

Activity 1: Japan's "Golden Opportunity"

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Imagine that it is the summer of 1940, and you are a member of the Japanese delegation to a summit conference between the United States and Japan. Read the following document, and come up with five questions that you would like to ask of the American delegation. During the next class you may have an opportunity to present your questions to the opposing delegation.

General Principles to Cope with the Changing World Situation, July 27, 1940:
<http://ibiblio.org/pha/monos/146/146app02.html>

The Japanese viewed the rapid German victories in Europe in the first half of 1940 as a great opportunity for solving the "China Incident," which was by this time in its fourth year. In late July Japan's most prominent military and political leaders attended a conference in Tokyo to discuss their options. Their conclusions were summarized in the following document.

Policy

The Japanese Empire will strive for the immediate settlement of the China Incident by improving internal and external conditions in keeping with changes in the world situation and, at the same time, will solve the southern area problem by taking advantage of opportunities.

Changes in policies, with emphasis placed on measures for the southern area [basically all of Southeast Asia, including the Netherlands East Indies], will be decided in consideration of various conditions, internal and external.

Various preparations for the matters described in the above items will be undertaken as soon as possible.

Procedure

Article 1.

In regard to the settlement of the China Incident, the combined strength of political and operational strategies will be concentrated thereon and immediate subjugation of the Chungking Regime by every possible means, to include the prevention of third power aid to Chiang Kai-shek, will be carried out. Efforts will be made to accelerate plans for the southern advance by utilizing the changes in the situation advantageously.

Article 2.

In regard to external measures to hasten the settlement of the China Incident and, at the same time, solve the problem of the southern advance, the following steps will be taken:

1. Emphasis will be placed on measures dealing with relations to Germany, Italy, and Soviet Russia. In particular, political unity with Germany and Italy will be strengthened immediately in an attempt to effect readjustment of diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia.

2. A firm attitude toward the United States will be maintained and the inevitable and natural deterioration of relations with the United States, following the execution of the measures mentioned in paragraph 1, will be accepted. However, the reactions of the United States will be kept under strict surveillance and wherever possible, measures will be taken to avoid increased friction arising from Japanese actions.

3. The following steps will be taken toward French Indo-China and Hong Kong:

a. Request will be made to French Indo-China...for complete discontinuation of aid to Chiang Kai-shek. At the same time, French Indo-China will be requested to furnish supplies to our army, to permit the use of airfields and to allow passage of Japanese troops through the country. Moreover, efforts will be exerted to obtain the resources necessary for the Japanese Empire. Armed strength will be employed, if necessary, depending upon the situation.

b. Various maneuverings will be carried out so as to eliminate immediately the antagonistic attitude of Hong Kong [Hong Kong was a British colony]. Burma will be completely blockaded to prevent aid reaching Chiang Kai-shek.

c. Efforts will be made to eliminate the hostile attitude of settlements and concessions and to evacuate troops of belligerent countries from these areas. At the same time, China will be assisted in obtaining the gradual return of settlements and concessions.

d. In carrying out the measures described in the preceding two paragraphs, armed strength will be employed, where necessary, in accordance with Article 3.

4. Efforts will be made to obtain important resources from the Netherlands East Indies [this especially meant oil] for the present by diplomatic measures.

5. In view of the importance to our national defense of French and former German islands in the South Pacific, steps will be taken so that possession thereof can be achieved, if possible, by diplomatic measures.

6. Measures will be taken so as to gain, by amicable means, the cooperation of other countries in the southern area.

Article 3.

Armed strength will be employed against the southern area in accordance with the following:

1. As the settlement of the China Incident is generally completed, armed strength will be used where necessary, insofar as various internal and external conditions permit, to solve the problem of the southward advance.

2. In the event the China Incident remains unsolved, necessary measures, short of starting hostilities against a third power, will be taken. In this case armed strength may be employed to assist in the advance southward provided that various internal and external conditions improve.

