

H-Diplo *Roundtables*

Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005)

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OVERVIEW

The end of the Pacific War looms as one of the leading controversies in American history. For more than fifty years—an astonishing achievement--Robert Butow's exemplary *Japan's Decision to Surrender* reigned as the essential work on political decision making in Japan and the United States.[1] Other works supplemented Butow, but never entirely displaced him. *Racing the Enemy* now stands as an absolutely critical work on political dimensions of this passage and I believe it is the first work with a legitimate claim to have eclipsed Butow. Not only does Dr. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa profit from an enormous body of evidence shielded from Butow's view, Hasegawa stretches the political canvas to include a Soviet Union in vivid hues. All of this is a sterling achievement that amply justifies this roundtable.

At the core of Hasegawa's presentation of Japanese decision making is his illumination of the attitudes of the key figures about the *kokutai*. This elusive concept represented the symbolic expression of both the political and the cultural essence of the emperor system. An attempt in the 1930's to find a modern constitutional monarchy in the Meiji constitution was savagely rebuffed by the prevailing mythical vision that made the emperor a god reigning above the political system. Despite his exalted theoretical status of supreme political, religious and cultural authority, much controversy surrounds the emperor's actual role in policy making. One pole of argument vigorously advanced by Dr. Herbert Bix in his prize winning work is that Hirohito was a sort of "fighting generalissimo," and the real master puppeteer forging Japan's destiny.[2] At the other pole is the image cultivated particularly during the occupation of Hirohito as a figurehead. Hasegawa leans to the later, but argues that the crisis of surrender propelled Hirohito to redefine the *kokutai* such that he could actively participate in the decision to capitulate, and that in doing this he separated himself from the mythic notion of a national community.[3]

One measure of Hirohito's deftness—and the opaqueness of imperial Japan--is that he crafted a record that left historians grappling to understand his exact role. Bix is convincing that Hirohito was much more than a figurehead. But the "fighting generalissimo" image reaches too far because there are simply too many gapping chasms between Hirohito's concepts and actual Japanese policy, not to mention instances of flat disregard for his ostensible "orders." [4] Hirohito used his intelligence and his willingness and skill at exploiting the power of his

symbolic role to shape and not simply ratify policy. His effectiveness, however, arose not from his veiled but unchecked power, but from his canny tactical maneuvering.[5]

Hasegawa as I read him does not dispute Butow's assessment that the key actors in Japan numbered only eight men: the inner cabinet dubbed The Big Six, the emperor and the emperor's alter ego, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal Marquis Kido Koichi. What Hasegawa illuminates in a new and subtle way is that among these eight men, only Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori was prepared to abandon any vestige of the old order in Japan dominated by a militarist and super nationalist elite and accept the Potsdam Proclamation terms save only for a promise of retention of a constitutional monarchy. Everyone else, most particularly including Hirohito, looked to maintain the old order in Japan. They were divided, however, over the means to achieve that aim. Most of these key actors looked to favorable terms for ending the war, prominently including the prohibition of an occupation. As a last resort sought, Hirohito and others sought to retain substantive powers in his hands to thwart the American occupation reforms aimed precisely at eradicating the old order. During the critical debates on August 9, Hasegawa shows that contrary to the conventional views, Hirohito sought more than what Togo was prepared to accept to end the war. All of this leads to two of Hasegawa's most important conclusions: that Japan was not on the cusp of peace before Hiroshima and that even an American guarantee of a constitutional monarchy under the existing dynasty would not have secured Japan's surrender without further military action.

Another major contribution is the first really comprehensive incorporation in the story of the end of the Pacific War of Soviet decision making and particularly the diplomatic and military initiatives that continued long after the emperor announced that Japan would surrender. *Racing the Enemy* depicts "geostrategic" considerations rather than ideology as the faithful guide to Joseph Stalin's maneuvers. Hasegawa presents a convincing case that the notion that the war might have been ended diplomatically by Soviet signature on the Potsdam Proclamation (with or without a promise regarding the imperial institution) is a chimera. Stalin would never have done anything that threatened to end the war before the Soviets could launch the attacks that would secure for them the spoils promised at Yalta. Hasegawa confirms Soviet designs on Hokkaido were real and came very near to realization. He further details the series of seizures of the southern Kuril Islands for which the Soviets lacked any historic claim whatsoever.

With respect to the U.S., Hasegawa portrays President Harry S. Truman and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes as facing a dilemma of avoiding massive American casualties and ending the war before the Soviets could enter. *Racing the Enemy* maintains that Truman and Byrnes therefore deliberately excised from the Potsdam Proclamation any promise that Japan could retain a constitutional monarchy. They did this with deliberate intent to assure that Japan rejected the Potsdam Proclamation to justify the use of the atomic bombs that would deliver them from their dilemma. Hasegawa further argues that it is a myth that Japan rejected the Potsdam Proclamation and that this rejection led to the use of atomic bombs. My dissents from these arguments are set forth below.

Hasegawa also provides the most comprehensive examination in English of the role of a number of secondary actors, like Admiral Takagi Sokichi, an aide to Navy Minister Yonai Mitsumasa, Matsudaira Yasumasa in the Imperial Household and Matsumoto Shun'ichi in the Foreign

Ministry, who steered and even deceived the key actors along the path to peace. On the American side, he provides a parallel story of secondary actors that is new and very significant. The exhortations concerning the mythic version of the kokutai of Baron Hiranuma Kiichiro at the Imperial Conference on August 9-10 prompted the insertion of a malignant cell in Japan's note purportedly accepting the Potsdam Proclamation. That cell constituted a demand as a condition precedent to surrender that the U.S. must concede the "prerogatives of His Majesty as a sovereign Ruler." Joseph Grew, Joseph Ballantine and Eugene Dooman— ironically under suspicion as the "appeasers" in the State Department—recognized this provision was not innocuous but was a demand to place substantive power in the hands of the emperor and thus defeat the overall American war aim of a demilitarized, democratic Japan. While critics castigated James Byrnes for years for persuading Truman not to accept this note, Hasegawa demonstrates that Byrnes himself was initially complacent about accepting it, and that Grew and company labored hard to convince him that the Japanese note could not be accepted without dire consequences.

Racing the Enemy will mark a turning point in the U.S. historiography of the end of the Pacific War. It is the coup de grace to the fundamental premises of the first wave of what has been called "revisionism." Following a number of prior works and based on such thorough and sound research from Japanese sources, it demolishes the narrative that Japan was near surrender before Hiroshima or that her surrender could have been easily procured with a guarantee about the imperial institution untenable. At the same time, this work will open new fronts for critical challenges to Japanese and American decision making. As this roundtable is designed to bring out disagreements and perhaps areas where further scholarship is warranted, I will now turn to those areas.

COMMENTARY

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The dominant narrative in Hasegawa fine work is that Japan's decision to surrender was "political" rather than "military." Having labored so hard and so well to capture more accurately than anyone else the nuances of Japanese political debates, he has skipped with ease to the conclusion that the "political" element is overwhelmingly dominant. He is by no means alone for this is a persistent theme in the cannon of "revisionist" work. In my view, the "political" and "military" elements are too thoroughly intertwined to be cleanly separated, much less to permit relegating "military" factors to a markedly inferior status. For example, the surrender decision of Japan's most senior military leaders in Tokyo is critical to ending the war. Even Hasegawa attributes this to a "military," not a "political" factor. He maintains that these militarists agreed to surrender because Soviet entry into the war negated their Ketsu Go strategy of a last great battle against the expected initial American invasion. Unfortunately, this assertion is belied by their actual reaction and their response can not be comprehended without placing the "military" elements in the foreground. I find that the lack of balance in presentation and assessment of the "political" and "military" aspects of Japan's surrender induces fundamental distortions Hasegawa's portrait of why Japan surrendered and American decision making. [6]

Japan's surrender is best understood as two steps. The chronological first step and thus the most important one was overtly "political:" someone with legitimate authority had to decide that Japan would surrender. But this would not alone end the war. There was a second essential step: Japan's armed forces both in the Home Islands and overseas had to comply with that order. These steps involved different actors and not surprisingly the factors that motivated these different actors varied. Both political and military considerations shaped both steps. Although *Racing the Enemy* does not explicitly follow this "two step" analysis, Hasegawa is too perceptive to ignore or minimize the question of the compliance of Japan's armed forces with the surrender. This sets him apart from much of the critical literature that in my view ignores or minimizes this very real issue. There is important new evidence and interpretation bearing on this second step in *Racing the Enemy*.

