many ultranationalist clubs and secret societies as well. In the month following Tanaka’s appointment, with his approval, a group of leaders convened to prepare for the Far Eastern Conference, which took place in Tokyo from June 27 to July 7, 1927. The specialists who sat on the preparatory committee included some of the most uncompromising advocates of Japanese expansionism and authoritarian nationalism in the ranks of the military and intelligence establishments. Two of them were particularly close to Hirohito; Viscount Machijiri, a former subordinate of Prince Higashikuni in Paris, and Major Anami, who later became Japan’s last wartime defense minister. Attended also were the Japanese minister in Peking, Kenkichi Yoshizawa, who served as the forty-sixth foreign minister of Japan in 1932, and Shigeru Yoshida, consul in Mukden and later served as prime minister of Japan from 1946 to 1947 and from 1948 to 1954. Yoshida was one of the longest-serving Japanese prime ministers, and was the third-longest-serving prime minister of post-occupation Japan.

The Far Eastern Conference was the first open meeting of Japanese officials to discuss the various alternatives open to Japan in her determination to increase her influence in Asia. Entitled the “Tanaka Memorial,” it was the text of a formal document submitted by Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi to Hirohito in 1927 as an “address to the throne.” In this document Tanaka laid out a strategy to take over the world.⁹³ Based on this agenda, Hirohito allowed the Manchukuo Incident and the Marco Polo Bridge Incident to happen. He promoted those responsible for them. Fully aware of the Japanese’s plan to attack the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, he did not take any decision that would have prevented the action to happen. He not only was aware in advance of the plan to

attack Pearl Harbor; he also knew the plan of the Japanese army to take over French Indochina in 1941. He openly questioned whether this should not also be accompanied by an invasion of Thailand.

In 1975, Inoue Kiyoshi, a doctrinaire communist, and a specialist in modern Japanese history, published *Tennō no Sensō Sekinin* (The Emperor's War Responsibility). In this book, the author criticized the imperial system. He was also very critical of "Japanese militarism." Yasuaki Onuma, a professor at Tokyo University in Japan, wrote in 1987, 'Saiban Kara Sengo Sekinin no Shiso E' (From the Tokyo Trial to the Concept of Post-war Responsibility). In his writings, Professor Onuma concluded that the victorious nations knowingly overlooked Emperor Hirohito's guilt.

Richard Minear in *Victor's Justice: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial* (1971) argued that the failure to prosecute key war criminals, — particularly the emperor— showed that the trial was merely a political construct of the victor nations. John W. Dower, in *Embracing Defeat* (1999), wrote that "America, by choosing to ignore Hirohito's guilt and by participating in the cover-up of this fact, came close to turning the whole issue of 'war responsibility' into a joke."⁹⁴

A few months before the attack on the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, Prime Minister Hideki Tōjō, addressing the emperor, said: "As soon as Your Majesty has decided to open hostilities, we will endeavor to fulfill our "must." According to the historian, "Having taken this position Hirohito devoted himself entirely to governing and leading the war to victory at all costs."

Prime Minister Tōjō said later in 1942: "The emperor is the Godhead...and we, no matter how hard we strive as Ministers, are nothing more than human." Many Japanese kamikazes, in suicidal charges, before the mission, pronounced the last words, "*Tenno Heika Banzai!* (Long live the emperor!)"

Hirohito's New Year's Day message for 1943 was a strong statement made to motivate Japanese troops with a prediction that Japan was closer to victory. The emperor said:

The Darkness is very deep, but dawn is about to break in the Eastern Sky. Today the finest of the Japanese Army, the Japanese Navy and Air Units are gathering. Sooner or later they will head toward the Solomon Islands where a decisive battle is being waged between Japan and America.⁹⁵

A few months before this statement, Vice Adm. Matome Ugaki, in describing Japanese emotions in 1942, noted in his diary:

How brilliant was the first stage operation up to April! And what miserable setbacks since Midway in June! The invasions of Hawaii, Fiji, Samoa, and New Caledonia [the] liberation of India and destruction of the British Far Eastern Fleet have all scattered like dreams. Meanwhile, not to speak of capturing Port Moresby, but the recovery of Guadalcanal...turned out to be impossible.⁹⁶

On April 18, 1942, the Americans staged the Doolittle Raid, bombing Tokyo and other places on Honshu. The raid planned and led by Lt. Col. James Doolittle caused negligible material damage to Japan, but had major psychological effects. Hirohito very concerned about the ability of military leaders to defend the home islands, gathered the Army General Staff led by Field Marshal Hajime Sugiyama at the Imperial Palace. During the meeting, he bitterly declared to the generals, "When are you going to start striking the enemy on all fronts? Could we not win even one spectacular success against the United States? We cannot continue to retreat in this way."⁹⁷

In mid-February 1943, after the setback suffered by the Japanese troops during the Imperial Navy's landing operation on Savo Island, near Guadalcanal, Hirohito who learned the failure of the Japanese navy air force exposed to the attacks of the American

forces under Admiral Nimitz and General MacArthur, addressing to Admiral Nagano, chief of the Navy General Staff, said:

I wonder if the army and navy are really cooperating. You give me all kinds of excuses, such as thick fog and so on, but it should have been thought of beforehand. I would like to know whether the army and the navy have any dialogue together. We cannot win with a lack of cooperation. If we continue to fight in this way, we will only delight the Chinese, disturb neutral countries, sorry our allies, and weaken the sphere of co-ownership. Is there no way, then, somewhere, in any way, to identify American forces and destroy them? Would the services be able to overcome their jealousies and cooperate in consolidating their newly won positions in the Solomons and in eastern New Guinea, where preparations were underway for launching a ground attack on Port Moresby?⁹⁸

Nagano apologized by acknowledging that everything in the Solomons and Bismarck Sea was in peril. Hirohito asked angrily, “There is no sign of any attacks. Why aren’t you carrying them out?”⁹⁹

Hirohito’s concern over the limitation of naval weapons and the setbacks of German and Italian troops, which formed the Axis powers with Japan, were another example that clearly showed that he was not only acting in the war in the Pacific, but was also closely following the course of the fighting on the European continent. At the very beginning of his reign, when the conflict broke out between “moderates,” the liberal minority (embodied by Prince Saionji Kinmochi), that was resolutely hostile to war and was determined to extend Japan’s traditional friendship with America

and Western countries, and on the other side, the supporters of fascism, those who believed in the success of an immediate war, Hirohito did not decide. Far from following the advice of some members in his circle who believed that war was a long-term goal, Japan had every interest in abstaining from fighting for a few years, in order to build a much more overwhelming power, rather, the emperor was tempted by the idea of setting in motion as soon as possible and using the advanced military machine to carry out his expansionist plan. Thus, in his blind ambition to conquer the world, he began the annexation of the territories of Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

According to the “Sugiyama Memo,” as well as the diaries of Fumimaro Konoë and Kido Kōichi, Hirohito had many informal meetings with his chief of staff and his ministers during the Second World War. These documents showed that he was kept informed of all military operations and he frequently asked senior management several questions about the deployment of troops, and sometimes, he gave his opinion on how to conduct the war. In July 1937, he signed the imperial decree that allowed Japan to go to war against China. On September 27, 1940, he approved the agreement of the Japanese government with Rome and Berlin, the Tripartite Pact. Immediately after, with his consent, Japan invaded Indochina on September 22, 1940. U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who has pursued a dual policy since 1939, issued an embargo on oil deliveries to Tokyo. Hirohito, sulking at the American threats that demanded of Japan the withdrawal of its troops in China and other occupied territories in Southeast Asia and the Pacific, signed on behalf of the Japanese people, a neutrality agreement with the Soviet Union on April 13, 1941. At the same period, he endorsed the decision of the Army Chief of Staff Sugiyama and Army Minister Tōjō for the invasion of Malaya and the Philippines.

According to many historians, such as Yoshiaki Yoshimi and Seiya Matsuno, Hirohito, authorized by specific orders, forwarded to the heads of state-major of the army, Prince Kan'in Kotohito and Gen. Hajime Sugiyama, the use of chemical weapons against civilians and Chinese soldiers. He approved the use of toxic gases several times during the Wuhan invasion in 1938. The use of the same weapons was also allowed during the Changde Invasion.

According to other historians, Akira Fujiwara and Akira Yamada, Hirohito has made direct interventions in several military operations. For example, from January to February 1942, to increase the number of Japanese troops in the Philippines, he pressed Sugiyama several times. He ordered the general to launch an attack on Bataan. In August 1943, he expressed his anger at Sugiyama who was unable to stop the American advance on the Solomon Islands, and asked him to consider other places to attack.

The analysis of the Japanese archives including documents written by Gen. Hajime Sugiyama, Prince Fumimaro Konoe, (three times prime minister), Prince Nobuhito Takamatsu, (Hirohito's younger brother), and finally, the seal keeper, Marquis Kōichi Kido, confirmed the active role played by Hirohito during the war. According to the monumental work published in five volumes between 1973 and 1974, under the title *Daibon'ei senshi*, Hirohito proved by his attitudes and actions to be the supreme commander of the Imperial Japanese Army. He led the war in the Pacific that claimed the lives of nearly twenty million people in Asia, three million Japanese, and sixty thousand Allied soldiers. He presided over all important high-staff meetings and controlled the activities of troops on the ground.

He oversaw all troop movements and military promotions, knowing that it is certain that he was fully informed in advance of what the commanders of his army were planning. On February 24, 1933, the Japanese delegation, defying world opinion, withdrew from the League of Nations Assembly after the assembly had adopted a report blaming Japan for events in Manchuria. In March 1933, Hirohito signed the imperial decree of Japan's withdrawal from the Society of Nations. In 1934, he condoned an attack by his followers on Dr. Minobe, a law professor. Minobe was attacked for challenging the "sacred and inviolable" character of the "imperial will" in the constitution. Minobe was forced to resign from his position in the House of Peers in September 1935. He was later the victim of two attacks.

Most of Hirohito's imperial interventions were made by direct orders, such as the crushing of the rebellion during the February 26 Incident. The Japanese archives, updated since the nineties, demonstrated that indeed, each order to use chemical weapons

must receive the express approval of the emperor. They also showed that the decision to suspend the international rights of civilians was indeed authorized by a specific Hirohito directive to Prince Kan'in in August 1937. Even though Hirohito publicly let his military leaders conduct the war, behind the scenes, he played a key role in the decision made by the high commander of the Imperial Japanese Army to conquer the territories of several countries in the Pacific. In December 1936, the Japanese officials ratified the Anti-Comintern Pact. For several years, Japan was at war with most countries in the Pacific. As commander in chief of the army and navy, Hirohito was involved in a secret program to develop the nation's air defense network, which was upgraded to prevent attacks by American bombers. As Japan's emperor, he did everything to prevent the Americans from conquering and defeating Japan. Close to defeat, he approved the launching of thousands of hydrogen balloons carrying incendiary bombs that travel five thousand miles across the Pacific to America.