3. The time, extent and method of utilizing the armed strength described in the preceding two paragraphs will be decided, depending upon the situation.

4. In employing armed strength, efforts will be made to limit the war adversary to Great Britain insofar as possible. However, thorough preparations for the commencement of hostilities against the United States will be made as it may prove impossible to avoid war with that country.

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Directions: Imagine that it is the summer of 1940, and you are a member of the U.S. delegation to a summit conference between the United States and Japan. Read the following document, and come up with five questions that you would like to ask of the Japanese delegation. During the next class you may have an opportunity to present your questions to the opposing delegation.

Ambassador Joseph C. Grew to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, September 12, 1940:

<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/paw/182.html>

Joseph Grew (1880-1965) had been U.S. ambassador to Japan since 1932. A critic—albeit a respectful one—of the Roosevelt administration's East Asia policies, he repeatedly argued that the use of economic sanctions against Japan might lead to war. He wrote the following message to Secretary of State Cordell Hull in an effort to predict Japanese actions in the coming months, and to recommend possible courses of action.

Whatever the intentions of the present Japanese Government may be there cannot be any doubt that the military and other elements in Japan see in the present world situation a "golden opportunity" to carry their dreams of expansion into effect; the German victories, like strong wine, have gone to their heads; they have believed implicitly until recently in Great Britain's defeat; they have argued that the war will probably be ended in a quick German victory and that Japan's position in Greater East Asia should be consolidated while Germany is still agreeable and before Japan might be robbed of her far-flung control in the Far East by the eventual hypothetical strengthening of the German naval power; although carefully watching the attitude of the United States they have discounted effective opposition on our part. It has been and is doubtful that the saner heads in and out of the government will be able to control these elements.

However, now a gradual change can be sensed in the outburst of exhilaration which greeted the inception of the new government. It is beginning to be seen by the Japanese Government, the army, the navy, and the public, that Germany may not defeat Great Britain after all...and now, in addition to that dawning realization, they see that Britain and the United States are steadily drawing closer together in mutual defense measures.... Reports are being heard of our rapid construction of a two-ocean Navy and of our consideration of strengthening our Pacific naval bases and they even hear rumors that we will eventually use Singapore [a British colony in Southeast Asia]. Japanese consciousness is logically being affected by these rumors and developments. They tend on the one hand to emphasize the potential danger facing Japan from the United States and Great Britain eventually acting together in positive action...or from the United States acting alone. They furnish cogent arguments on the other hand for those Japanese elements who seek political and economic security by securing raw material sources and markets entirely within Japanese control.... Until the world situation, particularly the position of the United States, becomes clearer the "nibbling policy" appears likely to continue.

I have expressed the opinion in previous communications that American-Japanese relations would be set on a downward curve if sanctions were applied by the United States.... [T]he probability must be contemplated that drastic embargoes on such important products as oil, of which a super-abundance is known to be possessed by the United States, would be interpreted by the people and government of Japan as actual sanctions and some form of retaliation might and probably would follow. The risks would depend not so much upon the careful calculations of the Japanese Government as upon the uncalculating "do or die" temper of the army and navy should they impute to the United States the responsibility for the failure of their plans for expansion. It may be that such retaliation would take the form of counter-measures by the government but it would be more likely that it would be some sudden stroke by the navy or army without the prior authorization or knowledge of the government. These dangers constitute an imponderable element which cannot be weighed with assurance at any given moment. However, it would be short sighted to deny their existence or to formulate policy and adopt measures without fully considering these potential risks and determining the wisdom of facing them squarely.

In the following observations I am giving careful consideration to both fundamental purposes of my mission, namely the advancement and protection of American interests and the maintenance of good relations between Japan and the United States. Should these two fundamental purposes conflict the preponderant emphasis to be placed on either one is a matter of high policy which is not within my competency. My object is only to set before the Washington administration the outstanding factors in the situation as viewed from the standpoint of this embassy. Since I have set forth carefully the inevitable hazards which a strong policy involves, I now turn respectfully to the hazards involved in the policy of *laissez faire* [that is, of doing nothing, and allowing the Japanese a free hand in East Asia].