One of the mainstays of *Racing the Enemy* is the repeated assertion that Soviet mediation was Japan's "last hope." But was it? The answer even within the text of *Racing the Enemy* is no. For many of the loose federation Hasegawa's tags as the "peace party" (including Togo and his Foreign Ministry, some outsiders like Prince Konoe, a former prime minister) it is correct to say that "Soviet mediation" was "the last hope." If ultimate power rested with this "peace party" then it would be reasonable to argue that Soviet mediation and thus political factors were the key to Japan's surrender.

But *Racing the Enemy* concedes that the nemesis of the "peace party" was another faction, the "war party." The "war party" vested its "last hope" in Ketsu Go, the strategic plan that aimed to either defeat or inflict such heavy loss on the initial invasion that the American leaders would be prepared to negotiate an end to the war satisfactory to the "war party." Ketsu Go tucked the critical moment for hard diplomacy chronologically after the initial invasion battle, although the effort to open a mediation channel before the first invasion battle did not unduly disturb the "war party"— provided that Japan made no great concessions that would imperil the old order.

This brings us to the central conceptual flaw in *Racing the Enemy*. The most powerful decision makers in Japan in 1945 were the "war party," the militarists. Thus, even the most insightful analysis of the "peace party" will not explain fully Japan's surrender. Hirohito by his own admission was effectively a member of the "war party" until defeat on Okinawa loomed as a certainty in the second half of June. At that point he augmented his vision to include a simultaneous effort to expedite the Soviet mediation effort. [7] But as *Racing the Enemy* shows, Hirohito's only ambiguous concepts of the terms for ending the war (assuming Hirohito ever had much in mind for terms beyond the preservation of the maximum power in his hands) did not match those of Togo and the "peace party."

The whole desultory tale of the checkered course of diplomatic approaches to the Soviets stands as a formidable obstacle to a generalized "last hope" interpretation. The incredibly dilatory contacts (first without an intention to reveal a desire to secure their mediation!) and the complete inability of the Big Six to conduct any meaningful discussion of what terms Japan would accept to end the war until the morning of August 9, belie the notion that Soviet mediation represented the "last hope" for all the major actors who actually held the power to make the decision to capitulate.

TRUMAN, BYRNES AND THE POTSDAM PROCLAMATION

The Potsdam Proclamation is pivotal to Hasegawa's depiction of American political decision making for ending the war. He maintains that Truman and Byrnes believed they were on the horns of dilemma between avoiding massive U.S. casualties and ending the war before Soviet intervention. They decided that by dropping draft language in the proclamation providing for a guarantee of the imperial institution, they could assure that Japan would reject the proclamation and thus justify the use of atomic weapons. The atomic bombs would then end the war without massive U.S. casualties and before Soviet entry. For the reasons set forth below, I do not find merit in this argument. [8]

The Chronology of the Decision to Drop the Promise of the Constitutional Monarchy from the Draft Potsdam Proclamation and the News of the Successful Test of the Atomic Bomb

One of the touchstones in *Racing the Enemy* is the chronology of the decision to drop the promise of a constitutional Monarchy from the draft of the Potsdam Proclamation and the news of the successful atomic bomb test on July 16. Initially, Hasegawa stresses the fact that when Truman's Chief of Staff, Admiral William Leahy briefed the Joint Chiefs of Staff on July 17, his language strongly suggested that Truman and Byrnes had already discussed the issue and that they had already decided to remove the promise of a constitutional monarchy from the draft of the Potsdam Proclamation. Leahy's actual comment is recorded as: "consideration had been given to removing the sentence in question [promising a constitutional monarchy]" at a political level (p. 148). I do not find this phrase an affirmation that a definitive decision had been made.

Racing the Enemy then goes on to argue that although there were initial reports about the atomic bomb test on July 16 and 17, it was not until a detailed report arrived on July 21 that the "atomic bomb began to influence American decisions" (pp. 148-49). But if Leahy's statement accurately mirrored what he understood Truman and Byrnes were thinking by July 17, then it would appear that the definitive or the tentative decision was made before the test, or at latest at the time of the first flash reports of the test without any details. The chronology alone would rule out the prospect that the decision was rendered with the knowledge the July 21 report that first confirmed the power of the weapon.

This analysis suggests *Racing the Enemy* might have been better arguing Leahy's comment to the JCS on July 17 was tentative (which appears more consistent with the evidence). This would still permit an argument that the July 21 report cinched the linkage in the minds of Truman and Byrnes that by dropping any promise with regard to a constitutional monarchy, they could assure Japanese rejection of the Potsdam Proclamation and thus justify the use of the atomic bombs. It still leaves a problem with the record because it shows in any way of reading Leahy's comments that Truman and Byrnes were already at least thinking of dropping the promise even before they had any basis to repose great confidence in the practical reality of really powerful bombs. At a minimum, this indicates there must have been some other factor or factors that moved them in this direction we must consider.

On the other hand, if the stance in *Racing the Enemy* that the decision had been made by July 17 to delete the promise of a constitutional monarchy from the Potsdam Proclamation is correct,

then it would establish that this critical decision was made before July 21 when Hasegawa first sees the atomic bombs as definitely beginning to influence American decisions. This would undermine the linkage in the minds of Truman and Byrnes between dropping the promise and the success of the bomb test.

Were Truman and Byrnes Alone in Contemplating Dropping the Promise of the Constitutional Monarchy from the Potsdam Proclamation?

One of the other mainstays of much critical argument by no means confined to this work is that it was Truman at Byrnes' urging who removed the promise of a constitutional monarchy from the draft of the Potsdam Proclamation despite what is often portrayed as massive if not universal support by other advisers. The obvious problem with this argument is that it ignored or glossed over the fact that the Joint Chiefs of Staff themselves recommended that the original draft language be dropped in a July 18 memorandum to the president—an action Secretary of War Henry Stimson would also endorse. The Joint Chiefs, in turn, were clearly influenced by the arguments of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC). This little noted component of the Joint Chiefs bureaucracy acted as a sort of “think tank” to which the Joint Chiefs referred complex and thorny issues.

Hasegawa goes after the JSSC with a vengeance.

As I read the comments of the JSSC, I thought that they had simply done useful work. They sat back and tried to put themselves in the shoes of the Japanese and asked how the draft language might be interpreted, without benefit of any preconceived notions of what the drafters actually intended. They astutely noted that the draft contained ambiguity. Then they set out what seemed to me to be two reasonable interpretations that the Japanese might extract from the ambiguity.

First they thought that some Japanese might take the provision allowing for “a constitutional monarchy under the present dynasty” as indicating as Hasegawa puts it “a commitment by the United Nations to depose or execute the present emperor and install some other member of the Imperial family” (p. 146). I thought that was reasonable and a useful warning that the silence about the incumbent emperor could be interpreted as having sinister implications for Hirohito. It was not as *Racing the Enemy* has it that the JSSC saw the “promise to keep a constitutional monarchy” as raising a threat to “depose or execute the present Emperor.” It was the silence on the explicit fate of the incumbent emperor in the draft language that the JSSC highlighted.