Marxist historians, Kamei Katsuchirō, Takeyama Michio, Matsuda Michio, Inoue Kiyoshi, Tōyama Shigeki, Toma Seita, Minzoku Ishiri, Suzuki Shirō, Eguchi Bokuro, Matsumoto Shinpachiro, and Ishimoda Shō have traced the inherently “criminogenic” character of the imperial system. These Marxists made the ruling class in Japan particularly Emperor Hirohito as responsible for the war, and they called for a reappraisal of the importance of the “spirit” of the time, its psychological context, and its influence on decisions. For them, “the historical narrative must serve to anchor a true democratic consciousness among the majority of the Japanese, and this justifies that we insist on the historical reconstruction of the Shōwa era, and on the responsibility of the dominant layers of society in the world.”

Other Japanese intellectuals, such as Maruyama Masao, folklorist Wakamori Tarō, Shinohara Hajime, philosopher Matsuzawa Hiroaki, and Nezu Masashi were also at the center of the debates of the historical consciousness of post-war Japan. Many of them have written about the demonic personality of Hirohito, who did not hesitate between January and December 1941 to launch his country into war while recognizing the stakes and risks to which Japan was exposed in taking this direction.

According to historians and experts —Bix, Dower, Kentaro, Pike, Yoshiaki, Yoshida, Kasahara, Ienaga, and Yoshiaki— and some revelations from people close to the Imperial Palace, it emerges that Hirohito was not a toy of the unscrupulous military. He had great influence in the decisions taken by the government and the high commander of the Imperial Japanese Army. Personally, he gave the green light to the plan to attack the Soviet Union after its invasion by Hitler in June 1941. He decided to violate the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Treaty signed on April 13, 1941. A few years earlier, with its endorsement, the Second Sino-Japanese War was launched. This conflict began following Japan's invasion of eastern China in 1937 and lasted until 1945. As commander-in-chief of the Japanese army and the Japanese navy, he put no obstacle to the militarization of Japan in the 1930s and its ultranationalist excesses. The emergence of documents long buried in the personal papers of one of his assistants, Terasaki Hidenari, published in 1990 by his daughter under the title *The Monologues of the Emperor*, confirmed with more veracity the important role that Hirohito played during the war.

In December 1936, he ratified the Anti-Comintern Pact, an agreement concluded first between Germany and Japan (Nov. 25, 1936) and then between Italy, Germany, and Japan (Nov. 6, 1937), directed against the Communist International (Comintern) but, by implication, specifically against the Soviet Union. In November and December 1937, the “Nanking Rape” occurred. Indeed, after the bitter battle of Shanghai, the Japanese entered Nanking, then the capital of China. The massacres would last for three months killed between 200,000 to 300,000 Chinese in particularly shock conditions. When the three all policy was implemented “kill everything, burn everything, plunder everything,” 2.7 million civilians lost their lives. More than 200,000 women, referred to as “comfort women,” were forced into prostitution.

In Japan, many survivors criticized Hirohito for their sufferings, and in their view the emperor was responsible for the atrocities of the war. Among them, many people in Okinawa who had paid a heavy price in recent times of conflict —more than two hundred thousand civilian and military deaths— were sometimes forced into

mass suicides. For example, during the Nanking Massacre, which took place in December 1937, according to the investigation led by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, the Japanese army had massacred at least two hundred thousand civilians and prisoners of war.

Herbert P. Bix, citing the work of Himeta Mitsuyoshi and Akira Fujiwara, believed that the three all policy, “kill everything, burn everything, plunder everything,” a strategy of the burned earth used by the Japanese in China between 1942 and 1945, and approved by Hirohito, was responsible for the deaths of at least 2.7 million Chinese civilians. War crimes in China also include the Changjiao Massacre in Hunan. Between May 9 and May 12, 1943, more than 30,000 people were massacred in this Chinese region by a Japanese expeditionary force led by Gen. Shunroku Hata.

Like other indirect victims of Japanese expansionist politics under Hirohito’s leadership, we mention the inhabitants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, who witnessed the devastation of these two cities totally ravaged by atomic bombs released by the Americans on August 6 and August 9, 1945. Japan’s persistence in continuing the war despite the capitulation of these two allies in the Axis: Germany and Italy, forced the Americans to bomb the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The mayor of Nagasaki, Mr. Hitoshi Motoshima, nearly succumbed in January 1990 to an attack after publicly mentioning Hirohito’s responsibility during the war.

On September 30, 1943, a conference of Imperial Headquarters was scheduled in Hirohito’s presence. The Privy Council president asked on his behalf Tōjō, Sugiyama, Nagano, the president of the Planning Bureau, and the minister of commerce and industry, several questions in connection with the war. Tōjō’s verbal answer revealed that although the government had planned “to produce 40,000 aircraft” during 1944, only “17,000 to 18,000 planes” will be produced. When Hara asked Nagano if he was “confident of securing the absolute defense perimeter” with forty thousand aircraft, the navy chief of staff replied:

I cannot assure the future of the war situation. At the end of the conference, both chiefs of staff

assured the emperor to prevent further depletion of men and materiel by establishing the “absolute defense perimeter,” and to rebuild, regroup, and redeploy to meet the coming Allied general offensive. Here is the policy document adopted that day: ...We shall establish a strategic posture to cope with the American-British offensive, making mid-1944 our approximate target for full readiness. Whenever the occasion presents, we shall capture and destroy the enemy’s offensive forces. To carry out the Empire’s war, the strategic area in the Pacific and Indian Oceans that must absolutely be secured is a perimeter that includes the Kuril Islands, Ogasawara, the inner South Pacific (the central and western parts), and the western part of New Guinea, the Sunda Strait, and Burma.¹⁰⁰

Hirohito, very skeptical, replied, “Being ready to defend isn’t enough. We have to do the attacking.”¹⁰¹ And as he did very often, he criticized his generals, whom he accused of not winning the war quickly enough. For him, it was a matter of unleashing the lightning of the Imperial Army throughout the Asian continent to annihilate the growing influence of the Communists in the region, especially in China.

When on November 1, 1943, Nagano reported good results in the second air battle of Bougainville, Hirohito’s naval aide, Lt. Comm. Jō Eiichirō, in his diary reported, “The emperor seemed satisfied and joined toasts with his aides-de-camp in their duty office.”¹⁰² One month later, in late December, Hirohito was very frustrated when the Japanese navy withdrew from the Solomons. Japanese troops lost control of the Vitiaz and Dampier Straits, the body of water between the island of New Britain and the north coast of New Guinea, forcing Gen. Isoroku Yamamoto to abandon the islands. Approximately 50,000 troops of the Second Army in

western New Guinea and another 50,000 of the 18th Army in the eastern part of the island, were isolated, and went down in defeat.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, 11,300 Americans were killed or wounded.

The Japanese occupied these locations and began the construction of several naval and air bases with the goals of protecting the flank of the Japanese offensive in New Guinea, establishing a security barrier for the major Japanese base at Rabaul on New Britain, and providing bases for interdicting supply lines between the Allied powers of the United States and Australia and New Zealand. Although every step has been made to hide the war crimes committed by the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy during World War II, Hirohito's guilt is not difficult to detect. During the short interval between his decision to capitulate and the arrival of the American occupying forces, he ordered that all confidential documents be burned. In accordance with an ordinance signed by the emperor, the minister of the imperial household ordered the destruction of all the "delicate" papers of the palace shortly before the surrender, and the ministers of foreign affairs, army, and navy, as well as the chiefs of the army and navy staff, did the same.

When Hirohito first met MacArthur at the U.S. embassy in Tokyo on September 27, 1945, he took full responsibility for all the war crimes committed by the Japanese troops during the Pacific War. Answering a question from MacArthur, "How was it that a sovereign powerful enough to end the war would not have been able to prevent it?" Hirohito replied:

It was not dear to me that our policy was unjustified. Even today, I am not sure to whom historians will attribute responsibility for this war. Then, he told the general, "I came to offer myself to the judgment of the powers you represent, as sole responsible for all political and military decisions taken and for all the actions taken by my people in the conduct of the war."¹⁰⁴

As Kidō points out in his diary, it is likely that the emperor went to war on tiptoe against the United States, but he nevertheless did so with full knowledge of the facts.¹⁰⁵ Several months before Pearl Harbor, Hirohito had in his possession a detailed schedule of the order of battles and the questions he asked his chiefs of staff showed that he was fully aware of the operation. As the war developed on the ground, he actively looked at every detail. He had not granted any moral scruple, no remorse for the victims, the suffering and personal sacrifices imposed on his people.

On September 5, 1942, on the advice of Prime Minister Konoe, Hirohito summoned the Army Chiefs of Staff. They were subjected to close interrogation, the most direct the emperor has ever had with subordinates:

Hirohito: Did the Chiefs of Staff believe they could “do the South” in the way they set out in their plans for operations?

Sugiyama: The plans have been studied very closely and we think everything will go according to plan.

Hirohito: Are you sure everything will work according to your plans? That is never quite the case. You say it will all be over in five months. But you said we would get rid of Chiang Kai-shek within a year and he’s still there. Shouldn’t we consider all that can happen unexpectedly?

Then the emperor went on:

Hirohito: Do you really think the landing will be so fragile?

Sugiyama: I don't know if it will be easy, but I think it's very doable.

Hirohito: During the simulated invasion exercises off Kyushu Island, many ships were "sunk" by enemy aircraft. If the same thing happens for real, what will you do?

Sugiyama: The fleet had acted before its air cover was ready. The error would never happen again.

Hirohito: What would happen if the weather was bad?

Sugiyama: That would complicate the operations, but not compromise them.

Hirohito: How could you be so confident? When you were Minister of War, you said that the "China incident" would be resolved in five months and it is still not.

Sugiyama: The fault was the "special circumstances" in China.

The general then said:

Your Honor, I cannot guarantee you a 100 percent victory, but I would argue that we have a good chance of winning.

Hirohito: I understand.

Hitler controlled the war in Europe by placing at the head of the German government close officials who were loyal to the Nazism ideology, such as Himmler, Goebbels and Goering. Hirohito, for his part, controlled the war in the Pacific by placing at the head of the Japanese Army close relatives, members of the imperial court, such as Prince Asaka Yasuhiko, Prince Chichibu Yasuhito, Prince Higashikuni Morihito, Prince Kan'in Kotohito, Prince Mikasa Takahito, Prince Takamatsu Nobuhito, and Prince Takeda Tsuneyoshi.