It is impossible in a discussion of the specific question of relations between the United States and Japan to view that problem in its proper perspective unless it is considered part and parcel of the world problem which presents in brief the following aspects:

(a) Britain and America are the leaders of a large world-wide group of English-speaking peoples which stand for a "way of life" which today is being threatened appallingly by Italy, Germany, and Japan.... The avowed purpose of these powers is the imposition of their will upon conquered peoples by force of arms. In general, the uses of diplomacy are bankrupt in attempting to deal with such powers. Occasionally diplomacy may retard, but it cannot stem the tide effectively. Only by force or the display of force can these powers be prevented from attaining their objectives. Japan is today one of the predatory powers; having submerged all ethical and moral sense she has become unashamedly and frankly opportunist, at every turn seeking to profit through the weakness of others. American interests in the Pacific are definitely threatened by her policy of southward expansion, which is a thrust at the British Empire in the east.

(b) Admittedly America's security has depended in a measure upon the British fleet, which has been in turn and could only have been supported by the British Empire.

(c) If the support of the British Empire in this her hour of travail is conceived to be in our interest, and most emphatically do I so conceive it, we must strive by every means to preserve the status quo in the Pacific, at least until the war in Europe has been won or lost. This cannot be done, in my opinion, nor can we further protect our interests properly and adequately merely by the expression of disapproval and carefully keeping a record thereof. Clearly, Japan has been deterred from the taking of greater liberties with American interests only because she respects our potential power; equally is it clear that she has trampled upon our rights to an extent in exact ratio to the strength of her conviction that the people of

the United States would not permit that power to be used. It is possible that once that conviction is shaken the uses of diplomacy may again become accepted.

(d) Therefore, if by firmness we can preserve the status quo in the Pacific until and if Great Britain is successful in the European war, a situation will be faced by Japan which will render it impossible for the present opportunist philosophy to keep the upper hand. Then it might be possible at a moment to undertake a readjustment of the whole problem of the Pacific on a frank, fair, and equitable basis which will be to the lasting benefit of both Japan and America. Until there is in Japan a complete regeneration of thought, a show of force, coupled with the determination that it will be used if necessary, alone can effectively contribute to such an outcome and to our own future security.

....I believe that in the present outlook and situation we have come to the time when the continuance of restraint and patience by the United States may and will probably lead to developments which will make progressively precarious relations between the United States and Japan. I hope that if the people and the Government of Japan can be led to believe that they are overplaying their hand, eventually there will come about a reverse swing of the pendulum in which it will be possible to reconstruct good relations between the United States and Japan. I consider the alternative to be hopeless....

Activity 2: Japan's Decision for War

Student Name _____ Date _____

Directions: Use the interactive timeline “America on the Sidelines: The United States and World Affairs, 1931-1941 (<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/neh/interactives/neutralty/>) to go through the events in Asia from July 1940 through September 1941. Make note of Japan's actions, and the U.S. responses to those actions. Also mark the locations mentioned in these events on a blank map of East Asia.

Once you have researched the events on the interactive timeline, read the following documents. Then imagine that you are a participant at an Imperial Conference in Japan in mid-1941. Drawing on the contents of these documents, compile a list of reasons for and against a war with the United States, then decide whether you would support or oppose a decision to engage in such a war. You will be asked to share your views in class.

The Roosevelt administration's decision to freeze Japanese assets in the United States—thus effectively cutting Japan off from its primary source of oil—led to a serious reevaluation of Japanese foreign policy. Another conference—this time in the emperor's presence—was held on September 6, 1941, to discuss what steps should be taken next. The following documents are excerpts from statements made at this conference by representatives of the army, the navy, and the civilian government.