On the other hand, the JSSC feared that this same highlighted language could be taken by “radical elements” as a promise to “continue the institution of the Emperor and Emperor worship.” Here I think *Racing the Enemy* misinterprets what the JSSC meant by “radical elements.” Hasegawa takes the JSSC to mean by “radical elements” groups opposed to the emperor (like the communists). But I think what the JSSC feared was right wing or militarist “radical elements” that would revive after a time and then they would insist that the Allies allowed for the reinstatement of the emperor system and emperor worship. Many Americans in general, and specifically the liberals within the administration like Dean Acheson and Archibald MacLeish, deemed the emperor system and the practice of emperor worship as the very origin of

Japan's militarism. I think one has to bear in mind that everyone's frame of reference at this point was the revival of Nazi Germany by Hitler after the defeat in World War I.

The JCSS recommended changing Stimson's draft as follows and in keeping with what it believed were the principles of the Atlantic Charter with the omissions in []:

"The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as our objectives are accomplished and there has been established beyond doubt a peacefully inclined, responsible government of a character representative of the Japanese people. [This may include a constitutional monarchy under the present dynasty if it be shown to the complete satisfaction of the world that such a government will never again aspire to aggression.] Subject to suitable guarantees against further acts of aggression, the Japanese people will be free to choose their own form of government."

As Hasegawa usefully adds to the record, the Operations Division of the War Department (OPD) countered this memorandum on July 13 in a memorandum to General Thomas T. Handy. OPD thought the first point made by JSSC could be handled by further clarifying the term "constitutional monarchy." Their essential recommendation was that the last sentence of the JSSC draft be modified to read: "The Japanese people will be free to choose whether they shall retain their emperor as a constitutional monarchy." As for the second point, OPD thought the "radical elements" were so small and unlikely to have any power to influence the present government in its decision to surrender that the argument was totally irrelevant. OPD said:

"The primary intention in issuing the proclamation is to induce Japan's surrender and thus avoid the heavy casualties implied in a fight to the finish. It is almost universally accepted that the basic point on which acceptance of surrender terms will hinge lies in the question of the disposition of the emperor and his dynasty. Therefore, from the military point of view it seems necessary to state unequivocally what we intend to do with regard to the Emperor."

OPD proposed language as follows, again omissions in []: "[Subject to suitable guarantees against further acts of aggression,] The Japanese people will be free to choose [their own form of government] whether they shall retain their emperor as a constitutional monarchy."

OPD said this was totally in line with the thinking of Stimson and McCloy. Handy sent this memorandum to Marshall. (Pp. 146-47)

With regard to this second point by the JSSC and the revision proposed by OPD, we get into the troublesome issue of the proper sphere of military competence and advice. OPD's position would be defensible if its proposal only touched the immediate surrender of both the Japanese government and armed forces. This is an area that falls within the realm of military competence and advice. The obvious problem is that OPD's proposed language can be read as a firm pledge about the fate of Hirohito ("whether they shall retain their emperor"). This inevitably reaches to the questions of the political arrangements the Allies intended to impose upon Japan and the fate of Hirohito. These questions extend well beyond the proper sphere of military competence and advice. No wonder it was rejected by the JCS.

Marshall proposed support of the JSSC and with an amendment by General Henry Arnold, the JCS then sent a memo to Truman explaining “in the exact words of the [JSSC] the reason for the amendment.” (p. 147-48) Hasegawa points out that Leahy and Marshall had previously been strong supporters of the efforts of Stimson, Grew and Forrestal to amend unconditional surrender, but by this action they prompted a draft that was “harsher on the Japanese.” (p. 148)

Racing the Enemy finds a number of mysteries about this, but detects a hint of an answer in Stimson’s record that the president and Byrnes had worked out a timetable for the end of the Pacific War. “Stimson must have felt how strongly Truman and Byrnes were committed to unconditional surrender. Likewise, informed by Leahy that Truman and Byrnes had already made up their minds to remove the promise to retain a constitutional monarchy, the JCS had to accept that decision.” But does the record of Leahy’s remarks really lend itself plainly to the interpretation that Truman and Byrnes were already committed to remove the promise of the constitutional monarchy? The reported remarks only say they had given consideration to this action (p. 148). More significantly, is there a scintilla of evidence that Truman and Byrnes manipulated the JSSC? *Racing the Enemy* cites none. (I seriously doubt if Truman even knew what the JSSC was.) The Joint Chiefs plainly based their recommendations on the report of the JSSC. To suggest otherwise is pure conjecture contrary to the contemporary written record.

Likewise, *Racing the Enemy* argues that Truman and Byrnes deliberately excised the promise of the constitutional monarchy from the Potsdam Proclamation because they had decided that by doing this, they could guarantee that they could justify the use of atomic bombs and thus avoid huge American casualties while ending the war before the Soviets could enter. Where is there any documentation that either Truman or Byrnes ever directly stated this reasoning? Did the JCS/JSSC propose the removal of the draft language for the same reasons? If the JCS/JSSC proposed removal of the original draft language for other reasons, how are we to conclude that Truman and Byrnes did not share the same thinking? In my view this whole argument is at best, a weak inference and one that prompts a particularly lamentable leap. Hasegawa writes:

“In his [Byrnes’] memoirs he noted that ‘had the Japanese government surrendered unconditionally, it would not have been necessary to drop the atomic bomb.’ But perhaps this statement can be read in reverse: ‘if we insisted on unconditional surrender, we could justify the dropping of the atomic bomb’” (p. 135).

Reading a statement in a public figure’s memoirs as signaling the reverse of what he actually penned may be an interesting exercise in textual analysis, but it is not history.

The labored hunt to detect a Machiavellian motive for American officials does not confront the fact as I will discuss that there was solid evidence to support the revision of the Potsdam Proclamation and that other key participants recognized correctly as Hasegawa ultimately concludes, that a promise of a constitutional monarchy would not secure Japan’s surrender.

Truman and Byrnes Revise the Potsdam Proclamation

Hasegawa points out that Stimson's diary entry for July 23 says, "He [Truman] told me that he had the warning message which we prepared on his desk, and had accepted our most recent change in it, and that he proposed to shoot it out as soon as he heard the definite day of the operation" (p. 151). This can be viewed as contemporary evidence that Truman is clearly linking the dropping of the promise of the constitutional monarchy to the recommendations made by the JCS and Stimson. Truman's comments as recorded by Stimson do not reflect that he and Byrnes had already made the same decision, or even that the recommended change was consistent with what he and Byrnes already had decided or had been contemplating. In my view, this diary entry alone is enough to illustrate how tenuous the charge is that Truman and Byrnes were plotting to maneuver Japan into providing a pretext for using atomic weapons.

On July 24, Truman and Byrnes approved the final draft of the Potsdam Proclamation. They removed the JCS proposed draft language: "Subject to suitable guarantee against further acts of aggression, the Japanese people will be free to choose their own form of government." Hasegawa's view of the amendment is: "The omission made the provision more stringent and less clear about the status of the emperor" (p. 156).

I do not see that the revision actually is "less clear about the status of the emperor." The final version of the Potsdam Proclamation reads:

"The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as their 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."

Both phrases tie the new government to the free "choice" or the "freely expressed will" of the Japanese people. I do not see that the final version was more stringent and less clear about the status of the emperor. The original version says the Japanese people get to choose "their own form of government," but this is made subject to the proviso that there will be a "suitable guarantee against further acts of aggression." The revised version says the government chosen must be "peacefully inclined and responsible." I do not see any difference between the original proviso about a "guarantee against further acts of aggression" and the revised language about the new government being "peacefully inclined." (If anything, by dropping the demand for "a suitable guarantee"--whatever that could mean-- one could argue the revision is somewhat less stringent).

This leaves us then with the only other material difference of the addition of the demand that the new government be "responsible." Is this coded language threatening the imperial system? I do not see it that way.

