

Activity 1: Last Chance for Peace?

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions (Japanese): It is the autumn of 1941, and you are a Japanese diplomat working at your country’s embassy in Washington, DC. Read the following instructions carefully. They are to be considered Top Secret—under no circumstances should this document be allowed to fall into the hands of the Americans.

As a Japanese diplomat assigned to the embassy in Washington, you must try to negotiate an agreement with the U.S. diplomat with whom you will be paired. Although your American counterpart will not know it, Tokyo has secretly informed you that such an agreement must be reached by November 29. You are not sure what the significance of November 29 is, but it is likely that your government is planning to go to war if its differences with the United States cannot be settled by that date. Therefore, these negotiations may well be the last chance of maintaining peace between your two countries.

The following are the four major areas of contention between Tokyo and Washington. Read them carefully, as they suggest what your government might be willing to accept, and what it will definitely reject. Any agreement that you reach must address all four of these issues, and must be acceptable to both sides.

China: Because the Chinese government has stubbornly refused to allow Japanese influence in North China, your army has been fighting in China on and off for the past ten years. The frustrating part is that while your valiant troops have won virtually every battle against the Chinese, the government at Chungking still refuses to negotiate. Your government is convinced that support from the United States is the only obstacle to settling the “China Incident.” Tokyo has instructed you to try to get the U.S. government to agree to stop all aid to China. This goal is somewhat less important than the restoration of normal trade relations between the United States and Japan, but under no circumstances will your government consider withdrawal from China until Chungking is willing to accept Japanese demands.

Indochina: Your army’s occupation of the French colony of Indochina was largely the cause of the current crisis, since it was in response to this move that President Roosevelt ordered the freezing of all Japanese assets in the United States. Indochina is a valuable bargaining chip, because as long as your troops are there no outside aid can move through that colony to China. Moreover, Indochina would be a perfect jumping-off point for military operations against the Dutch East Indies, the British colonies of Malaya and Burma, and even the U.S.-controlled Philippines. Nevertheless, from Tokyo’s point of view it is far more important that trade with the United States be restored; therefore, you are permitted to offer a full Japanese withdrawal from Indochina if necessary.

The Tripartite Pact: Last September Tokyo signed the Tripartite Pact [<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/triparti.htm>] with Germany and Italy. According to that treaty, the three signatories are obliged “to assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three contracting powers is attacked by a power at present not involved in the

European war or in the Chinese-Japanese conflict.” Because there is a real possibility that war might break out between the United States and Germany, the Americans view this treaty as a threat. Because Germany and Italy are Japan’s only friends, it would be extremely dangerous to abandon the Tripartite Pact. However, there is more than one way to interpret the treaty; nowhere does it say that Japan is actually obligated to declare war on the United States if that country goes to war with Germany. The Americans, therefore, might be satisfied with a promise that Japan would remain neutral in that case.

Trade: Your country has very little in the way of raw materials; it has become an economic powerhouse based on its industry, but Japan depends largely upon imports from abroad in order to keep its factories working, and to keep its war machine moving. The most important of these imports—scrap iron and steel and, particularly, oil—come from the United States, but thanks to trade sanctions imposed over the past year and a half Japan is cut off from those critical resources. Japanese oil reserves are dwindling quickly; if normal trade relations are not restored soon your country has only two choices—make a humiliating withdrawal from China or go to war to seize the oil-rich Dutch East Indies. Because you know for a fact that the military will never accept surrender in China, the trade issue absolutely must be solved in order to avoid a war against Great Britain and the United States.

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Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions (Americans): It is the autumn of 1941, and you are a diplomat in the U.S. State Department. Read the following instructions carefully. They are to be considered Top Secret—under no circumstances should this document be allowed to fall into the hands of the Japanese.