Explanation by Chief of Naval General Staff Nagano at the Imperial Conference of 6 September 1941:
<http://ibiblio.org/pha/monos/147/147app03.html>

[...] From the operational standpoint of Imperial General Headquarters, based on the assumption that a peaceful solution has not been found and war is inevitable, the Empire's oil supply, as well as the stockpiles of many other important war materials, is being depleted day by day with the result that the national defense power is gradually diminishing. If this deplorable situation is left unchecked, I believe that, after a lapse of some time, the nation's vitality will deteriorate and ultimately fall into dire straits. On the other hand, the defense of military installations and key points of Britain, the United States and other countries in the Far East, as well as military preparations of these nations, particularly those of the United States, are being strengthened and augmented at a fantastic tempo. By the latter half of next year, military preparations of the United States will have made such rapid strides that we will find it difficult to oppose them. Therefore, wasting time now can prove disastrous for the Empire. Such being the case, if our minimum demands for the Empire's self-existence and self-defense are not recognized in diplomatic negotiations and if ultimately a war becomes inevitable, I believe that it is imperative for the Empire that it should first make the fullest preparations and lose no time in carrying out positive operations with firm determination, in order that it can find a way out of the difficult situation.

In regard to the prospect of war, we can perceive a strong possibility that the opponent will carry on a prolonged war. Therefore, the Empire must resolve and prepare for it. If the opponent should attempt a short and decisive action and challenge us by advancing with the main force of its naval strength, it

would be a desirable situation. At this time, when the European war is still being fought, the naval strength which Britain can afford to dispatch to the Far East will be subjected to considerable restriction. Therefore, in case we intercept the combined Anglo-American Fleet on our anticipated area of decisive battle, I am confident that the chances are in our favor if we take into account full utilization of land-based aircraft. However, even when the Empire gains a victory in this decisive battle, such a victory alone would not end the war. In all probability, the opponent will then switch to a prolonged war based on the strength of his superiority in industrial power and resources.

Our Empire has not means by which to subjugate the enemy by invasion operations or to break his will to fight. Moreover, a long war is what we least desire because of the meagerness of our domestic resources. However, if we should enter into a long war, the first requisite for enduring it is to promptly occupy, at the outset, the enemy's strategic points and areas rich in natural resources, complete a solid operational setup and, at the same time, acquire from our sphere of influence vitally needed materials. If this first-stage operation should be accomplished promptly, the Empire then will be in a position to secure strategic points in the Southwest Pacific, even if military preparations of the United States develop as scheduled, and we shall be able to establish the foundation for a long war by maintaining an invincible position. It is my belief that the course of events thereafter will be mostly determined by the nation's total strength and the development of the world situation.

Thus, success or failure of the first-stage operations will have a tremendous bearing on the outcome of the war. However, the prerequisites for augmenting the probabilities of success in the first-stage operations are, first, to decide upon the declaration of war promptly while considering the actual war potential of both sides; secondly, to take the initiative without being circumvented by the opponent; and thirdly, to take into consideration the weather conditions in the theater of operations from the viewpoint of facilitating operations....

Needless to say, we intend to push preparations for military operations prudently, taking into full account the developments of diplomatic negotiations. I would like to add one more word. We must seek with utmost efforts the way by which we can surmount the present crisis peacefully and insure the development and stability of the Empire. We must avoid any war which can be avoided. But at the same time, for the future interest of our Empire we must not be forced into a position where we would have to fight under extremely disadvantageous conditions....

Explanation by Chief of Army General Staff Sugiyama at the Imperial Conference of 6 September 1941:
<http://ibiblio.org/pha/monos/147/147app04.html>

...[I]n view of the present urgent situation, especially of the gradual decrease in the potentiality of our national strength, it is my firm conviction that the time has come for the Empire to decide on peace or war. Furthermore, it has become imperative for Imperial General Headquarters to make immediate and necessary preparations for military operations to cope with both peace and war.