Hasegawa adds that Truman and Byrnes accepted British amendments to direct the Proclamation at the Japanese government and not the Japanese people, but the UK did not insist on the preservation of the monarchical system. "In view of strong opposition from Truman and Byrnes, Churchill and Eden decided to drop the demand that unconditional surrender be modified" (p. 156). Where is the authority for this? The footnote cites the Stimson diary for July 24 and FRUS. Which of these sets out the views of Churchill and Eden?

“Magic” and Ultra

I believe the most reasonable explanation of the actions of Truman and Byrnes (and probably the Joint Chiefs among others) rests in radio intelligence. Certainly, Joseph Grew clearly linked that source to his documented view that Japan was nowhere close to peace on July 13 and again as late as August 7, the day after Hiroshima. The decisions of Truman and Byrnes are also consistent with the opinion reached by the expert navy analysts closely following the radio intelligence information flowing from decoded Japanese diplomatic and military communications. In other words, the express or implied argument that only nefarious reasons could undergird the actions of Truman and Byrnes because no other officials shared their view is without merit.

Likewise, the intercepts demolished the belief that a guarantee of the imperial institution would secure Japan’s surrender and provide an explanation of why prior advocates of such a promise like Marshall, Leahy and Stimson backed away from such a promise.

It has been a fixture in much critical literature that Truman, Byrnes and other officials were reading the daily “Magic” Diplomatic Summary. Employing some excerpts from this summary, critics raised arguments either that Truman and Byrnes must have realized Japan was on the cusp of surrender from the intercepts alone, or that the intercepts coupled to the counsel of advisers like Stimson and Grew, clearly armed them with certain knowledge that they had to provide a guarantee of the emperor system and that such a guarantee would have ended the war.

But the reality is that the decrypts flowed to policy makers in not just one, but two streams. A comparative trickle of diplomatic exchanges comprised the contents of the “Magic” Diplomatic Summary. But there was a second stream culled from a torrent of military intercepts. This stream was the “Magic” Far East Summary.

Racing the Enemy takes the stance that there is evidence that Truman and Byrnes saw at least some of the diplomatic intercepts, but disputes whether they saw any of the military intercepts or that such intercepts influenced their decisions.[9] In important part, Dr. Hasegawa’s position was based on my work in *Downfall*. At the time I wrote *Downfall*, I was very cautious about what intercept summaries officials saw because I had not located what I regarded as definitive evidence on this point.

Because the draft chapters of *Racing the Enemy* really forced this question to the forefront, I returned to the national archives to seek further information on the distribution of Ultra and “Magic.” What was not clear when *Downfall* was written or when *Racing the Enemy* was in draft, but is now clear is that the exact same officials receiving the “Magic” Diplomatic Summary also received the “Magic” Far East Summary. Indeed, both summaries usually were delivered jointly. [10] Moreover, as the message files of the White House Map Room detachment with Truman at Potsdam make clear, the Magic/Ultra summaries were being forwarded by locked pouch courier to Potsdam with a three day delay from publication in Washington to receipt in Potsdam. When the intercepts showed the emperor’s intervention to participate in the Soviet mediation effort, arrangements were altered so that each day radio

intelligence information was passed from General Marshall and Admiral King, who did have the special secure “Ultra” radio links, through Marshall’s aide Col. Frank McCarthy to Truman’s chief of Staff, Admiral William Leahy. There is no indication, however, that the locked pouch delivery halted. [11]

Understanding the distribution of the summaries by no means completely resolves the question of the influence of radio intelligence. The extraordinary security requirements imposed upon the very tiny number of officials cleared to see radio intelligence material required that they not keep copies, that they make no written records at the time of what they saw or what action they took based upon what they saw, that they never discuss the material with those not in on the “ultra secret,” and that they not refer to the matter later in memoirs or other writings. To an amazing extent, American officials honored these restrictions. Even those who violated these rules usually left only terse comments.

What has emerged in the historiography of use of Allied radio intelligence in World War II is a general pattern. We now have evidence of the radio intelligence material that flowed to various officials. We have evidence of the chronology and content of the decisions they made. In a distinct minority of cases overall an obvious direct link can be seen between the information and the decision. But far more often we are left to infer that the radio intelligence information shaped the decision making. I am not aware of any serious historian dealing with this problem who has taken the track that since we can not prove definitively whether the information shaped policy, we must therefore presume that it did not. I believe overwhelmingly historians dealing with this problem in the many other contexts it appears for events in World War II draw the inference when it is reasonably evident. I do not see that different rules should apply to this period.

We face a further conundrum when we are dealing with sets of officials, some of whom violated security restrictions and made contemporary or later references to radio intelligence while others kept their silence. If we are to try to judge the impact of radio intelligence from such indiscretions, then we need to at least assemble all the indiscretions (or the few positive indicators of how the intelligence was interpreted) when we draw inferences.

Interpreting the impact of the Japanese diplomatic and military intercepts in 1945 illustrates all of these issues.

The key diplomatic exchanges were between Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori in Tokyo and Ambassador Sato Naotake in Moscow. Sato was the conduit through which the Japanese were attempting to secure Soviet mediation. From the outset, however, Sato was convinced that the effort must fail. Further, he infuriated Togo with his dismissive hectoring about the soundness of the whole approach.

A critical exchange transpired between July 15 and 21. Sato declared that “abstract arguments” and “pretty little phrases devoid of all connection with reality” would not impress the Soviets. He further directed pointed questions at the bona fides of the whole enterprise. Did the government and the military actually support initiative? How could the initiative represent government policy in light of the fight to the finish stance adopted in the June Imperial

Conference? Because the initiative was a closely held secret by the Big Six, Togo's reply was evasive. He could not claim board support by the government and the military because it did not exist. Nor could he explain how it displaced the decision in the Imperial Conference. Instead, Togo was forced to say it was supported by the "directing powers" as he called them. Further, because the Big Six remained divided about terms to end the war Togo could not provide terms, apart from his oft cited comment that "If [the Anglo-Americans] insist unrelentingly upon unconditional surrender, the Japanese are unanimous in their resolve to wage a thorough-going war." But what are not commonly cited are Togo's very next words:

"The emperor himself has deigned to express his determination and we have therefore made this request of the Russians. Please bear particularly in mind, however, that we are not seeking the Russian's mediation for anything like an unconditional surrender."

A reasonable interpretation of this message is not that Japan is simply adamant about the phrase "unconditional surrender," but that Japan would only accept a negotiated end to the war far, far different from "unconditional surrender." When Sato received that dispatch, he fired back two messages advising Togo that the best conditions Japan could hope for were unconditional surrender modified to the extent that imperial institution was preserved. [12] Togo replied to Sato on July 21, and *Racing the Enemy* particularly highlights this message from Togo finding that this telegram "played a decisive role in Byrnes and Truman's decision." (p. 157)

Byrnes' biographer stressed that Byrnes saw this message as indicating Japan's intention to fight on to the end rather than accept unconditional surrender. *Racing the Enemy*, acknowledges this, however, it goes on to argue that Stimson and Forrestal saw the dispatch very differently as indicating Japan "might be close to surrender." (p. 158.)

I agree the July 21 message was critical, and perhaps the most critical of the individual diplomatic messages that appear in the summaries. But what *Racing the Enemy* does not address about that July 21 intercepts is that the editors of the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary made it crystal clear to policy makers that Sato expressly "advocated unconditional surrender provided the Imperial House was preserved." Togo flatly rejected this. His comments do not even include language indicating a guarantee of the imperial institution would be vital or even helpful. Nor I would add is *Racing the Enemy* alone. As far as I am aware, the entire body of literature critical of Truman has failed to acknowledge and address the fact that the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary of July 22, 1945, made it perfectly clear that Togo was rejecting Sato's proposal which parallels the package of terms that supposedly would have produced Japan's capitulation before Hiroshima. I would add that this fact was of record as early as the 1978 release of the "Magic" Diplomatic Summary.