As a U.S. diplomat in Washington, your job is to try to negotiate an agreement with the Japanese diplomat with whom you will be paired. Because American cryptanalysts have succeeded in breaking the Japanese diplomatic code, you know that Tokyo has set a deadline of November 29 for such an agreement to be reached. Your Japanese counterpart will not be aware that you know this. You are not sure what the significance of November 29 is, but your superiors at the State Department believe that Japan is planning an attack on U.S. forces somewhere—probably in the Philippines. Therefore, it is not clear whether the Japanese are seriously interested in settling their differences peacefully, or if they are simply trying to stall for time while they complete their preparations for war.

The following are the four major areas of contention between Tokyo and Washington. Read them carefully, as they suggest what your government might be willing to accept, and what it will definitely reject. Any agreement that you reach must address all four of these issues, and must be acceptable to both sides.

China: The Japanese have been encroaching upon Chinese sovereignty for over ten years now, ever since the invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Your government’s policy has been to assist the Chinese government at Chungking, both because Americans sympathize with victims of aggression and because the “open door” in China has been a basic principle of U.S. diplomacy since 1899. The Chinese have been holding on valiantly, thank in part to U.S. aid. Washington has no intention of giving in to Japanese demands that this aid be stopped. Japan cannot be allowed to dominate China.

Indochina: Since July the Japanese Army has been occupying all of French Indochina. Not only has this cut off one of the routes by which U.S. aid may reach China, it also provides the Japanese with a staging area for further military operations in Southeast Asia, or even for an attack on the Philippines, which have been an American colony since 1898. It is, therefore, in the interest of U.S. national security that the Japanese vacate Indochina—immediately.

The Tripartite Pact: Last September Tokyo signed the Tripartite Pact [<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/triparti.htm>] with Germany and Italy. According to that treaty, the three signatories are obliged “to assist one another with all political, economic and military means when one of the three contracting powers is attacked by a power at present not involved in the European war or in the Chinese-Japanese conflict.” For the past year and a half Washington has been openly aiding Great Britain in its war against Germany, and in recent weeks the U.S. Navy has been repeatedly engaged in skirmishes against German submarines. A full-scale war between the United States and Germany might break out at any time; what would the Japanese do in that case? A war in the

Pacific might be a risky diversion from the fight against Hitler, whom President Roosevelt believes is a far more dangerous enemy. Ideally the administration would like Tokyo to repudiate the Tripartite Pact altogether; however, it may be sufficient for the Japanese to promise that they will not interpret the treaty to mean that Japan is actually obliged to declare war on the United States in the event of a U.S.-German war.

Trade: Poll after poll shows that the American people are not interested in being drawn into any foreign wars, and President Roosevelt has repeatedly said that he will not allow this to happen. This means that trade is the only real leverage that America has. Japan is dangerously dependent on imports from the United States, particularly scrap iron and steel, and—most critically of all—oil. For the past year and a half government has responded to Japanese aggression with a steadily escalating campaign of economic sanctions. This policy culminated in the freezing of Japanese assets in the United States, which was done in response to the Japanese occupation of southern Indochina in July. This has effectively made it impossible for Japan to purchase American resources. Tokyo is therefore in a difficult situation; if it cannot get the United States to lift its sanctions it either must order a humiliating withdrawal from China, or go to war to try to get those resources somewhere else (probably from the Dutch East Indies and British Malaya). The administration might be willing to lift the trade sanctions, but only in return for serious concessions from the Japanese

Assessment

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Just after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese ambassador presented the following memorandum to Secretary of State Hull. After reading it, Hull claimed that the document was “crowded with infamous falsehoods and distortions.” Based on what you have learned in this lesson, as well as the previous lessons of this unit, write a five-paragraph essay in which you argue the merits of Hull’s claim.

Memorandum Handed by Ambassador Nomura to Secretary of State Hull, 7 December 1941:
<http://ibiblio.org/pha/monos/150/150app05.html>

1. The government of Japan, prompted by a genuine desire to come to an amicable understanding with the Government of the United States, in order that the two countries, by their joint efforts may secure the peace of the Pacific Area and thereby contribute toward the realization of world peace, has continued negotiations with the utmost sincerity since April last with the Government of the United States regarding the adjustment and advancement of Japanese-American relations and the stabilization of the Pacific Area.