If we should play into the hands of the United States and Great Britain by being driven into the prolonging of diplomatic negotiations at a time when the situation is urgent, the potentiality of the Empire's national defense strength would gradually decrease while at the same time the armament of the United States, and Britain would gradually increase. Such a situation would make our military operations more difficult and place us in a position where we would be forced to lose the advantage of surmounting the obstacles created by the United States and Britain. Therefore, we must open hostilities against the United States and Britain while we have confidence in waging war against them. Thus, after

considering the meteorological conditions in the anticipated theater of operations, we have decided that the appropriate time for the completion of war preparations is the middle of October.

Furthermore, the Empire at this time should take final diplomatic action to determine peace or war. Until such time, the Imperial General Headquarters must take such precautions regarding the execution of the preparations for military operations as to ensure its actions will not arouse the United States and Britain and as the result place us in a disadvantageous position in our diplomatic negotiations.

However, in case we are unable to attain our diplomatic aims, we must immediately decide to declare war on the United States and Britain and hasten the preparations for war. Preparations must be completed by the middle of October, including the dispatch of reinforcements to southern French Indo-China. Our determination as to whether or not to open hostilities should be established by early October at the latest in consideration of the viewpoint of troop movements....

In conclusion, I want to emphasize that if the situation should result in a war in the south, the Empire should immediately disclose her intention to Germany and Italy and tighten the agreement with those two countries so that Japan, Germany and Italy can cooperate closely to achieve the common objectives of the war. The most important item in the direction of war is to prevent Germany and Italy from concluding a separate peace with the United States and Britain.

Explanation by President of the Planning Board Suzuki at the Imperial Conference of 5 September 1941: <http://ibiblio.org/pha/monos/147/147app05.html>

I wish to offer my explanation on the potentiality of the national power of our Empire. In my opinion we do not have to worry about the moral strength of the nation or the manpower which constitutes the source of our national strength regardless of any situation which may confront us in the future. Our main problem is maintaining stockpiles of materials.

From the first our national economy has been founded and developed on trade with the United States, Britain and with countries within the sphere of British influence. Thus, we have been relying on supplies from abroad for most of the critical materials.

To cope with the worst situation, which it is realized will come sooner or later, I have been trying, since the outbreak of the China Incident, to have the economy of this country reject its dependence upon the overseas sources by planning the exploitation of resources and the development as well as the boosting of productive power, within the self-sustaining sphere [that is, within Japan's empire]. However, as a result of the rapid change in the world situation since the outbreak of the war in Europe, especially of the aggravation of the relationship between Japan and the United States since last summer, it is expected that, despite the fact that the development and boosting of the productive power of this country has not reached a sufficient level, we shall have to be fully prepared to rapidly free ourselves of economic dependence on the United States and Britain.

For this reason, critical materials have been purchased amounting to 660,000,000 yen since the latter part of last year. At the same time, we have tried to supplement the deficiency by taking advantage of our relations with Germany and the Soviet Union. The outbreak of war between Germany and the Soviet Union this June, however, forced us to abandon this line of action. Accordingly, the material potentiality of the Empire's national strength has been forced to depend entirely upon her own productive power and

that of Manchuria, China, French Indo-China and Thailand, which are under the influence of our armed forces, and also upon the already accumulated critical materials.

Consequently, under the present situation of total economic rupture with the United States and Britain, the potentiality of our national strength will be weakened day by day. The reserve of liquid fuel, which is a matter of importance, will be depleted by next June or July, regardless of the strict wartime restrictions which may be imposed on civilian demands. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary for the self-existence of the Empire to make a definite decision and establish and stabilize a firm economic foundation.