Moreover, two contemporary informed opinions of particular weight supported Truman and Byrnes. The first is Joseph Grew, the man most sympathetic to the Japanese and arguably the most knowledgeable about Japan's leadership within the U.S. government. As *Racing the Enemy* notes, an assessment prepared by the Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, General John Weckerling on July 13 assessed the evidence that the emperor had intervened to support the effort at Soviet mediation. He listed three possible interpretations:

- (1) The emperor personally intervened for peace against the military opposition;
- (2) The conservative groups close to the emperor triumphed over militaristic elements who favored continuation of the war; and
- (3) That the Japanese government was making a well coordinated effort to stave off defeat, believed that Soviet mediation could be brought for the right price, and that an attractive peace offer from Japan would cause war weariness in the United States.

Weckerling labeled the first as remote, the second as possible and the third as the most likely scenario. He noted that Grew concurred with this assessment. The memorandum shows that it was forwarded to General Marshall at Potsdam. [13] Hasegawa concurs with my view in *Downfall* that based on what we know now, the assessment was probably too pessimistic about the significance of the emperor's intervention. But would any American official with knowledge of the Weckerling-Grew memorandum find that emperor's intervention was a clear signpost that Japan was near surrender?

Hasegawa argues that we have only Weckerling's claim that Grew agreed with the assessment. But there is no evidence that Weckerling misrepresented Grew's views. Moreover, in a memorandum to Byrnes on August 7, Grew wrote:

“We know, for instance, from secret but unimpeachable information that Sato, the Japanese Ambassador to Moscow [and former Foreign Minister] has been earnestly recommending this course [i.e. acceptance of the Potsdam terms] and we believe it possible although by no means certain that this movement may gain headway to the point where the advocates of peace will be able to overcome the opposition of the military extremists and their present control of the Emperor.” [14]

Based on his obvious reading the radio intelligence (the “secret but unimpeachable source”), Grew even at this late point still sees Japan not close to peace on terms acceptable to the U.S. [15]

The second contemporary informed opinion is an analysis piece from naval intelligence published in the “Magic” Far East Summary on July 27. What is notable about this analysis is that it originates from specialists whose basic job was to closely monitor and interpret radio intelligence. Their assessment states that when both the military and the diplomatic intercepts are evaluated, it was clear that so long as the Imperial Army believes it can defeat the initial invasion, there was very little prospect that Japan would surrender on terms acceptable to the U.S.

This second opinion reflected the extraordinarily grim picture presented by the military intercepts which showed Japan's militarists without exception girding for a final Armageddon battle in the Homeland. Given the dominant role of the militarists, this radio intelligence material carried political significance as well. Further, while the opinion did not appear in the “Magic” Far East Summary until July 27, it represented a cumulative assessment of the pattern that had emerged literally over months. There simply was no indication at all that the militarists

would quit before a final “decisive battle” in the Homeland. Thus, it was not a conclusion one could only have reached by July 27. It is one that anyone looking at both the “Magic” Diplomatic Summary and the “Magic” Far East Summary could have extracted days or weeks before.

In my view, both of these opinions carry more weight than those of Forrestal, Stimson or McCloy about the nearness of Japan to surrender. At a minimum the actual contents of the summaries, coupled with the opinions of Grew and the expert analysts, indicate that a policy maker reasonably could have concluded by July 13 if not well before that there simply was no diplomatic silver bullet that could bring Japan to surrender before the atomic bombs were used. Further, the intercepts made clear an absolutely crucial point prior to the date the Potsdam Proclamation was finalized and contemporaneous to the period when Truman and the Joint Chiefs believed dropping the promise of the imperial institution was appropriate: modifying the Potsdam terms to include a guarantee of the imperial institution would not secure Japan’s surrender. You do not have to imagine ever more nefarious motives to understand why dropping language making some guarantee about the imperial institution stood on its own merits aside from a Machiavellian desire to justify use of atomic bombs.

I find another irony here. Literature about this passage customarily addresses the radio intelligence in terms of the perceptions of American officials. But I would submit that this material is a particularly invaluable source of insight into Japanese thinking and decision making. The body of documentary evidence from Japan for this period is beset by a number of hazards. I suspect that much of importance within the top echelons was not written down in the first place because of the secrecy and fear of the consequences if evidence that an official was contemplating terminating the war. The Japanese make no bones about the fact that much documentary evidence was destroyed in the interval between the surrender and the arrival of occupation forces. All the post-war statements are, of course, suspect for reasons ranging from frayed memory to the deliberate distortions of hidden agendas. What makes the intercepts so invaluable is that they are unquestionably contemporary, authentic and unmarred by efforts to conceal matters after the fact. Indeed, one of the most important conclusions by Dr. Hasegawa is that an offer to preserve the Imperial institution in the Potsdam Proclamation would not have secured Japan’s surrender. Any American official could have reached that exact conclusion reading the “Magic” Diplomatic Summary on July 22, 1945. And this followed weeks of mounting evidence that the men who really controlled Japan were absolutely bent upon one final decisive battle and would not surrender on terms acceptable to the U.S.

PEARL HARBOR

This discussion of radio intelligence also brings up another issue. *Racing the Enemy* contains a persistent theme emphasizing that references to Pearl Harbor demonstrated that revenge figured prominently in the motives of American leaders, particularly Truman. For example, Hasegawa notes that on morning of June 18, Truman met Grew who pressed to modify unconditional surrender and Truman told him he was postponing it to the joint conference. Hasegawa comments that:

“[Truman’s] consistent avoidance of the problem pointed to the inevitable conclusion that Truman did not want to modify unconditional surrender demand. He was bent on avenging the humiliation of Pearl Harbor by imposing on the enemy unconditional surrender. But he would still have to find ways to minimize the cost of American lives while satisfying his thirst for revenge. He was not yet holding all the cards.” (p. 99, see also 142-43, 180-81, 201-02)

That Americans hated the Japanese with a passion during World War II is clear. *Racing the Enemy*, however, does not explore the vast catalogue of horrors Japan perpetrated that earned it the hatred of not just the Americans but other peoples. There is no acknowledgement that every day the war continued massive numbers of Asian noncombatants died as a consequence of Japan’s march of conquest.

But what is more significant in connection with Pearl Harbor that is not addressed is the fact that it inflicted horrendous damage on the credibility of Japanese diplomacy. The bungled attempt to provide a declaration of war before the Japanese launched the attack on Pearl Harbor indelibly impressed Americans that the Japanese were particularly duplicitous and that the words of their diplomats could not be assumed to be sincere. (For example, in the announcement of the Nagasaki bomb, Truman referred to the Japanese “who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor.”) As Edward Drea aptly notes, “Thus in early August 1945 as the Japanese signal peace (MAGIC) they are preparing another military surprise on Kyushu (ULTRA). I’m sure many U.S. intelligence analysts felt a sense of déjà vu.” [16] If you assumed, as for example Joseph Grew did, that the militarists held the upper hand in Japan, you were likely to discount the diplomatic intercepts as true indicators of Japan’s intentions. This is exactly how not only Grew saw the situation as late as August 7, but also the message the “Magic” Far East Summary conveyed on July 27.

The “Myth” of Rejection of the Potsdam Proclamation

Racing the Enemy maintains that it is a popular “myth” that Japan’s rejection of the Potsdam Proclamation led to the decision to use the bombs. More specifically, this argument goes to so far as to maintain that Japan never rejected the Potsdam Proclamation. While I admire the creativity of this argument, I do not agree with it.

1) The Proclamation was not issued as a formal diplomatic note, but was released through “propaganda” channels. Whatever the niceties of how the proclamation was transmitted, the fact is that Japanese leaders recognized it as a very significant diplomatic note. The discussions reported in *Racing the Enemy* do not reflect that any Japanese leader seriously argued that it should be ignored because proper diplomatic etiquette had been violated. Both the Proclamation and the Japanese “response” appeared via “propaganda” channels. The “mokusatsu” comment from Suzuki appeared in the Japanese print media, and other comments were still more strident.