Having made his close relatives and protégés in all important positions, Hirohito dedicated himself totally to presiding over and guiding the war from the Imperial Palace. He publicly encouraged and praised soldiers, officers, commanders, all the troops deployed on the battlefields. He sent messages and messengers to the fronts to push his troops to victory. He reinforced their belief in the inherent superiority of offense over defense.¹⁰⁶ He visited bases, battleships, and various army and navy headquarters. He inspected military schools, granted audiences to industrial leaders to encourage production, took a great interest in weapons development, and, everywhere drove home the message of sacrifice for the state.¹⁰⁷

As an emperor, the supreme commander of the army and navy, many times Hirohito intervened directly in the issue. He criticized command errors and failed attempts to win battles. After July 18, 1944, two months before the battle for Peleliu, he withdrew his support for Tōjō's government. He became the leading sovereign for Japan's tactical and supported the army's strategy of slaughtering innocent civilians and executing prisoners of war. Behind his shy personality, in many occasions, he set up when exceptionally strong leadership was needed to make the final decision and end conflicts between the general staff and their

ministries. Since the start of the war, he allowed his generals and admirals to be the face military of the nation. At the beginning of 1945, as the American Army and Navy got closer to the homeland of Japan, he personally took control of the situation. He approved the plan to destroy the enemy by using kamikaze aircraft as a strategy to extend the war. A few years after he took the throne, during a conversation with Japanese generals and admirals in Ibaraki Prefecture, Hirohito showed interest in strengthening the Japanese air force strikes to launch the war all over the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

One of the biggest atrocities of the Japanese army during the war was the use of chemical weapons. In 1936, Hirohito authorized by imperial decree the expansion of Shirō Ishii's bacteriological research unit and its incorporation into the Guangdong Army. As early as July 1937, he authorized the use of poison gas against Chinese soldiers and civilians. These authorizations were given through specific imperial directives, (*rinsanmei*), transmitted to the generals through the chief of the army staff, Prince Kan'in Kotohito and Gen. Hajime Sugiyama. From September to October 1938, he also authorized the use of toxic gases on hundreds of occasions during the Battle of Wuhan. In 1941, Gen. Yasuji Okamura was authorized to use fifteen thousand canisters of toxic gas in Shandong.¹⁰⁸

Historians Yoshiaki Yoshimi, Awaya Kentaro, Seiya Matsuno, and Yuki Tanaka, found in their research that Hirohito authorized the use of chemical weapons in China by imperial order. During the invasion of Wuhan from August to October 1938, he authorized the use of toxic gases 375 times, in violation of Article 171 of the Treaty of Versailles, particularly Article V of the treaty on the use of submarines and asphyxiation gases in times of war, a resolution adopted by the League of Nations on May 14 of that year condemning Japan's use of toxic gases.¹⁰⁹ According to documents found in 2004, by Yoshimi and Tanaka in the Australian National Archives, toxic gases were tested on Australian and Dutch prisoners in November 1944 in the Kai Islands.

In September 1942, Hirohito signed an imperial ordinance sentencing American lieutenants Mark and Farrow, as well as soldiers Spatz and Hite, to death. All these soldiers took part in the

Doolittle Raid. George Barr and captured Cpl. Jacob Daniel DeShazer were sentenced to life imprisonment.¹¹⁰ In the morning of December 7, 1941, Japanese navy forces attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. This attack was one of Hirohito's most criminal acts. The Japanese sank or damaged 3 cruisers, 3 destroyers, an anti-aircraft training ship, and an anti-mine vessel. They destroyed 180 American aircraft. During the attacks, 2,403 American soldiers were killed while another 1,178 were wounded.

Those positions justified Hirohito's direct responsibility in the war and suggested why he should have been tried in Tokyo.¹¹¹ He personally supervised the battle of the Philippine Island of Leyte, which he had ordered Japanese Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita to hold at all costs.¹¹² He declared himself, deeply satisfied of the issue of this battle, and then he added to the prime minister, the former army intelligence officer, Koiso Kuniaki, that Leyte was Japan's greatest military victory since the Battle of Yamazaki in 1582.¹¹³

As Francis Pike explained, "It was the war of his Empire, fought under its divine name, and with its approval. As Supreme Commander, he sanctioned the decisions of the High Staff, built a war room under his palace and advised his generals on troop movements in China, where several million people had died.¹¹⁴ U.S. secretaries of state, Dean Gooderham Acheson and Cordell Hull, were among those who encouraged Hirohito to be charged with war crimes. The two diplomats said that "liquidating the imperial system was the ultimate way to democratize Japan." In a lengthy report to President Truman in 1946, George Acheson Jr., the secretary of state's representative in Tokyo, declared that Hirohito is "a war criminal and that the imperial system must disappear in order to the country to become a democratic state."¹¹⁵

As one reviewing the history of the Shōwa era, Hirohito was a monster, who had played an effective role in the crimes committed by the Japanese army and the Japanese navy during World War II. For his role in the war, he should have been tried and convicted at the Tokyo trials.¹¹⁶ His judgment would have been a move to condemn crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. The decision made by MacArthur, who led Japan's post-conflict occupation administration, had helped Hirohito to escape justice. MacArthur, using his power, had played all the cards to

remove Hirohito's name from the list of defendants. As a basic rule, the American occupants observed a wartime policy of not provoking the enemy by attacking the emperor. The general U.S. war policy had opposed attacks against imperial sites or even condemned any verbal denigration of Emperor Hirohito. Given the intense campaign by MacArthur to present Hirohito as a champion of peace, the high-level evocation of his war responsibility during the Tokyo trials was starting. All the defendants accused of "Class A" war crimes had meticulously avoided saying anything that might seem to implicate their sovereign.

MacArthur told his staff that Hirohito was emperor by birth, and when he met him for the first time at the US embassy in Tokyo, he knew that he had in front of him the first great Lord of Japan by right. He also confided that at first,

I arrived here with the intention of treating the emperor more harshly, but this was not necessary. He is sincere, authentic, and he is a liberal man. I found that ruling via the emperor made my job in running Japan much easier than it otherwise would have been.¹¹⁷

According to Kido's diary, MacArthur said that, "Hirohito is best placed to know the important men of his country's political universe. So, I'd like to hear his opinion on different topics."¹¹⁸ The diary of Ashida Hitoshi, a former member of the Liberal Party, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1947 and became Prime Minister of Japan in 1948, reported on his visit to QHQ on February 21, 1946: "MacArthur, as usual, started on an oration. "I am working from the bottom of my heart for the good of Japan. Ever since my audience with the emperor, I have been telling myself I must insure his safety at all costs."¹¹⁹ Western leaders, led by the United States for political reasons, did not try Hirohito before the International Military Tribunal for the Far East;

however, there is no doubt to the emperor's responsibility in the war.

MacArthur's conduct of the occupation had already come under criticism from the Russians and the British at the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in London. Secretary of State James F. Byrnes was preparing to yield to Allied pressure for some form of group supervision of the freewheeling supreme commander. The prime minister of New Zealand had warned the American minister that "these should be no soft peace;" "the Emperor should be tried as a war criminal."¹²⁰

Reluctant at the beginning to the prospect of Japan entering World War II, Hirohito welcomed the success of the Japanese offensive on Pearl Harbor and the victories that followed in Southeast Asia. Based on archives and historical records, Hirohito was a war criminal who must stand trial in Tokyo. On November 13, 1948, Sir William Webb, the president of the tribunal, declared, "This immunity of the emperor is contrasted with the part he played in launching the war in the Pacific, is, I think, a matter which the tribunal should take into consideration in imposing the sentences."¹²¹

In August 1945, Gen. Bonner Fellers, ordered by General MacArthur to make a list of those to prosecute, had to decide whether Hirohito was a war criminal or not. Fellers noted that the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy had committed millions of crimes, and Hirohito, in his role as commander-in-chief, could not completely ignore them. In fact, upon his arrival on the throne, like Hitler in Germany, he had used military parades to formalize the militarization of Japan and prepare the Japanese troops in their vast plan to occupy the neighboring territories in the Pacific and in Southeast Asia. The guilt of the emperor was evident, but Fellers feared that Japan, as

devastated it was, could fall into the orbit of Communism. “Japan’s destiny is at stake. We must maintain the imperial regime,” Fellers concluded.¹²²

The question is why wasn’t Hirohito, a “Class” A war criminal, tried during the Tokyo trial when knowing that he had controlled behind the scenes all the operations of the Japanese army during the war? Fellers acknowledged that “as emperor and acknowledged head of state, Hirohito cannot sidestep war guilt. He is part of and must be considered an instigator of the Pacific War.”¹²³ An internal report by the Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.) noted in July 1944, “The desirability of eliminating the present emperor is questionable; it is probable that he inclines personally toward the more moderate faction and might prove a useful influence later.”¹²⁴

The O.S.S. and other intelligence agencies believed that Hirohito held the key not only to surrender but also a postwar change.¹²⁵ In his memoirs, Yoshida Shigeru praised MacArthur as the “great benefactor of his country.”¹²⁶ He praised the commander for the preservation of the throne and protection of its august occupant in a time of unprecedented peril.

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Chapter Eight

The Potsdam Declaration

The Potsdam Declaration was signed on July 26, 1945. Written by Harry Truman and Clement Atlee, it was remotely approved by Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek). The Soviet Union de facto accepted the terms when it declared war on Japan on August 8, 1945. On July 26, 1945, President Harry S. Truman, for the United States, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, for United Kingdom, and Chiang Kai-shek, Chairman of China, issued the document, which outlined the terms of surrender for the Empire of Japan, as agreed upon at the Potsdam Conference. The ultimatum stated, “If Japan did not surrender; it would face “prompt and utter destruction.””¹²⁷

It had been several weeks since the Japanese authorities had been notified of the Potsdam Declaration; Hirohito and his staff instead of recognizing defeat and stopping the casualties from the war, tried to use all political means for avoiding complete defeat or unconditional surrender.

The strategy was to persuade the Soviet Union to continue its neutrality, and, at the same time to make every effort to grow discord between the Americans and the British on one side, and the Russians on the other side. As the situation deteriorates still further, Japan may even make a serious attempt to use the Soviets as a mediator in ending the war.”

Knowing the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy were objectively defeated, Hirohito was indifferent to the suffering that the war was causing on his own citizens, and on the peoples of Asia, the Pacific, and the West. The leaders of this wartime empire and his war leaders let pass several opportunities to end the war. First, Hirohito and his inner war cabinet, — the Supreme War Leadership Council, — could sue for peace when Prince Konoe and Foreign Minister Shigemitsu, in February 1945, warned the emperor that once the war was ending in Europe, the Soviet Union would not hesitate to eschew the Neutrality Treaty

and would decide to intervene military in the Far East to occupy Manchuria and other territories in Japan. According to military intelligence officers, the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan by midsummer. Hirohito, instead of starting the process to end the war, was determined to fight. He supported the position of the far-right extremists in the army who rejected any act of surrender.¹²⁸

The second opportunity was offered at the beginning of June 1945, when Japanese troops were defeated during the Battle of Okinawa. The invasion of Okinawa on April 1, 1945, was the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific Ocean theater of World War II. The battle has been referred to as the “typhoon of steel” because of the ferocity of the fighting, the intensity of Japanese kamikaze attacks, and the numbers of Allied ships and armored vehicles that assaulted the island. The battle was one of the bloodiest in the Pacific, with approximately 210,000 casualties: at least 85,000 Allies and 125,000 Japanese. The Americans suffered over 82,000 casualties, including non-battle casualties (psychiatric, injuries, illnesses), of whom over 12,500 were killed or missing. Battle deaths were 4,907 of navy, 4,675 army, and 2,938 Marine Corps personnel. The US military estimates that 110,071 Japanese soldiers were killed during the battle. A total of 7,401 Japanese regulars and 3,400 Okinawan conscripts surrendered or were captured during the battle. Both sides lost considerable numbers of ships and aircraft, including the Japanese battleship *Yamato*. Of the estimated pre-war population of 300,000, an estimated 150,000 Okinawans were killed, committed suicide or went missing. The eighty-two-day battle lasted from April 1 until June 22, 1945.