If the establishment of such an economic foundation must be executed by military strength, our national productivity is expected to decline for the time being to about one-half of the present productivity due to surface transportation capacity and other causes. Consequently, from the point of view of materials, I think utmost efforts must be made to shorten the period of productive declination and, at the same time, plans must be drawn up immediately to exploit the successes gained from military achievements.

If the strategic points in the Southern area can be secured by us in three or four months, it is estimated that we would be able to acquire some supplies of petroleum, aluminum ore, nickel, raw rubber and tin in about six months or thereabouts and utilize them fully after two years. However, since those plans depend upon military successes, there might be some occasions when things would not develop as expected. Therefore, we have been conducting research on means to cope with such a situation.

High octane gas, cobalt and a few other critical materials may be difficult to obtain even though the Southern area is occupied, but they will not constitute a great obstacle to the maintenance and strengthening of national strength since research has already been undertaken on the production of their substitutes and since strict restriction has been enforced on their consumption.

Contentions Expressed at the Tekigai-so Conference, October 1941:

<http://ibiblio.org/pha/monos/147/147app06.html>

One month later members of the Cabinet met again, this time at the home of the Japanese Premier, Konoye Fumimaro. The following are excerpts from the minutes of that conference.

Contention of Premier Konoye and Foreign Minister Toyoda:

If Japan stubbornly upholds her contention [that is, insistence that China give in to Japanese demands] then there is no possibility of the United States-Japanese negotiations reaching a settlement. However, the key to the negotiations lies in the problem of withdrawing troops. Therefore, if Japan makes concessions in this direction, there is a possibility of the negotiations resulting in success. Japan could drop the shadow for the substance. In other words, Japan could first decide upon the overall withdrawal of her troops in compliance with the demand of the United States, then station her troops as a new problem after negotiating with China....

Contention of War Minister Tojo:

Taking into consideration the progress made thus far in the United States-Japanese negotiations, and specifically the United States'...attitude in refusing a top-level parley, I suspect that there is every possibility of the United States-Japanese negotiation developing into a policy of postponement. If Japan

is forced to open hostilities against the United States, she will face the danger of being strategically trapped, if she is caught in this policy of postponement. Therefore, I believe that the time has come when we should make a decision.... As for the problem of withdrawing our troops from China, negotiations have, since the start of the United States-Japanese negotiations, been underway on the basis that we will recognize the principle of an overall withdrawal of our troops.... However, the true objective of the United States is quite different. With the progress of the negotiations, it has become clear that her objective lies in an unconditional withdrawal of our troops. In other words, she is calling for an immediate and complete withdrawal of our troops. Therefore, it is inconceivable that a compromise can be reached by "sacrificing the shadow for the substance", as has been advocated by the two ministers.

What will happen if we accept fully the United States' demand for abandoning the stationing of our troops and effecting a complete withdrawal? Japan will not only bring to naught the effort and sacrifices she has made thus far in the China Incident for four long years, but will also bring upon herself the intensified contempt of the Chinese people if she should unconditionally withdraw from China under strong duress by the United States.... As a result, it is certain that a second and third China Incident will occur. This loss of Japan's prestige will exert its influence on both Manchuria and Korea. The difficulties in the United States-Japanese negotiations are not confined to the stationing and the withdrawal of troops but there are many other problems involving...the interpretation of the Tripartite Pact and the problem of non-discrimination in trade. From this point of view alone, I consider the United States-Japanese negotiations will never reach a solution. However, I will reconsider, if the Foreign Minister is sure that success can be attained. The decision of war or peace cannot be left to the discretion of the Premier alone. The opinions of Imperial General Headquarters must also be considered.

View of Navy Minister Oikawa:

[...] Japan now stands at the crossroads of war or peace. If we are to wage war, now is the time. We must make the decision now. It will be embarrassing to the Navy to rely upon the possibility of a diplomatic solution without any decision on the opening of a war and then, after the elapse of two or three months, go to war. If we desire to attain success by diplomacy, we must stick to this means to the end.