2) In any event, the Japanese never rejected the Proclamation because they made no formal response whatever. The problem with this argument is that by its very terms, the Potsdam Proclamation demanded an immediate response: “The following are our terms. We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.” (Emphasis added.)

Thus, the proclamation demanded that it be entirely accepted without delay. Failing to respond at all when the demand was for a prompt response was a rejection.

3) Since the order authorizing the use of the atomic bombs was issued before the Potsdam Proclamation was issued, it is a popular myth that Japan's rejection of the Proclamation led to decision to use the bombs (p. 152). This misses the context. It is true that the July 25 order authorizing use of atomic bombs was issued before the Potsdam Proclamation. But the order did not authorize actual use until "after about 3 August 1945." As the prior description of the status of the Japanese diplomatic stumbling indicates, the Japanese had not decided on terms to end the war and were not close to surrender. If this was clear reading the diplomatic and military intercepts, why would anyone believe they would accept the Potsdam Proclamation? If it was obvious that the Proclamation would be rejected, why pretend there was some mystery waiting to be solved before it was appropriate to issue a preparatory order authorizing use of the bombs at a date well after it was expected that Japan's stance on the Proclamation would be revealed. If the Japanese quite unexpectedly accept, there was plenty of time to cancel authorization for use of the bombs.

Backfire: The Real Reaction of Japanese Policy Makers to the Potsdam Proclamation

There are two very important pieces of evidence about the reaction of Japanese policy makers to the Potsdam Proclamation *Racing the Enemy* omits. The first is the reaction of Navy Minister Admiral Yonai, one of the Big Six, as recorded by Admiral Takagi. "If one is first to issue a statement, he is always at a disadvantage. Churchill had fallen. America is beginning to be isolated. The government therefore will ignore it. There is no need to rush." [17]

The second is Prime Minister Suzuki's comments to the Cabinet Advisory Council:

"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, they will yield before we do. Just because they have 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]." [18]

This is contemporary and authentic evidence on the stance of two men usually cast as among the three "moderates" on the Big Six (I agree with Hasegawa that Suzuki's entitlement to the status of "moderate" is suspect before August 9). If this is how the "moderates" or at least one "moderate" reacted, obviously it must have powerfully reinforced the die-hards in the belief that American will was cracking even before the first casualty in the invasion.

Thus, these statements constitute potent evidence that the Potsdam Proclamation in one important sense backfired. Its many promises housed a host of weighty concessions never offered to Germany. It promised dire consequences for those who lead Japan into war and war criminals, but guaranteed no extinction of Japan or its people and a generous future for ordinary Japanese. Precisely because it comprised a laundry list of unilateral concessions, we now know that critical Japanese decision makers interpreted it as a sign that there was no need to rush to

terminate the war as American will was crumbling and if they just held out, the Americans would yield. In view of this documented reaction, had the proclamation contained some guarantee about the imperial institution, instead of fortifying the so called “peace party” to try to terminate the war immediately, it might very well have steered Hirohito to believe that if Japan just held on a little longer, the next round of concessions would leave him (or a government formed from the old order) with real substantive power that would preserve the old order and a kokutai to Hirohito’s taste.

I think many of those who strenuously argue that a modification of the Potsdam Proclamation could have secured Japan’s surrender labor in the wishful belief that unilateral concessions are a one way ratchet to peace. The reaction of the very hard headed men who decided Japan’s destiny illustrate that this is just not so.

THE SURRENDER OF JAPAN AND HER ARMED FORCES

A Turning Point in the Controversy

The relative role of the political and military threads in Japan’s decision to surrender brings us to another major argument in *Racing the Enemy* that is apt to provoke the most debate and perhaps wrongly detract from the book’s other major contributions. This is the argument that Soviet intervention not only was the most important factor in securing Japan’s surrender, but that Soviet intervention might have produced the surrender without the atomic bombs whereas the converse was not true. (pp. 295-98) More implicit than stated is the further proposition that ending the war in this fashion would have been morally superior.

The first thing about this issue is that regardless of whether it stands or falls in the subsequent debates, I believe *Racing the Enemy* will mark a major turning point in the historiography. The initial wave of what has been called “revisionism” attacked American motives in using atomic weapons. Central to all of the assaults was the premise that American leaders knew Japan was on the cusp of surrender when they deliberately chose to unleash needless nuclear devastation for suspect reasons, such as intimidation of the Soviets. A further central “revisionist” argument is the assertion that a U.S. guarantee of the imperial institution would have secured Japan’s surrender. Hasegawa finds no merit in the central premise of this line of argument that Japan was about to surrender prior to Hiroshima. Coming on top of similar conclusions or implications in Dower, Bix, Drea and Frank, and based as it is on deep research in Japanese evidence, I think *Racing the Enemy* will be the coup de grace to the cornerstone of the first wave of “revisionism.” [19] Hasegawa further finds no validity in the idea that a mere guarantee of the imperial institution would have secured Japan’s surrender.

Hasegawa thus reorients the basic structure of the controversy. He insists that historians take as the departure point for debate that Japan was not close to surrender before the morning of August 6, 1945. Instead, he argues that various diplomatic and military options should be addressed and evaluated in terms of their effectiveness in ending a war that was not at an end. He still leaves plenty of scope for scrutiny of American motives that will not please “traditionalists,” but he shows that the fractured Japanese leadership sought much more than a mere guarantee of the

imperial institution and was even more resistant to surrender than the earlier versions of “revisionism” recognized.

Was Manchuria “Written Off” by Japanese Leaders Prior to Soviet Intervention?

Hasegawa and I respectfully disagree as to whether or not the Japanese had “written off” Manchuria prior to Soviet intervention. He believes they had not whereas I believe they had. *Racing the Enemy* notes that Chief of Staff Umezu briefed the emperor on June 9 following an inspection trip to the continent. Hasegawa accurately terms the briefing as “shocking.” Umezu reported that the Kwantung Army “had shrunk to a mere skeleton, and that the ammunition reserve would be exhausted after the first major encounter” (p. 101). This sounds to me like he is telling the emperor that he could write off Manchuria if the Soviets attacked. Also, I would continue to emphasize the Kwantung Army revised and secret strategic plan (it was not disclosed to units defending the frontiers) called for abandonment of all but a small triangular redoubt in southeastern Manchuria along the Korean border. This would be analogous to a “defense plan” for the United States that provided for withdrawal of all forces to an enclave comprising Florida, Georgia and parts of South Carolina and Alabama. This again appears to me like a “write off” of Manchuria.

Amending the Framework, The New Strategic Bombing Directive and Surrender Compliance of Japan’s Armed Forces

With respect to the overall analytical framework set out in Hasegawa’s Conclusion, pp. 290-98, the featured variables involve the Potsdam Proclamation, the atomic bombs, the Soviet intervention, the Japanese offer of August 10 and U.S. response denominated as the Byrnes Note. The other issue directly addressed is the conclusion in the 1946 Summary Report of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS) that Japan would have surrendered without the atomic bombs or Soviet intervention before November 1, 1945 (actually the Summary Report stated that that Japan would have surrendered by December 31 and probably by November 1 without the atomic bombs or Soviet entry.)

While these variables certainly deserve attention, I believe they are incomplete. Moreover, I believe two omitted variables must figure critically in any analysis of why the war ended and the alternatives to the path history followed.

The November 1 Deadline

Before addressing the omitted variables, one other matter must be addressed. I find the long held belief on all sides of the controversy that Operation Olympic, the planned first phase of the invasion of Japan with a target date of November 1, 1945, loomed as a “deadline” in assessing how the war might have ended should be discarded. The revelations from radio intelligence and the reactions of key policy makers, particularly those of the U.S. Navy, make clear that Olympic was not going to take place as planned and ordered. This was not because it was unnecessary, but because it was unthinkable in the face of the massive build-up of Japanese forces on Kyushu.