The Japanese Government has the honor to state frankly its views concerning the stand the United States Government has persistently maintained as well as the measure the United States and Great Britain have taken toward Japan during these eight months.

2. It is the immutable policy of the Japanese Government to insure the stability of East Asia and to promote world peace and thereby to enable all nations to find each its proper place in the world.

Ever since China Affair broke out, owing to the failure on the part of China to comprehend Japan's true intentions, the Japanese Government has striven for the restoration of peace and it has consistently exerted its best efforts to prevent the extension of war-like disturbances. It was also to that end that in September last year Japan concluded the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy.

However, both the United States and Great Britain have resorted to every possible measure to assist the Chungking regime so as to obstruct the establishment of a general peace between Japan and China, interfering with Japan's constructive endeavours toward the stabilization of East Asia. Exerting pressure on the Netherlands East Indies, or menacing French Indo-China, they have attempted to frustrate Japan's aspiration to the ideal of common prosperity in cooperation with these regimes. Furthermore, when Japan in accordance with its protocol with France took measures of joint defense of French Indo-China, both American and British Governments, willfully misinterpreting it as a threat to their own possessions, and inducing the Netherlands Government to follow suit, they enforced the assets freezing order, thus severing economic relations with Japan. While manifesting thus an obviously hostile attitude, these countries have strengthened their military preparations perfecting an encirclement of Japan, and have brought about a situation which endangers the very existence of the Empire....

4. From the beginning of the present negotiation the Japanese Government has always maintained an attitude of fairness and moderation and did its best to reach a settlement, for which it made all possible concessions. In regard to the China question, which constitutes an important subject of the negotiation, the Japanese Government showed a most conciliatory attitude. As for the principle of non-discrimination in international commerce, advocated by the United States Government, the Japanese Government expressed its desire to see the said principle applied throughout the world, and declared that the Japanese Government would endeavour to apply the same in the Pacific area, including China, and made it clear that Japan had no intention of excluding from China economic activities of third powers pursued on an equitable basis. Furthermore, as regards the question of withdrawing troops from French Indo-China, the Japanese Government even volunteered, as mentioned above, to carry out an immediate evacuation of troops from Southern French Indo-China as a measure of easing the situation. It is presumed that the spirit of conciliation exhibited to the utmost degree by the Japanese Government in all these matters is fully appreciated by the American Government.

On the other hand, the American Government, always holding fast to theories in disregard of realities, and refusing to yield an inch on its impractical principles, cause undue delay in the negotiation. It is difficult to understand this attitude of the American Government and the Japanese Government desires to call the attention of the American Government especially to the following points:

a. The American Government advocates in the name of world peace those principles favorable to it and urges upon the Japanese Government the acceptance thereof. The peace of the world may be brought about only by discovering a mutually acceptable formula through recognition of the reality of the situation and mutual appreciation of one another's position. An attitude such as ignores realities and imposes one's selfish views upon others will scarcely serve the purpose of facilitating the consummation of negotiations.

Of the various principles put forward by the American Government as a basis of the Japanese-American agreement, there are some which the Japanese Government is ready to accept in principle, but in view of the world's actual condition it seems only a Utopian ideal on the part of the United States Government to attempt to force their immediate adoption.

Again, the proposal to conclude a multilateral non-aggression pact between Japan, United States, Great Britain, China, the Soviet Union, the Netherlands and Thailand...is far removed from the realities of East Asia.

b. The American proposal contained a stipulation which states - "Both Governments will agree that no agreement, which either has concluded with any third power or powers, shall be interpreted by it in such a way as to conflict with the fundamental purpose of this agreement, the establishment and preservation of peace throughout the Pacific area." It is presumed that the above provision has been proposed with a view to restrain Japan from fulfilling its obligations under the Tripartite Pact when the United States participates in the war in Europe, and, as such, it cannot be accepted by the Japanese Government.