After the defeat, General Umezu indicated that the war effort could continue no longer, and Umezu unveiled the dramatic situation in China. Foreign Minister Molotov had notified Tokyo on April 5, 1945, that the Japan-Soviet Neutrality Pact would not be extended, and that the Germans had surrendered unconditionally on May 7–8, leaving Japan completely isolated. Hirohito, once again, instead of listening to Umezu’s advice, had refused to surrender in order to allow the imperial structure to survive. The

emperor adopted, with his war leaders, two dangerous measures: preparations for a final battle on the homeland, and efforts to gain Soviet assistance in ending the war by offering Stalin limited territorial concessions. Over several weeks, witnessing that the home islands had been bombed on a large scale, and knowing for certain that the bombing of Tokyo and several major cities in Japan would intensify over time, Hirohito approved the decision of the six constituent members of the council who agreed to return to the situation that had existed prior to the Russo-Japanese War, while retaining Korea as a Japanese territory and making southern Manchuria a neutral zone.

The third opportunity came on July 27–28, when the Potsdam Declaration was signified to the Suzuki cabinet. The Japanese government obtained the declaration and was informed that if it fulfilled certain unilateral obligations, which the victorious powers would impose after the Japanese government had proclaimed “the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces” and furnished “proper and adequate assurance of their good faith in such action,” Japan would then be allowed to retain its peace industries and resume participation in world trade on the basis of the principle of equal access to raw materials. “The alternative for Japan,” the declaration concluded, “is prompt and utter destruction.” Article 12 stated, “The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government.”

Prime Minister Suzuki received the declaration on July 27 and showed no intention of accepting it. On the contrary, the Suzuki cabinet first ordered the press to publish the *Dōmei News Service's* edited version and to minimize the significance of the declaration by not commenting on it.¹²⁹ The next day, on July 28, Hirohito called Prime Minister Suzuki and four other important officials for an audience; among them, Army Minister Korechika Anami, Chief of the Naval General Staff, Toyoda Soemu. The five officials came in their limousines. Arriving at the palace, they assembled in the

conference room of the imperial library. Hirohito, in uniform, opened the meeting brusquely, by saying: “We have heard enough of this determination of yours to fight to the last soldier. Now we want action. We want you to consider methods of ending this war. Don’t be bound by anything you have said before. State your real opinions.”

In the afternoon of that meeting, in accord with Army Minister Anami Korechika, Chief of the Naval General Staff Toyoda Soemu, Prime Minister Suzuki made Japan’s rejection explicit by formally declaring, that the Potsdam Declaration was no more than a “rehash” (*yakinaoshi*) of the Cairo Declaration, and that Japan intended to “ignore” it (*mokusatsu*).¹³⁰ Navy Minister Adm. Mitsumasa Yonai was very comfortable with this position. When his secretary, Rear Adm. Takeo Takagi, asked him why the prime minister had been allowed to make such an absurd statement, Yonai replied: “If one is first to issue a statement, he is always at a disadvantage. Churchill has fallen; America is beginning to be isolated. The government therefore will ignore it. There is no need to rush.”¹³¹

My question here is, why did Japan’s top leaders delay so long before finally accepting to end the war? It was Emperor Hirohito’s tactic to delay the inevitable capitulation in order to cut a deal on the issue of guaranteeing the dynasty. To do so, he requested Soviet mediation. The Hirota Kōki and Jacob Malik talks, and the secret messages that Foreign Minister Shigenori Tōgō sent to Ambassador Satō Naotake in Moscow, were part of the strategy. The negotiations between Japan and Russia to gain Soviet assistance to end the war went on through June, July, and early August. Those political meetings could be perceived as a tactic to delay the act of surrender. The future of the throne and the all-important prerogatives of its occupants, by the time of the discussions, would be absolutely guaranteed.

On the morning of August 3, 1945, Suzuki had a meeting with his cabinet advisory council, composed of the president of Asano Cement, the founder of the Nissan Consortium, the vice president of the Bank of Japan, and other business leaders who had profited

greatly from the war. Those from the *zaibatsu* recommended acceptance of the Potsdam terms on the grounds that the United States would allow Japan to retain its military industries and participate in world trade. Suzuki replied to them:

For the enemy to say something like that means circumstances have arisen that force them also to end the war. That is why they are talking about unconditional surrender. Precisely at a time like this, if we hold firm, then they will yield before we do. Just because they broadcast their declaration, it is not necessary to stop fighting. You advisers may ask me to reconsider, but I don't think there is any need to stop [the war].¹³²

The Atomic Bomb

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima. At precisely eight fifteen and seventeen seconds, Col. Paul Tibbets, commander of the 509th Composite Group of the United States Army Forces, who piloted the Boeing B-29 Super fortress Enola Gay, pulled the B-29 over a sixty-degree bank and dropped the "Little Boy" on Hiroshima.¹³³ A black and orange shape weighting nearly five tons fell down on the 255,000 people living in the city. At an altitude of 1,870 feet, the 9.5 pounds of cordite drove the uranium chunks into each other, and the equivalent of 13,500 tons of TNT exploded in the sky. The explosion wiped out 90 percent of the city and immediately killed 80,000 people; tens of thousands more would later die of radiation exposure.¹³⁴

When the first plutonium device was exploded in New Mexico in July, Admiral Purnell and General Groves had agreed on the strategy of putting a second bomb on target as quickly as possible after the first in order to impress the Japanese with the fact that the

United States has more than one atomic bomb, in their arsenal. During a conversation with Groves, Purnell had suggested that it would take two bombs to end the war. President Truman had accepted this proposition. He ordered atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the two cities named after the conversation in Potsdam. The first idea was instead of Nagasaki, to choose the city of Kyoto. Kyoto was replaced by Nagasaki because the U.S. officials considered Kyoto to be mainly a historical, religious, and urban center, and its destruction would lead to a massive destruction of historical heritage. Other cities that were on the list were Yokohama, Niigata, and Kokura, which was home to Japan's largest ammunition plant. Poor visibility had forced the Americans to abandon Kokura in the morning of August 9. "The winds of destiny seemed to favor certain Japanese cities," wrote the *New York Times* reporter William Laurence, a passenger on one of the mission's B-29s.

On August 9, at 11:02 a.m. local time, at an altitude of 1,540 feet, the Fat Man, carried by the U.S. military plane nicknamed "Bockscar," was detonated just over the northeast of the stadium in the Urakami Valley, an area that included industry as well as schools, hospitals and a cathedral. With the equivalent of 22 kilotons of power, the "Fat Man" plutonium bomb was far more powerful than the "Little Boy" used on Hiroshima three days earlier. From 100 miles away, people could hear the explosion of the bomb while an intense bluish-white flash illuminated the sky over Nagasaki. In a few seconds, the city became a graveyard. People by thousands lay on the streets, in the fields, screaming for help.

From the east bank of the Urakami River, the entire roof of the Chinzei School had caved in. A few miles away from the school, the roof and masonry of the Catholic cathedral fell on the kneeling worshippers. The blast tore through the church, killing Father Saburo Nishida and about 10 parishioners. Between 8,500 and 10,000 Urakami District Catholics died in the blast. The atomic bomb destroyed the Nagasaki Medical College, and some 900 professors, doctors, nurses, faculty members, and students were killed. A total of between 50,000 to 80,000 people in Nagasaki were killed in the explosion and its immediate aftermath.

The same day of Nagasaki's bombing, in a nationwide radio report on the Potsdam Conference, President Truman explained the legitimacy of the bombing:

Having found the bomb, we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans.¹³⁵

Despite the massive and mounting death toll from the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Hirohito, who was considered a deity by his subjects, refused to surrender. Knowing that only unconditional surrender would save Japan from complete destruction and knowing that unconditional surrender would mean the end of the 2,600-year-old imperial dynasty, the emperor persisted.¹³⁶

On August 8, 1945, the Soviet Union officially declared war on Japan, flooding 1.6 million troops into Manchuria, an area of 600,000 square miles in the northeast of China.¹³⁷ As the Russians poured into Manchuria and the Japanese lived in utter fear wondering where the new nuclear bombs would be dropped next, on August 9, 1945, a second atomic bomb nicknamed "Fat Man" was dropped on the city of Nagasaki. Between 35,000 to 45,000 Japanese were killed during the first day of the blast.

Hirohito, as a witness of the sufferings of his people, had to make a hard decision. Very concerned about the future of the war, he finally convoked his supreme council, and invited former Prime Ministers Hiranuma Hirota, Wakatsuki Okada, Fumimaro Konoe,

and Hideki Tōjō to come to the Imperial Palace to gather their views on the war. A few hours later, he met with the six high-ranking dignitaries of the empire, the so-called “Big Six,” to decide on surrender, namely: Prime Minister Kantarō Suzuki, Foreign Minister Shigenori Tōgō, Minister of the Navy, Adm. Mitsumasa Yonai, Minister of War, Gen. Korechika Anami, the Japanese imperial general staff, Gen. Yoshijirō Umezu, and the chief of navy personnel, Adm. Soemu Toyoda.

Three agreed with the position to continue the war, and three voted for surrender. Then, Hirohito intervened:

Now that the Soviet Union has entered the war against us, to continue... under the present conditions at home and abroad would only recklessly incur even more damage to ourselves and result in endangering the very foundation of the empire's existence. Therefore, even though enormous fighting spirit still exists in the Imperial Navy and Army, I am going to make peace with the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union, as well as with Chungking, in order to maintain our glorious national polity.¹³⁸

The emperor continued:

I have given a lot of thought to the current situation in the country and outside the territory; I have come to the conclusion that continuing the war would lead to more destruction in the nation and an extension of cruelty and barbarism in

the world. Those who want to continue the war have taught me that new battalions will arrive from Kujukurihama in June. Now I realize that these promises cannot be fulfilled even in September. To those who are in favor of one last battle on our own soil, I want to remind them of the difference between their plan presented in the past and the one on the agenda. I don't want to witness any more suffering from my people. Ending the war is the only way to restore peace in the world and lift the country into the distress it is currently facing.

Thinking about the world situation and the internal Japanese situation to continue in the world and that the Japanese nation will suffer severe damage. This is the reason why I order the acceptance of the provisions of the joint declaration of the powers.¹³⁹

In a radio address (known as Gyokuon-hsa), on August 15, 1945, Emperor Hirohito announced the acceptance of the terms of the Potsdam Declaration. The same day, the Japanese government communicated the message to the Allied powers: "Acting by order and on behalf of the emperor, the Japanese government and the Japanese imperial headquarters, we hereby declare that we accept the conditions set out in the declaration issued by the Heads of Governments of the United States, of China and Great Britain, on July 26, 1945, in Potsdam."

On September 2, 1945, Japan's acts of surrender were signed by representatives of the empire of Japan, the United States, the Republic of China, the United Kingdom, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, Australia, Canada, the Provisional Government of the French Republic, Kingdom of the Netherlands, and New Zealand, on the deck of the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. This action ended the war against China as well as the Pacific War linked to World War II.