Had Japan not surrendered when it did, senior American policy makers would have clashed violently in a great debate over whether to discard any invasion strategy at all of the Home Islands (the navy position) or whether Olympic or some alternative landing should be mounted (the army position). [20] Moreover, I believe that anyone who could conceivably have been president in 1945 would have authorized the use of the atomic bombs in the face of the radio intelligence information about Japan's preparations to meet Operation Olympic.

The Strategic Bombing Survey, Rail Bombing, and the "Domestic Situation"

With respect to the USSBS conclusion, I fully concur with Hasegawa that the work of Barton Bernstein (as well as Robert Newman and others) has demonstrated that the Survey's conclusion was not supported by its own evidence. The USSBS opinion rested on two pillars. One was that the testimony of Japanese officials had endorsed this statement. The scholarship by Bart Bernstein, Robert Newman and others has illustrated that this is just not so. But the other pillar purportedly buttressing the opinion was that it was based on a "detailed investigation of all the facts." That is an extraordinarily broad and diffuse claim. On its face it appears dubious to anyone who gazes beyond the prodigious output of USSBS and gains some grasp of the limited time invested and depth of research by the USSBS.

I agree that the amorphous claim that USSBS looked at "all the facts" is unsustainable. I do not believe that the work the USSBS did on "the facts" would unequivocally support the 1946 opinion. I do think, however, that buried in the mass of USSBS work was evidence not cited in the summary report that there was yet another scenario that might have produced surrender without the atomic bombs or Soviet entry. And I believe there is a reason why, if the author or authors of that opinion had this evidence in mind, they chose not to refer to it explicitly.

The additional evidence submerged within the USSBS reports concerns the new August 11 strategic bombing directive. This reoriented the B-29 campaign away from urban incendiary attacks in favor of a massive attack on Japan's railroad system. This new bombing campaign coupled with Japan's extremely dire food situation does raise a legitimate question as to whether Japan might have surrendered without the atomic bombs or Soviet entry.[21]

The rail bombing would have had an immediate impact on the urban populations in the densely peopled areas in western Honshu from Tokyo to the south and west (which contained 48% of Japan's population in the 1944 census). This would have triggered a massive breakdown in civil order in two waves. The first marked by the almost immediate flight of millions from the cities to the countryside. The second wave would involve nearly half the population of Japan trekking out from western Honshu to escape a massive famine. [22]

This collapse of civil order and the internal threat to the continuation of the imperial system is exactly what I think formed the most terrifying nightmare for Kido and Hirohito. (A breakdown of civil order was explicitly cited in Kido's June proposal as an important reason for action by the emperor and he again raises it in the context of his severe dressing down of Prime Minister Suzuki on August 12, described on page 232. Hirohito would mention this factor at the Imperial

Conferences on August 10 and 14 and in the Imperial Rescripts of August 15 and 17.) Admiral Yonai would comment that the atomic bombs and Soviet intervention were “gifts from the gods” precisely because they permitted Japanese leaders to avoid admitting that their real nightmare was “the domestic situation.” [23]

The rail bombing scenario alone raises a legitimate question as to whether Kido and Hirohito would have attempted to contrive an imperial conference and to render a decision like the emperor did on August 10. I do not think the evidence is absolutely clear as to what the outcome of such a showdown might have been, or as to when necessarily it would have taken place. (A protracted surrender debate in Tokyo might have provided the ultra radicals with more time to halt the march to peace with violence. Without atomic bombs, Ketsu Go may still have appeared viable to the militarists.) Overshadowing all other aspects of this scenario is one other that I believe may explain why it was not expressly cited in the 1946 USSBS opinion. The cumulative effect of the rail bombing in the context of the food shortage would be to kill Japanese, mostly noncombatants, by the millions through starvation. As it was, Japan experienced an extremely severe food deficit in the first years of the occupation with an intact civil order and a functioning rail system to haul foodstuffs from surplus to deficit areas. Since part of the hidden agenda of the USSBS was to burnish the reputation of the air force, its authors were not about to triumph explicitly how it could have defeated Japan by killing millions of civilians.

Even if the rail bombing alone did not produce surrender by itself, it is a factor that must be considered in any counterfactual scenarios on how the war might have ended. So too is the issue of the fear of Hirohito, Kido and other leaders of the “domestic situation.”

Compliance of Japan’s Armed Forces with the Surrender

The other important variable that should figure in any assessment of how the Pacific War ended and what were the alternatives is the issue of the compliance of Japan’s armed forces with the surrender order. Overall, the literature in this country on Japan’s surrender has either ignored this issue, or treated the compliance of Japan’s armed forces with the surrender as a foregone conclusion. It was a very real consideration as demonstrated both by evidence not highlighted and evidence cited in *Racing the Enemy*.

The evidence absent from *Racing the Enemy* demonstrating that the compliance of all the armed forces with the surrender was not automatic is extensive and persuasive. At the imperial conference on the night of August 9-10, War Minister Anami expressly warned that the overseas commanders might not comply with a surrender order. On August 11, the Vice Chief of the General Staff, General Kawabe confided to his diary that another senior officer at Imperial Headquarters commented to him that he did not think the overseas commanders would comply with the surrender order and Kawabe noted he agreed. A dispatch from Foreign Minister Togo to Japan’s diplomats overseas on August 11 cautioned that the government had decided to surrender, but cautioned that the Imperial Army and Navy had not concurred. When word of the surrender decision was radioed to overseas commanders, the senior officers of the China Expeditionary Army and the Southern Army both replied that they would not comply. These

two commands had between a quarter and a third of all Japanese soldiers. I regard the actual coup attempt on the night of August 14-15 as a lesser piece of evidence on this issue. [24]

Racing the Enemy does diligently itemize a series of actions by War Minister Anami demonstrating that he by no means accepted the emperor's decision on August 10 as final and continued to contemplate seriously reversing it by argument or force. On page 217, for example, Hasegawa notes all the unofficial meeting of junior officers after they receive the shocking news of the emperor's decision and the episode of Major Inaba's public statement for Anami that sounded as though the army would ignore the emperor's decision and press on with the war. Hasegawa points out that Anami refused to halt the publication because he said this represented his attitude which showed:

"...that Japan's surrender was still precarious. One false move could tip the balance, reverse the decision, and send Japan down the costly path of continuing the war. Anami's position was crucial in the balance, and he had not decided which side to take."

Racing the Enemy points out that the Soviets had an excuse for their adventures on Sakhalin and the Kurils through August and into September because: "For inexplicable reasons, the cease fire order was not issued to the armed forces until August 17" (p. 252). I do not find the "delay" in issuing this order "inexplicable." It is in fact entirely consistent with the underlying problem that the compliance of the armed forces with the emperor's order was not simply a foregone conclusion. The "delay" in issuing this cease fire order is in my view one of the clearest pieces of evidence on this point.

Hasegawa provides further important evidence on this point in the context of the ill-considered Soviet attempt to land on Shimushu, the obvious target for an initial Soviet penetration of the Kurils. The Imperial Army's 91st Division not only checked the attack, but was poised to crush it. At that point, as *Racing the Enemy* explains, the Fifth Area Army Headquarters in charge of the Kurils "panicked." As Hasegawa observes, "At a time when the Imperial General Headquarters was trying to secure the smooth surrender of all Japanese forces, a victory of the 91st Division against the Soviet forces would derail the entire process. Thus, around noon on August 18, the Fifth Area Army ordered Tsutsumi [commander of the 91st Division in the Kurils] to stop fighting except in self-defense." (p. 262) Then on August 19, Imperial Headquarters "alarmed at the prospect of continue resistance from the Japanese forces, admonished the Fifth Area Army to stop any military action, even in self-defense, 'on order of the emperor'" (p. 262). But 5th Area Army did not order forces on Sakhalin to surrender until August 26. (p. 258)

The reaction of Imperial General Headquarters as late as August 18 and 19 to the prospect of a "victory" by the 91st Division on Shimushu is further important evidence of how senior Japanese officers viewed the fragile status of the surrender of Imperial forces. If they thought this relatively small scale action could unravel general compliance with the surrender, then they clearly were extremely concerned that even a relatively modest blow could collapse the whole process. Further, the fact that this would involve a "defeat" of Soviet forces is evidence that the

Imperial Army was not totally intimidated by Soviet entry. Moreover, here yet again, we find evidence that even declaring a directive an “order of the emperor” is not enough to secure automatic compliance from a command as high as an area army.