The United States Government, obsessed with its own views and opinions, may be said to be scheming for the extension of the war. While it seeks, on the one hand, to secure its rear by stabilizing the Pacific Area, it is engaged, on the other hand, in aiding Great Britain and preparing to attack, in the name of self-defense, Germany and Italy, two powers that are striving to establish a new order in Europe. Such a policy is totally at variance with the many principles upon which the American Government proposes to found the stability of the Pacific Area through peaceful means.

c. Whereas the United States Government, under the principles it rigidly upholds, objects to settle international issues through military pressure, it is exercising in conjunction with Great Britain and other nations pressure by economic power. Recourse to such pressure as a means of dealing with international relations should be condemned as it is at times more inhuman than military pressure.

d. It is impossible not to reach the conclusion that the United States Government desires to maintain and strengthen, in coalition with Great Britain and other Powers, the dominant position it has occupied not only in China but in other areas of East Asia. It is a fact of history that the countries of East Asia for the past two hundred years or more have been compelled to observe the status quo under the Anglo-American policy of imperialistic exploitation and to sacrifice themselves to the prosperity of the two nations. The Japanese Government cannot tolerate the perpetuation of such a situation since it directly runs counter to Japan's fundamental policy to enable all nations to enjoy each its proper place in the world.

The stipulation proposed by the United States Government relative to French Indo-China is a good exemplification of the above-mentioned American policy. That the six countries, - Japan, the United States, Great Britain, the Netherlands, China, and Thailand, - should undertake among themselves to respect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of French Indo-China and equality of treatment in trade and commerce would be tantamount to placing that territory under the joint guarantee of the Governments of those six countries. Apart from the fact that such a proposal totally ignores the position of France, it is unacceptable to the Japanese Government in that such an arrangement cannot but be considered as an extension to French Indo-China of a system similar to the Nine Power Treaty structure which is the chief factor responsible for the present predicament of East Asia.

e. All the items demanded of Japan by the United States Government regarding China, such as wholesale evacuation of troops...ignored the actual conditions in China, and are calculated to destroy Japan's position as the stabilizing factor of East Asia. The attitude of the United States Government in demanding Japan not to support militarily, politically or economically, any regime other than the regime at Chungking, disregarding thereby the existence of the Nanking Government [the Japanese set up an alternative government there in 1939], shatters the very basis of the present negotiations. This demand of the American Government falling, as it does, in line with its refusal to cease from aiding the Chungking regime, demonstrates clearly the intention of the United States Government to obstruct the restoration of normal relations between Japan and China and the return of peace to East Asia.

5. In brief, the American proposal contains certain acceptable items such as those concerning commerce, including the conclusion of a trade agreement, mutual removal of the freezing restrictions, and stabilization of yen and dollar exchange, and the abolition of extra-territorial rights in China. On the other hand, however, the proposal in question ignores Japan's sacrifices in the four years of the China Affair, menaces the Empire's existence itself and discredits its honor and prestige. Therefore, viewed in its entirety, the Japanese Government regrets that it cannot accept the proposal as a basis of negotiation.

6. The Japanese Government, in its desire for an early conclusion of the negotiation, proposed, simultaneously with the conclusion of the Japanese-American negotiation, agreements to be signed with Great Britain and other interested countries. The proposal was accepted by the United States Government. However, since the American Government has made the proposal of November 26th as a result of frequent consultation with Great Britain, Australia, the Netherlands and Chungking, and presumably is catering to the wishes of the Chungking regime on the China question, it must be concluded that all these countries are at one with the United States in ignoring Japan's position.

7. Obviously it is the intention of the American Government to conspire with Great Britain and other countries to obstruct Japan's effort toward the establishment of peace through the creation of a new order in East Asia, and especially to preserve Anglo-American rights and interest by keeping Japan and China at war. This intention has been revealed clearly during the course of the present negotiation. Thus, the earnest hope of the Japanese Government to adjust Japanese-American relations and to preserve and promote the peace of the Pacific through cooperation with the American Government has finally been lost.

The Japanese Government regrets to have to notify hereby the United States Government that in view of the attitude of the United States Government it cannot but consider that it is impossible to reach an agreement through further negotiations.