According to Kusayanagi Daizō, author of *Nihon Meishoden*, in the immediate wake of the defeat, it was estimated that more than 300 army and 50 navy personnel had committed suicide. Among them were: Gen. Korechika Anami, Adm. Takijirō Onishi, Gen. Seiichi Tanaka, Field Marshal Gen. Hajime Sugiyama, Army Chief of Staff at the time of Pearl Harbor, and Mrs. Sugiyama.¹⁴⁰ Yoichi Nakagawa, ex-professor at Kenkoku University in Manchuria during World War II, author of the book, *A Moonflower in Heaven*, and Kazuko Tsurumi, Japanese scholar, ex-professor at Princeton University, author of the book, *Social Change and the Individual: Japan Before and After Defeat in World War II*, estimated that between the emperor's broadcast on August 15, 1945 and October 1948, a total of 527 army and navy men, plus a small number of civilians took their lives as a gesture of responsibility for the defeat.

Conclusion

As head of the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy, Hirohito engaged Japan in the Second World War in 1941. After the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Soviet Union's declaration of war against its empire, on August 15, 1945, Japan surrendered. On September 2, 1945, aboard the Missouri in Tokyo Bay, Gen. Yoshijirō Umezu signed capitulation to Gen. Douglas MacArthur by unconditionally accepting the Potsdam Proclamation of July 26, 1945.

Despite increasingly concordant information that confirmed Hirohito's active role during the war, the question of his responsibility for the crimes committed by the Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy in the Pacific continued to the subject until today of great debates among historians. What role did Hirohito play during the Second World War? For some scholars and historians, the emperor reigned over Japan in accordance with Article 1 of the 1889 Constitution. He was certainly, according to the Meiji Constitution, the supreme commander of the Army and Navy, but manipulated by the military, did he not exercise power? For others, on the other hand, Hirohito carefully and thoughtfully supervised the affairs of the state? He was deeply involved in the governance of the country, and in the strategic plans of the army.

Japanese historian Awaya Kentaro answered this question very well. According to him, Hirohito not only gave advice in all important decisions of the government and the army, but he closely supervised his orders to be sure they have been respected. He favored the coming to power of trusted men, Kido, Konoe and Tōjō, and he followed daily through the emissaries – Kawai, Makino, Chichibu, Chinda, Ichiki – diplomatic, political, and military affairs. His intervention to end the war despite threats of rebellion from a group of fascists in the military, such as, Kosono, Ugaki, Hatanaka, Haga, Mori, Anami, Shiizaki, Ida, Takeshida, Toyoda, Onishi, Arai, Koga, Ishihara, Mizutani, suggested that he could have changed the course of events sooner if he had the will,

and he could have avoided the destruction of several Japanese cities, including Tokyo, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki, by the American Air Force.

In writings and memoirs that cover his degree of maturity as commander-in-Chief of the Army, the emperor's closest advisers namely, Baron Harada Kumao, Prince Konoe Fumimaro, and Marquis Kōichi Kido, in contrast to the opinion of the venerable Saionji Kinmochi, said they admired the will of the young monarch who decided to play an important role in the political life of the Japanese empire, especially in the control of the army.

Unlike his father, Yoshihito Taishō, known as an erased monarch, Hirohito gave the last words in the major political decisions that engaged Japan. The emergence of documents long buried in the personal papers of one of his assistants, Terasaki Hidenari, published in 1990 by his daughter under the title *The Monologues of the Emperor*, confirmed with more veracity the important role that Hirohito played during the war. In these documents, we found the answers that he made in 1946 to the questions of his five closest advisers who prepared him in case that he was summoned as a witness by the International Tribunal for the Judgment of Japanese War Criminals in Tokyo. This plan would help him to reject any personal responsibility in the war against China and in the attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbor.

Hirohito, contrary to what was said, was not a puppet.

NOTES

1. Every Japanese emperor has two names, one for his lifetime, and the other one for posterity. Until their deaths, Emperor Mutsuhito had been known as Emperor Meiji, Yoshihito as Emperor Taisho, and Hirohito as Emperor Shōwa.
2. A leading scholar of the concept of the kokutai, Motoori Norinaga wrote in 1771: “Japan is the birthplace of the sublime ancestral deity Amaterasu Ōmikami. From this, it is especially clear why Japan is so distinguished compared to all other countries. After all, there is no country that is not touched by the power of this sublime goddess. Naobi no mitama = KGS 10:3, Stolte 1939: 193.
3. The Seventeen-Article Constitution written by Crown Prince Shōtoku in the year 604 determined the principles according to which the transformation of Japan occurred from a loose group of dynasties into a centralized state according to the Chinese model. The foundation of the new state in the 7th century, just as later in the 19th century, was the institution of the divine ruler: the emperor. Cited by Klaus Antoni, *Kokutai—Political Shintō From Early-Modern to Contemporary Japan*, (Eberhard Karls University Tübingen, 2016).
4. The so-called Meiji Restoration was the era in which Hirohito was born, which theoretically was a meaning of the return of authority to the emperor from the military dictators, called shoguns, and for Japan’s amazing progress from feudalism and isolation to the front rank of world powers. See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), Chapter 1, “*The Boy, The Family, And the Meiji Legacies*,” 21. See also Edward Behr, *Hirohito: Behind the Myth*, (New York: Villard, 1989).

5. After Japan's defeat in World War II, under the 1947 Constitution, the emperor of Japan became the head of the Imperial Family and the head of the state. He is defined in the new constitution as "the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people." He is also the highest authority of the Shinto religion. In Japanese, the emperor is called tennō, literally "heavenly sovereign." See Charles Holcombe (2001), *The Genesis of East Asia: 221-BC – A.D. 907*, University of Hawaii Press, 198. Also read *Legacy of Hirohito*, (The Times, May 3, 1989).
6. See Robert Trumbull, *A Leader Who Took Japan to War, to Surrender, and Finally to Peace*, (The New York Times, January 7, 1989).
7. A third brother, Mikasa-no-miya Takahito, was born ten years later, on December 2, 1915.
8. "Emperor Meiji, in consultation with Yoshihito and Sadako, had decided that his grandson Hirohito should be reared in the approved modern manner by a military man. His first choice, Gen. Oyama Iwao, declined to undertake this heavy responsibility. They then turned to the elderly Count Kawamura Sumiyoshi, a retired vice admiral and ex-navy minister from the Satsuma domain and asked him to rear the child just as though he were his own grandson." "*The Boy, the Family, and the Meiji Legacies*," See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 22, 23. Other lectures of the young Crown Prince Hirohito during the 1920s included Hirohito's teacher of Japanese literature, Professor Haga Yaichi; Professor Toribe, who taught Chinese literature; Professor Katō Shigeru, who lectured on Chinese history and philosophy; Yamamoto Shinjirō, Hirohito's translator and teacher of French; and the right-wing constitutional scholar Kakei Katsuhiko.
9. Count Nogi Maresuke also known as Kitten, Count Nogi, was a Japanese general in the

Imperial Japanese Army and a governor-general of Taiwan. He was a prominent figure in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, as commander of the forces which captured Port Arthur from the Russians.

10. Bushido is a feudal-military code of chivalry that valued honor above life.
11. On Nogi's instructions, Hirohito and his young brother were made to walk to school every morning, escorted by a medical attendant and two employees of the Imperial Household Ministry. On rainy days, they were allowed to ride in carriages; Hirohito rode alone while his brothers rode together and behind – the only exception being when one was sick. Cited by Stephen S. Large, *Emperor Hirohito and Showa Japan*, (Routledge, 2013).
12. See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), “*The Boy, The Family, And the Meiji Legacies*,” 36. See also *Takamatsu no miya Nobuhito shinnō*, 68.
13. William Stewart, Time Bureau Chief, “*The World: Hirohito: A Happy Experience*,” Hirohito's interview inside the Imperial Palace, Tokyo, Japan, published on October 6, 1975.
14. Hirohito graduated two months before his twentieth birthday. Three years before the graduation, and a few weeks before his seventeenth birthday, he became engaged to Princess Nagako, daughter of Prince Kuniyoshi Kuni. They were to have been married in 1923, but the ceremony was postponed until the following January because of the Great Kantō Earthquake in Tokyo on September 1, 1923.
15. In his *Lectures on Evolutionary Theory* (1904), Asajirō explained Charles Darwin's theory of evolution in plain simple language. He dealt with human problems from the point of view of an

evolutionist; in his famous work *From the Group of Monks to the Republic*, he compared the modern political system with ape society. He also criticized the absolutism and one-sided ethical education of Japanese society at that time and emphasized the necessity of an objective education oriented to scientific study.

16. Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 58.
17. In an interview that appeared in the *Sandē Mainichi* magazine on October 2, 1949, Hattori offered his opinion on Hirohito's scientific contribution to marine biology. Asked whether the emperor's studies should be viewed as genuine scientific research rather than the work of an amateur, Hattori replied, "Recently Professor Satō Tadao [of Nagoya University] wrote in the Nagoya newspaper that it belonged to the category of an amateur's research. Indeed, depending on how one looks at the matter, I think that is true. He never published anything under his own name and ended up furnishing raw data to various specialists. Therefore, from one point of view he is, in the final analysis, probably a mere collector. But I don't think so. He did not just hand them material he had collected. Rather, he first thoroughly investigated that material himself, and on that point, he is no amateur."

According to a 1987 interview with Grand Chamberlain Yoshihiro Tokugawa, who served the emperor for fifty years at the imperial palace, Hirohito's affinity for the biological sciences began in the sixth grade, when he saw his first collection of marine specimens. In this interview, published in the journal *Oceanus* Tokugawa said that this youthful interest marked for Hirohito the

beginning of a lifetime of scientific investigations and contributions to the field of marine biology.

18. Throughout his entire life, Hirohito continued to pursue his interest in marine biology, and, in his later age, became a fellow of the British Royal Society in 1971. He visited the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in 1974. An American publication reported that the emperor devoted “each Monday and Thursday afternoon” to marine biology. In 1928, during the second year of his reign, Hirohito built the Imperial Biological Research Institute, consisting of a greenhouse and two large laboratories. On the marine biology question see Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 60.
19. See Yves Samyn, ““Return to Sender: Hydrozoa Collected by Emperor Hirohito of Japan in the 1930s and Studied in Brussels,”” *Archives of Natural History*, vol. 41, Issue 1, (2004), 17–24. See also E. J. H. Corner, “His Majesty Emperor Hirohito of Japan, K.G., April 29, 1901–January 9, 1989,” *Biographical Memoirs of the Fellows of the Royal Society*, vol. 36 (Dec., 1990), 243; Stephen Large, *Hirohito and Shōwa Japan: A Political Biography*, (New York: Routledge, 1992).
20. See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 61.
21. See Suzanne Geisler, *God and Sea Power: The Influence of Religion on Alfred Thayer Mahan*, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2015). See also Philip A. Crowl, “Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian,” Kenneth Bourne and Carl Boyd, “Captain Mahan’s War with Great Britain,” (U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 94:7 (1968), 71–78.
22. In 1923, Ugaki became vice minister of the army. While Baron Takeji Nara graduated from the eleventh class of the Imperial Japanese Army

Academy in 1889 as a second lieutenant in artillery. He participated in the First Sino-Japanese War from 1894–1895, served in Germany, commanded the Japanese garrison at Tianjin, and worked in the Bureau of Military Affairs.

23. See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 45.
24. *Ibid.*, 49.
25. See Stephen S. Large, *Emperor Hirohito and Showa Japan*, The Nissan Institute/Routledge, 1992. See also Takashi Ōtake, *Phonological Structure and Language Processing*, (De Gruyter Mouton 1996), 265.
26. Tsunoda R., et al., 1960, 644.
27. Yamamoto, 1989: 251–2.
28. See Jun, Uchida, “From Island Nation to Oceanic Empire: A Vision of Japanese Expansion from the Periphery,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, February 2016.
29. “On Crown Prince Hirohito’s Tour of Europe, 1921,” Frederick R. Dickinson, *World War I and the Triumph of a New Japan, 1919–1930*. See also Noriko Kawamura, *Emperor Hirohito and the Pacific War*, (University of Washington Press, 2015), 28–29.
30. The Kobe strike was a protest the injustice of the way in which Japanese labor has been treated by the employer class. While the Kobe strike was the most important that has occurred in Japan in many years, it is not the only one inspired by the same general cause – inadequate pay and excessive living expenses. Since January 1 there have been sixty-three strikes, each affecting more than two thousand men, the largest number of strikes in any one trade being 16,000 before the Kobe out-break. 1905–1918 in Japan was called the Era of Popular Violence (*minshu sōjō ki*). This began with the

Hibiya Incendiary Incident, a huge demonstration of hundred thousand people against the terms of the Portsmouth Treaty which ended the Russo-Japanese war of 1904–1905. There were also several strikes and riots in 1911 in Tokyo, and a three-day riot in Nagoya, against which a large contingent of troops was required to suppress it. As a response to wartime inflation, low wages and commodity speculation, several strikes occurred in Japan in 1918. The rise in prices, particularly a rice shortage, gave rise to a major social revolution. Strikes increased from 49 strikes by 5,763 workers in 1914 to 108 strikes by 8,413 workers in 1916 to 417 strikes by 66,457 workers in 1918.

31. The right of women to vote was not affirmed by Japan until 1946 after it lost World War II.
32. See Taisho Democracy in Japan: 1912–1926, in the website of the non-profit organization, Facing History and Ourselves.
33. Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 63.
34. Yoshino Sakuzō, “On the Meaning of Constitutional Government and the Methods by Which It Can Be Perfected” (Kensei No Hongi O Toite Sono Yūshū No Bi O Seisu No To O Ronzu), 1916, in *Sources of Japanese Tradition, Abridged: Part 2: 1868 to 2000*, compiled by Wm. Theodore DeBary, Carol Gluck, and Arthur E. Tiedemann, 2nd edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 168–169.
35. Suzuki Kindai *no tennō*, 52. See also Herbert P. Bix, “The Politics of Good Intentions,” Chapter 4, 162, in *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016).
36. From 1918–1922 and 1924–1930 the military did not yet utilize its prerogative to control the formation of the Cabinet, so in the Taishō period,

- most of the administrations in Japan operated largely free from military intervention. See Banjo, Junji, *The Establishment of the Japanese Constitutional System*, (Routledge, 2002). Also see Sims Richard, *Japanese Political History Since the Meiji Renovation (1868–2000)*, (Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Young, A. Morgan, *Imperial Japan 1926–1938*, (Borah Press, 2007); Julia Adney Thomas, *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology (Twentieth-Century Japan)*, (University of California Press, 2002).
37. See Bredon Piers, *The Dark Valley: A Panorama of the 1930s*, (Vintage, 2002). Also see Frank Richard B., *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire*, (Penguin, 2001).
 38. See *Taisho Democracy in Japan: 1912–1926, published in Facing History and Ourselves*.
 39. See Masato Shizume, *The Japanese Economy during the Interwar Period: Instability in the Financial System and the Impact of the World Depression*, (Institute for Money and Economic Studies, 2009).
 40. Masuda Bill Broker Bank was headquartered in Osaka and had branches in the national and regional commercial centers of Tokyo, Nagoya, Kyoto, and Moji. See Tsurumi, Masayoshi [2000] “*Senzen-ki ni okeru Kin’yu Kiki to Intaabanku Shijo no Henbo (Financial Crises and Changes in the Interbank Money Market during the Prewar Period)*,” Itoh Masanao, Masayoshi Tsurumi, and Yoshio Asai, eds., *Kin’yu Kiki to Kakushin: Rekishi kara Gendai e (Financial Crises and Innovation: From History to Present)*, Nihon Keizai Hyoronsha, Tokyo, 67–107; and Ehiro Akira [2000], “*Kin’yu Kiki eno Taiou (Financial Crises and the Injection of Public Funds: Policy Responses to the Financial Crises of the 1920s)*,” Itoh, Tsurumi, and Asai, eds., 67–107.
 41. “Special loans” refer to various kinds of loans extended by the BOJ with special arrangements. They include loans exceeding a credit line per

borrower, loans with extended coverage of collateral, and loans to borrowers who have no present ties to BOJ as clients. See Masato Shizume, “The Japanese Economy during the Interwar Period: Instability in the Financial System and the Impact of the World Depression,” (Institute for Money and Economic Studies, 2009).

42. Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 140–141. Also see Nish, Ian, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period*, (Praeger Publishers, 2002).
43. The High Treason Incident also known as the Kōtoku Incident was a socialist-anarchist plot to assassinate the Japanese Emperor Meiji in 1910, leading to a mass arrest of leftists, and the execution of twelve alleged conspirators in 1911. See Victoria, Brian, *Zen at War*, Weather hill, Inc., 1997, 38. See also Raddeker, Helen Bowen, *Treacherous Women of Imperial Japan*, (Routledge, 1997), 6.
44. Shimichi Kitaoka, *Diplomacy and the Military in Showa Japan*, (MIT Press, 1990).
45. Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *A History of Japan Economic Thought*, (Routledge, 1998).
46. Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 128.
47. *Ibid.*, 128.
48. *Ibid.*, 128.
49. *Ibid.*, 148.
50. William G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894–1945*, (Oxford University Press, 1987).
51. Hirohito was considered a living god forged from a dynastic line that extended back twenty-six centuries. Children were cautioned from looking at his face as they would be blinded, and mentioning his name was considered a taboo.

Herbert Bix's article "The Shōwa Emperor's 'Monologue' and the Problem of War Responsibility" states, "It is permissible to say that the idea that the Japanese are descendants of the gods is a false conception; but it is absolutely impermissible to call chimerical the idea that the emperor is a descendant of the gods." The emperor reinforces the notion that he is a descendant of the gods. This notion was aligned with the emperor's role as not only the "head of state" but also the highest authority of the Japanese religion, Shintoism. The emperor's prewar legitimacy rested on the notion of his descent from the sun goddess. See Patrick H. Choi, *The Ambiguous Emperor: Hirohito's Role in Engaging in and Ending the Pacific War*, (Harvard University Extension School, 2017), 4. Also see Peter Wetzler, *Hirohito and War: The Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan*. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii's Press, 1998), 3.

52. It was a fiction that he was supreme commander of the army and navy. True, he held the title, but when he attempted to exercise control, he was hamstrung, or his wishes were politely ignored. Of course, it was nothing personal. The mechanism was so rigged that the military could easily block efforts they disapproved. See Lester Brooks, *Behind Japan's Surrender: The Secret Struggle That Ended an Empire*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1995), 98.
53. See Shizume Masato, "The Japanese Economy during the Interwar Period: Instability in the Financial System and the Impact of the World Depression", (Institute for Money and Economic Studies, May 2009), 3.

54. Under the gold standard, the parity of one yen was equivalent to 49.845 U.S. cents and 2.0291 shillings. In November 1932, the yen hit 20 cents and 1.14 shillings. See Hugh T. Patrick, "The Economic Muddle of the 1920s," Morley, James William, eds., *Dilemmas of Growth in Prewar Japan*, (Princeton University Press, 1971), 211–266. See also Michael D. Bordo, and Hugh Rockoff, "The Gold Standard as a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval," (*Journal of Economic History*, 56–2, 1996), 389–428. Others, such as Nakamura, call the 1920s an "era of unbalanced growth," for Japan, emphasizing the surge of urbanization and industrialization supported by public investment. See Takafusa Nakamura, *Economic Growth in Prewar Japan*, (Yale University Press, 1983).
55. Minsei Party (full name: Rikken Minsei to) was originally called Kenseikai, later merged with another party to become Minsei Party in 1927. Its main policies were (i) economic austerity and industrial streamlining (free economy and small government); (ii) return to prewar gold parity; (iii) international cooperation and peaceful diplomacy especially with the United States Its support base consisted of intellectuals and urban population. Minsei means "people's politics."
56. Seiyukai (full name: Rikken Seiyukai) was established in 1900 by the union of leading politician (Hirobumi Ito) and a former opposition party who decided to cooperate with the government. Its main policies were (i) fiscal activism with an emphasis on public investment in rural and industrial infrastructure; (ii) acceptance of military buildup and expansion; and (iii) pleasing a narrow voter base (rural landlords and urban rich). It was a party supportive of big

government allocating public money and subsidies. *Seiyukai* literally means “political friend society.”

57. See Gerald Iguchi, *Nichirenism as Modernism: Imperialism, Fascism, and Buddhism in Modern Japan*, (University of California, San Diego, 2006.) See also Edwin Lee, “Nichiren and Nationalism: The Religious Patriotism of Tanaka Chigaku,” in *Monumenta Nipponica* 30:1 (1975); Murakami Shigeyoshi, *Japanese Religion in the Modern Century*, (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1908), 19–32.
58. Tanaka (1935–36), 74–75, 82, 90, 158.
59. Christina Naylor, “Nichiren, Imperialism, and the Peace Movement,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 51
60. Tōa renmei, (1941), quoted by Nakano (1972), 85.
61. Hayashima (1965), 267
62. Quoted in Tokoro (1966), 79
63. Nakano (1972), 87).
64. Christina Naylor, “Nichiren, Imperialism, and the Peace Movement”, (*Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*), 53–54.
65. Beers, 686.
66. The Russian Revolution of 1917 was one of the most explosive political events of the twentieth century. The violent revolution marked the end of the Romanov dynasty and centuries of Russian imperial rule. The leftist revolutionary Vladimir Lenin seized power in Russia and destroyed the tradition of tsarist rule. The Bolsheviks would later become the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
67. Mao’s vision of Communism differed from Lenin in the following sense: while Lenin held that urban workers should form the revolutionary vanguard, Mao Zedong, on the other hand, believed that Communist revolutions should

gestate among the rural peasantry, who would later join with their proletariat comrades in the cities to form classless paradises.

68. On Article 11 of the Meiji constitution, “The Imperial Japanese Army and the Imperial Japanese Navy were under the emperor’s direct control,” see Akita George, “Foundations of constitutional government in modern Japan, 1868–1900. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967). See also William G. Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan: Political, Economic and Social Change Since 1850*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995).
69. See Patrick H. Choi, *The Ambiguous Emperor: Hirohito’s Role in Engaging and Ending the Pacific War*, (Harvard University Extension School, 2017), 24. See also Norikazu Kawagishi, “The Constitution of Japan: An Unfinished Revolution,” (Yale Law School, 2003), 63.
70. In “A View of International Law in the Kellogg-Briand Pact” and “Britain’s New Monroe Doctrine and the Effect of the No-War Treaty,” both published in 1928, Tachi belabored the obvious point that the signatories to the pact had renounced war “as an instrument of national policy,” but not the right of self-defense. Focusing on the interpretive notes that France, Great Britain, and the United States exchanged prior to signing the Pact on August 27, 1928, he observed that: Britain does not recognize the application of the No-War Pact in regions where it claims to have a vital interest...If other countries recognize this claim of Britain, it will lead to a situation where the United States too will claim that war based on the principle of the Monroe Doctrine is not prohibited by the No War Pact. I have to acknowledge, therefore, that, in addition to cases of the activation of the right of self-defense, wars

- exist that cannot be prohibited by the Pact in connection with the Monroe Doctrine of the United States and the New Monroe-ism of Britain.
71. Honjō Shigeru, *Honjo Diaries: Honjo Nikki*, trans. Mikiso Hane, Tokyo, (Tokyo University Press, 1967), 75.
 72. The Sakurakai or Cherry Blossom Society was the name chosen by young officers within the Imperial Japanese Army in September 1930 for their secret society established with the goal of reorganizing the state along totalitarian militaristic lines, via a military coup d'état. See James L. McClain, *Japan: A Modern History*, (W.W. Norton Company, 2002), 414. During World War II, the cherry blossom was used to motivate the Japanese people, to stoke nationalism and militarism among the populace. See also Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and the Militarization of Aesthetics in Japan History*, (University of Chicago, 2002), 9–10.
 73. Operation Chahar known in Chinese as the Nankou Campaign was the second attack of the Kwantung Army and the Inner Mongolian Army of Prince Teh Wang on Inner Mongolia after the failure of the Suiyuan Campaign (1936). The Chahar Expeditionary Force was under the direct command of General Hideki Tōjō, the chief of staff of the Kwantung Army. Later, the 1st Army, under General Kiyoshi Katsuki, was also involved. See Philipp S. Jowett, *Rays of the Rising Sun, Armed Forces of Japan's Asian Allies 1931–45, Volume 1: China & Manchuria*, (Helion & Co. Ltd., 2004).
 74. Ogasawara's *Tōgō gensui sōden* first appeared in a limited edition in the spring of 1921; it was reissued in an inexpensive popular edition in 1925. See Tanaka Hiromi, "Kyo-zō no gunshin Tōgō

- Heihachirō,” 234–35. Cited also by Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (Harper Collins, 2016), 239.
75. *Ibid.*, 239–240. See also Tanaka, “Kyo-zō no gunshin Tōgō Heihachirō,” 225, 236, 239.
76. On Mukden Incident, OSS agents took photographs of Japanese depredations and wrote reports on the activities of the Japanese forces in Manchuria. All Chinese were forced to leave Mukden after Japan’s occupation.
77. During the Pacific War, Army Imperial Headquarter was continually communicating with the Imperial household in detail about the military situation. On 8 October, Sugiyama signed a 47-page report to the emperor (sōjōan) outlining in minute detail plans for the advance into Southeast Asia. On September 27, 1940, under Hirohito’s leadership, Japan became a contracting partner of the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy forming the Axis Powers. From those facts, it is correct to say, “As time passed, Hirohito became more involved in Japanese politics throughout the 1940s.”
78. In his “Monologue,” Hirohito noted that he had brought an end to the fighting in Shanghai. “When the suspension of hostilities occurred on March 3,” it was “because I had expressly ordered Shirakawa beforehand not to expand the conflict.
79. Gordon M. Berger, *Politics and Mobilization in Japan, 1931–1945* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 97-153.
80. C. Peter Chen, *Japan’s Refusal of Washington Treaty*, (Northern Vermont, University Online, Dec 19, 1934).
81. James B. Cowley, “Japanese Army Factionalism in the Early 1930s,” (*The Journal of Asian Studies*, 1962). See also Richard Storry, *The Double*

- Patriots: A Study of Japanese Nationalism, (Greenwood Press, 1957).
82. Robert J.C. Butow, Japan's Decision to Surrender (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1954), 229.
 83. *Ibid.*, 229.
 84. Edward Behr, Hirohito behind the Myth, (Villard Books, 1989), introduction.
 85. Daikichi Irokawa, The Age of Hirohito, (New York: Free Press, 1995), 77–80.
 86. Noriko Kawamura, Emperor Hirohito and the Pacific War, (University of Washington Press), 6.
 87. MacArthur's precise position over the future of Emperor Hirohito has stimulated a lot of speculation. Due to declassifications dated in the past twenty years and the personal interest of MacArthur Memorial archivist James Zobel, some worthy documentation emerges on the MacArthur-Hirohito relation.
 88. Herbert P. Bix, Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan, (HarperCollins, 2016), 11–12.
 89. Francis Pike, Hirohito's War: The Pacific War 1941–1945, (Bloomsbury, 2015), see introduction and background.
 90. In his early career, Inoue established himself as a Marxist historian, publishing works on the Japanese imperial system and buraku.
 91. Edward, Behr, Hirohito behind the Myth, (Villard Books, 1989) xxxiii.
 92. *Ibid.*, 55.
 93. The authenticity of the document was long accepted, and it is still quoted in some Chinese textbooks, but historian John Dower states that “most scholars now agree that it was a masterful anti-Japanese hoax.” See William G. Beasley, Japanese Imperialism 1894-1945, (Oxford University Press, 1991). See also John W. Dower,

War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War; 1987, and John T. Stephan *The Tanaka Memorial (1927): Authentic or Spurious?* (*Modern Asian Studies*, 1973), 733–745.

94. Cited by John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat* in chapter sixteen: *What Do You Tell the Dead When You Lose?* 488.
95. Francis Pike, *Hirohito's War: The Pacific War 1941–1945*, (Bloomsbury, 2015), 20.
96. Vice Admiral Matome Ugaki held several key leadership positions during World War II. These included chief of staff for Admiral Yamamoto, commander of the 1st Battleship Division that included the giant battleships Yamato and Musashi, and commanding officer of the 5th Air Fleet as he directed kamikaze attacks against Allied ships off Okinawa. His diary written from October 1941 to August 1945 provided an invaluable primary source of the Imperial Japanese Navy's wartime strategy and battle tactics.
97. Cited by Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 461: "On December 31, 1942, the Imperial Headquarters Conference was held with Hirohito and the Army General Staff led by Field Marshal Hajime Sugiyama at the Imperial Palace. The chiefs of staff reported they would cancel the attempt to recapture Guadalcanal, and the withdrawal of troops would begin at the end of January. Hirohito sanctioned that decision but insisted, "It is unacceptable to just give up on capturing Guadalcanal. We must launch an offensive elsewhere." Sugiyama promised to "take the offensive in New Guinea area and restore the morale of the troops." By placing their hopes on a new offensive in New Guinea, Hirohito and the

General Staff delayed one again Japan's strategic shift to the defensive in the Pacific."

98. For the full exchange at the Aug. 5, 1943, audience, see Sugiyama memo, ge, "Kaisetsu," 24–25. Cited by Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 466.
99. *Ibid.*, 463.
100. See Herbert P. Bix on the conference of the Imperial Headquarters on September 30, 1943, 468–469.
101. Hirohito's regular military teachers included Gen. Ōsako Naoharu, an expert on the Russo-Japanese War; two navy rear admirals; and four active-duty lieutenant generals. Hirohito's army lectures also included two generals who had commanded troops in China during World War I, Gen. Ugaki Kazushige and Gen. Nara Takeji. Another naval officer who lectured Hirohito was his own uncle, Adm. Prince Fushimi Hiroyasu, an expert on German military theory. From them, the emperor learned the inherent superiority of offense over defense. See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 44–45.
102. "A skilled pilot who, late in 1937, had helped plan and direct the first air offensive against China's cities from the aircraft Kaga, Jō Eiichirō was very close to the emperor. As a naval officer, he served on the Navy General Staff and taught at the Navy and Army War Colleges. He was the vice commander of the Thirteenth Naval Air Force, charged with bombing operations deep within China. Jō came with the plan for a "kamikaze" Special Attack Corps in June 1943. The Corps recruited and trained young pilots willing to smash their Zero fighters, armed with 550-pound bombs,

into the decks of American ships.” See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 450–451. See also Jo nikki, 324.

103. *Ibid.*, 471–472.

104. This historic first meeting between Gen. Douglas MacArthur appointed supreme commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) and Emperor Hirohito was held on the morning of September 27, 1945 at the American Embassy in Tokyo. The two met for minutes and one photo was taken. Hirohito accepted responsibility for the conduct of the war. See Motoko Rich, “Aide’s Diary Suggests Hirohito Agonized Over His War Responsibility,” (*The New York Times*, Aug. 24, 2018).

105. According to Professor Bix, Kidō always tried to leave the impression that he and Hirohito were consistent opponents of the militarists. Interviewed on April 6, 1966, he declared: “On the whole, our minds were already prepared [for surrender] earlier. That’s why we weren’t shocked by the atomic bombs...There was also a plus aspect to the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war. I assumed at the time that if there had been no atomic bombs and the Soviet Union hadn’t joined in, we might not have succeeded.” The following year he opened boastfully: “Because the Soviets and the atomic bombs did the job for us, one could say that Japan was able to revive to this extent.” “Kido Kōichi-shi to no taiwa,” in Kanazawa Makoto et al., eds., *Kazoku: Meiji hyakunen sokumenshi* (*Hakuyō Sensho*, 1978), 185; Wa da Haruki, “Nisso sensō” in Hara Teruyuki et al., eds., *Kōza Suravu no sekai* 8, *Suravu to Nihon* (*Kōbundō*, 1995), 119. Quoted in Bix’s note, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 765.

106. In Kido's Diary it is clear that although Hirohito never visited the war theaters but he exercised a decisive and controlling influence on theater operations. As Bix said, Hirohito received in audience generals and admirals returning on duty from the Pacific and China battlefronts. He carefully edited his rescripts to be sure exactly what words were used. He inspected military schools, granted audiences to industrial leaders to encourage production, took a keen interest in weapons development, and everywhere drove home the message of sacrifice for the state." See Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 441.
107. *Ibid.*, 441.
108. One of the greatest atrocities of the Japanese army during the Pacific War was the use of chemical weapons. On July 1937, Hirohito authorized the use of poison gas against the Chinese soldiers and civilians during the invasion of Wuhan (1938), then in 1939 in Guangzhou, and in 1943 at the Battle of Changde. Cited on World War II Database, Contributor: C. Peter Chen, In Dec 1941, Okamura received and obeyed the scorched earth policies dictated by his superiors under army order number 575; his troops were responsible for the killing of over two million Chinese, mostly civilians in Hebei and Shandong, as the result of this order.
109. See John W. Dower, "Japan Addresses Its War Responsibility," (*The Journal of the International Institute*), volume 3, Issue 1, Fall 1995.
110. On sentencing Lieutenants Dean E. Mark and William G. Farrow etc. see John Chandler Griffin, *Lt. Bill Farrow: Doolittle Raider*, (Pelican, 2006). See also B. Chance Saltzman and Thomas R. Searle, *Introduction to the United States Air*

Force, Airpower Research Institute, College of Aerospace Doctrine, Research and Education, and (Air University Press Maxwell AFB, Alabama, 2001).

111. National Lawyers Guild (NLG) a progressive public interest association founded in 1937 and dedicated to the need for basic and progressive change in the structure of the political and economic system in the U.S., with finality that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests,” as early December 1945, had unanimously called for a Hirohito trial. Calling him Japan’s “despotic master,” the Guild insisted that Hirohito was no different from Hitler or Mussolini. “Try Hirohito, Philippines Lawyers Urge,” (Pacific Stars and Stripes, Dec. 23, 1945), 1, 2. “Apprehension, Trial and Punishment of War Criminals in the Far East,” Apr. 25, 1946, (MacArthur Archives). The role of Japanese journalism over the years in denying the reality of horrible World War II massacres, such as that at Nanjing, is a major matter of concern in the work of Katsuichi Honda. Honda is a Japanese journalist and famous for his writing on the Nanjing Massacre. During the 1970s, he wrote a series of articles on the atrocities committed by Imperial Japanese soldiers during World War II called “Chūgoku no Tabi” (Travels in China). The series were published by the Asahi Shimbun. Honda also worked as a war correspondent in Vietnam during the Vietnam War, an experience which contributed to stocking his interest in Japanese wartime history.
112. The Imperial Japanese Navy attacked the Philippines on December 8, 1941, nine hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The United States controlled the Philippines at the time and

possessed important military bases there. As at Pearl Harbor, American aircraft were severely damaged in the initial Japanese attack. General MacArthur was ordered out, leaving his men at Corregidor. The 76,000 American and Filipino defenders the Philippines surrendered on April 9, 1942 and were forced to endure the infamous Bataan Death March on which between 8,000 and 10,000 died or were murdered. Japan occupied the Philippines for over three years. On October 20, 1944, U.S. forces landed on Leyte. General Yamashita was assigned to defend the Philippines “at all costs.” In early 1945, American troops under the command of MacArthur crushed Japanese forces during the Battle of Manila in which an estimated 1,000 U.S. soldiers, 16,000 Japanese soldiers, and 100,000 Filipino noncombatants died. See Richard Connaughton, John Pimlot, and Duncan Anderson, *Battle of Manila*, (Presidio Press, 2002). See also S. Sandler, *World War II in the Pacific: An Encyclopedia Military History of the United States*, (Routledge, 2000).

113. Prior to this battle, Japan was ruled by daimyo (samurai lords) who established their own small kingdoms. Forces led by Toyotomi Hideyoshi defeated those of the shogun (military dictator). With Akechi Mitsuhide had begun the reunification of Japan. Hideyoshi’s brilliant generalship has been compared to that of Napoleon Bonaparte. Daimyō rule remained in effect in some areas of Japan coming to an end in 1871.
114. Francis Pike, in Hirohito’s War: “Thus Hirohito spent most of the Pacific War dressed in military uniform and followed the tides of conflict in minute detail from the war room built in the

basement of his palace – increasingly offering the military the benefits of his cryptic advice as Japan stumbled toward defeat. It is notable that the two most decisive interventions of his reign – the last being his acceptance of the Allies’ unconditional terms of surrender in August 1945 – came when the army was in a state of decision-making paralysis.

115. Atcheson served as Gen. Douglas MacArthur’s political adviser and allied council chairman. Before that position, he was US diplomat in China, there he tried to mediate in the conflicts between Kuomintang and Chinese Communist Party for US government but failed. See Christopher R. Lew and Edwin Pak-wah Leung, *Historical Dictionary of the Chinese Civil War*, (Scarecrow Press, 29 July 2013), 95; see also John Paton Davies, Jr., *China Hand: An Autobiography*, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 31 January 2012), 267–269.
116. The international Far Eastern Commission exempted the emperor as a war criminal on April 3, 1946; the prosecution at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East did so publicly on June 18. Formal U.S. policy consideration of “treatment of Hirohito” was removed from the agenda of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee on June 12). This text is quoted in notes from John W. Dower’s book, *Embracing Defeat*, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 599.
117. Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 545.
118. See Kido Koichi, *Diary of Marquis Kido*, (Praeger, 1984).
119. Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 571.

120. FRUS, *Diplomatic Papers 1945: The Far East*, vol. 6, 270. Cited by Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HaperCollins, 2016), 543.
121. "Guide to the papers of Sir William Webb," *Australian War Memorial*, Retrieved 1 December, 2005.
122. Fellers, *Basic Military Plan for Psychological Warfare Against Japan*, with appendices and minutes of the Conference on Psychological Warfare Against Japan," Manila, May 7–8, 1949, 2–3, 7–10, 14; box 4 of Fellers papers. "In the spring of 1945, MacArthur's command convened a meeting of psychological-warfare personnel from the combined U.S. and British forces in Manila. By then, Fellers in his staff had compressed "Japanese behavior patterns" that could be exploited by the Allies into a fifteen-point mantra: "inferiority complex, credulousness, regimented thought, tendency to misrepresent, self-dramatization, strong sense of responsibility, superstition, face-saving tendency, intense emotionality, attachment to home and family, and Emperor worship." A "wedge" policy was agreed upon, as was the idea of using the emperor 'to further our aims' at a proper time." "At one point, the naval intelligence officer for the British fleet in the Pacific suggested, apparently in all seriousness, that kamikaze suicide attacks might be deterred by painting the emperor's picture on the sides of Allied ships." Fellers, "Basic Military Plan for Psychological Warfare against Japan" (May 7–8), 10, 11, 13, 18, 22, 31–32.
123. Fellers memorandum to commander in chief, October 2, 1945, in box 3 of the Fellers papers in the Hoover Institution. See William P. Woodard, *The Allied Occupation of Japan 1945–1952*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1972), 360–361.

124. The international Far Eastern Commission exempted the emperor as a war criminal on April 3, 1946; the persecution at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East did so publicly on June 18. Formal U.S. policy consideration of “treatment of Hirohito” was removed from the agenda of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee on June 12. Cited by John W. Dower in his notes, *Embracing Defeat*, (W.W. Norton & Company, 1999), 599.
125. The debate between Truman and MacArthur over the “proper” rehabilitation of postwar Japan is a major focus of Hans H. Baerwald, former MacArthur staffer turned post-Occupation Government analyst. According to Baerwald, Truman and MacArthur shared the same ambition to purge Japan from its militarist past, but their “similar personalities” and “conflicting responsibilities” led to disagreements over “tactics and strategy.” Baerwald, *Purge of Japanese Leaders*. Hadley who had a minor role in MacArthur’s Tokyo command shared a similar analysis. See, Eleanor M. Hadley, *Antitrust in Japan*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970).
126. Shigeru Yoshida, *The Yoshida memoirs; the story of Japan in crisis*, (London, Heinemann, 1961).
127. See Mokusatsu, “*Japan’s Response to the Potsdam Declaration*,” Kazuo Kawai, *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 19, No. 4 (November 1950), 409-414.
128. Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 500.
129. Yamada, *Daigensu Shōwa tennō*, 203; Grace P. Hayes, *The History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in World War II: The War Against Japan* (Naval Institute Press, 1982), 190.
130. Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, (HarperCollins, 2016), 501.

131. Ugaki Matome, *Senmoroku* (Hara Shobō, 1968), 224. Cited by Bix, 501.
132. Yamada, *Daigensui Shōwa tennō*, 205. Cited by Bix, 503.
133. The bomb was known as “Little Boy”: a uranium gun-type bomb that exploded with about thirteen kilotons of force. The Hiroshima bombing was the second man-made nuclear explosion in history, after the Trinity test. On “Atomic bomb”, see Bernstein, Jeremy, *Nuclear Weapons: What You Need to Know*, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Also see Coster-Mullen, *Atom Bombs: The Top Secret Inside Story of Little Boy and Fat Man*, (Waukesha, Wisconsin: J. Coster-Mullen, 2012).
134. See William Craig, *The Fall of Japan: The Final Weeks of World War II in the Pacific*, (Open Road Integrated Media Inc., 2017), 78.
135. Yamada, *Daigensui Shōwa tennō*, 202. Cited by Bix, 502.
136. Even as the invasion of Manchuria by the Soviets made surrender inevitable, Hirohito continued to consider capitulation as an unacceptable option. Instead of surrendering, he supported the military and civilian leaders who welcomed a final battle on Japanese soil. War Minister Korechika Anami believed, “Japan could at least for a time repulse the enemy and might thereafter somehow find life out of death.” Telling the truth, it is right to say that, after Midway, Japanese naval leaders secretly concluded that Japan’s outlook for victory was poor. The fall of Saipan on July 9, 1944 brought U.S. bombers into Japan homeland’s airspace. At that time, inside the Imperial Palace, it had been decided that a new strategy with a new leadership was necessary to fight the war. The Tōjō cabinet was replaced by that of Koiso Kuniaki. Koiso formed a supreme war-direction council designed to link the cabinet and the high command. It was clear that the war was lost, but declaring defeat was not acceptable to a large group of officers in

the Japanese army and navy, who had been dreaming only of victories. Great firebombing raids in 1945 brought destruction to every major city in Japan. Despite that reality, the Generals were bent on continuing the war, confident that a major victory would help gain more concessions from the Allies during the process of capitulation.

137. On April 1, 1945, 50,000 U.S. combat troops, under the command of Lt. Gen. Simon B. Buckner Jr., landed on the southwest coast of the Japanese island of Okinawa, 350 miles south of Kyushu, the southern mainland of Japan. The Koiso government fell and was replaced by a Cabinet led by Adm. Suzuki Kantarō. The first action of the new government was to ask the Soviet Union, which was still at peace with Japan, to intercede with the Allies. The Soviet government had agreed, but its reply was delayed while Soviet leaders participated in the Potsdam Conference in July. The Potsdam Declaration was issued on July 26. Eleven days later, on August 6, 1945, the first atomic bomb nicknamed “Little Boy,” was dropped onto the city of Hiroshima. The bomb detonated some 1,800 feet above the city center of Hiroshima. It took a few seconds for a massive fireball to erupt and instantly vaporize everything in an immediate one-mile radius. Nearly 80,000 Japanese had been killed.
138. Senda Kakō, *Tennō to chokugo to Shōwa shi* (Sekibunsha, 1983), 394. Cited by Bix, 530.
139. On Hirohito’s decision to surrender read this article by Robert Trumbull, “*A Leader, Who Took Japan to War, to Surrender, and Finally to Peace*”, (the *New York Times*, Jan. 7, 1989).
140. In the immediate wake of the defeat, it was estimated that more than three hundred army and fifty navy personnel committed suicide; Kusayanagi Daizō, *Naimusbō tai Senryōgun* (Tokyo: Asaki Bunko, 1987), 16. By another calculation, between the emperor’s broadcast and October

1948, a total of 527 army and navy men, plus a small number of civilians, took their lives as a gesture of responsibility for the defeat; Tsurumi and Nakagawa, 1:714–16. Quoted Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, Notes, 569.

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Author

A former judge with a passion for history, Jean Sénat Fleury was born in Haiti and currently lives in Boston. He wrote several historical books. *Hirohito: The Last God Emperor* reviews the reign of Hirohito during the Shōwa era particularly before the Pacific War. The book details the role Emperor Hirohito played in planning Japan's expansionist policies: the invasion of China, the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and eventually, the launching of the Pacific War.

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