Racing the Enemy wisely acknowledges this issue in the text, but does not return to it in the analysis. I believe it must be considered.

ASSESSMENT

At the center of this debate over the effects of the atomic bombs, Soviet intervention and other factors is a close examination of the really critical period between August 6 and 14, 1945. Hasegawa argues that chronology is the key guide to what factors induced Japan’s surrender. I agree that chronology is certainly a key analytical tool, but I do not agree that it supports all the conclusions propounded in *Racing the Enemy*. I do find, however, that *Racing the Enemy* prompted revision of my own views.

The departure point for analyzing the workings of Japanese decision making is that at the time the first atomic bomb fell on Hiroshima, the government of Japan still had not agreed on what terms it was seeking to end the war. Drafts of negotiating guidelines had been prepared for Prince Konoe who was to head the mission to Moscow seeking Soviet mediation, but the government had not endorsed them.

Hiroshima was a tremendous shock. Indeed, incredulity marked the response of many Japanese officials. Even those who knew about the possibility of atomic weapons were not all instantly inclined to believe the U.S. possessed even one. Moreover, as Hasegawa concludes: “There is no question that the Hiroshima bomb had a great impact on the emperor, convincing him of the urgency with which Japan had to terminate the war.” He adds that likewise the determination of Kido and Togo to terminate the war as quickly as possible was likewise strengthened by the Hiroshima bomb. “Nonetheless, it did not lead to their decision to accept the Potsdam terms. If anything, the atomic bomb on Hiroshima further contributed to their desperate effort to terminate the war through Moscow’s mediation.” (pp. 185-86) I agree with this picture of how the Hiroshima bomb affected the core “peace party.” Hasegawa presents no evidence that Kido and Hirohito shared this same view.

But how did Hiroshima affect the “war party”? Hasegawa quotes Admiral Toyoda’s postwar testimony as “the situation had not progressed to the point where one atomic bomb would force us to discuss the possibility of terminating the war.” There was more to the stance of the war party than this that *Racing the Enemy* does not fully engage. Their first response was that an investigation must be conducted before the American claim that it had an atomic weapon would be accepted. But the second line of defense erected by the “war party” was that even if it was an atomic bomb, the U.S. could not have that many of them, they would not be that powerful, or world opinion would deter the U.S. from using more of them.

When *Racing the Enemy* turns to Soviet entry, Hasegawa finds that “[t]he evidence is compelling that Soviet entry into the war had a strong impact on the peace party. Indeed, the Soviet attack,

not the Hiroshima bomb, convinced political leaders to end the war by accepting the Potsdam Proclamation.” (pp. 198-99) For the “peace party” Soviet entry extinguished their plans for Japan to mediate her way out of the war. In this sense, Soviet entry carried more weight than the atomic bombs for this faction.

He then confronts the question of what Soviet entry meant for the military (the “war party”). His assessment is that the military’s Ketsu Go plan was anchored in the premise of Soviet neutrality. A staff study as late as August 8 urged that Soviet intervention should be met by acquiescing in any Soviet ultimatum, or keeping the Soviets neutral, if not joining the war on Japan’s side (!).

The fundamental problem with attempting to elevate Soviet intervention to primacy in the dictating the actions of “war party” is that their policy decisions, as acknowledged in *Racing the Enemy*, as well as the behavior of the powerful figure of the War Minister, simply can not be hammered into conformity with this view. The Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Kawabe Torashiro, had been one of the most if not the most vocal exponent of the necessity for keeping the Soviets neutral. He was unquestionably shocked at news of their entry into the war. Hasegawa finds that Kawabe’s diary entry reaction to Soviet entry demonstrates more shock than news of the atomic bomb. Even assuming Kawabe sustained a greater jolt from Soviet entry than Hiroshima, the differential in his emotional reaction to these two events did not lead him to argue that the only solution for Japan was to accept the Potsdam terms. On the contrary, Kawabe’s policy prescription was just the opposite: continue the war, declare martial law and, if necessary, terminate the last vestige of any government and run the government from Imperial General Headquarters. War Minister Anami found this plan congenial. Perhaps the most level headed of the three key army figures at Imperial General Headquarters, General Umezu Yoshijiro, the Chief of the General Staff, told the emperor to his face at the Imperial Conference on August 10 that Soviet entry was unfavorable, but it did not negate Ketsu Go. Umezu’s telling comments to the emperor are absent from *Racing the Enemy*. [25]

At this point a digression is in order to comprehend why the reaction of these key Japanese officers was rational. Decades of images of mighty Soviet forces have made it easy for many to assume that the mere prospect of Soviet intervention would intimidate Japan’s military masters into submission. But the facts are different. The Soviets massed about 1.6 million men and over 5,000 combat aircraft and over 5,000 armored vehicles in the Far East for their onslaught against Japan. They readily crushed the Kwantung Army which by this time was numerically strong, but composed of woefully untrained and underequipped units that Japanese staff officers estimated possess the combat power of only six and two-thirds divisions. [26]

The Achilles heel of Soviet capabilities, however, was sea lift. Like the German Army facing Great Britain in 1940, once the Soviets reached the ocean shores, all this mass of men, planes and armored vehicles could not avail them unless they could be transported over the water to the places the Soviets needed to go. Soviet sea lift permitted only extraordinarily modest excursions by regiments or small divisions of light infantry with a few man portable weapons (supported by the larger caliber weapons on the Soviet warships). There was no capability of landing on a beach armored vehicles or artillery in numbers. Soviet aircraft were optimized for immediate battlefield missions, not long range escort or strike as required to support an invasion of Japan. [27] As *Racing the Enemy* describes, what passed for a major Soviet landing in the Kurils came

within an ace of being crushed by the modest Japanese garrison on Shimushu. (*Racing the Enemy*, pp. 261-62.) In light of these realities, there was nothing absurd about the reaction of the key leaders of the Imperial Army that Soviet intervention did not negate their “last hope,” Ketsu Go.

Nor was Soviet intervention unexpected. The Imperial Army anticipated that the Soviets would join the war. Despite clear intelligence that the Soviets were conducting a huge build-up of forces in the Far East, senior officers convinced themselves that the Soviets would not intervene until 1946, after Ketsu Go. This was an obvious case of believing that what you wished would be so. [28]

When the news of the Soviet attack arrived, it did clearly prompt the emperor to order the government to confront the situation and seriously address settling the war. This is an important step in the right direction, because the government of Japan amazingly still had no clear concept of what would be acceptable terms to end the war. But belatedly confronting the issue of terms is not surrender itself.

When forced to settle at long last on terms to end the war, the best the Japanese leadership in the inner cabinet, the Big Six, could do was to adopt the set of terms most favorable to Japan that had been devised for the Kono mission prior to the use of atomic bombs or Soviet intervention. That folio of terms included not simply a guarantee of the imperial institution, but also three others: Japanese self-disarmament, Japanese trial of alleged “war criminals,” and above all no occupation. As Hasegawa concedes, this was not a set of terms that could or should have been acceptable to the U.S.

The News of Nagasaki

The news of Nagasaki arrived before the Big Six at 11:30 PM and Hasegawa finds that it had “little impact on the substance of the discussion.” He points out the official Japanese war history says there was no evidence it had serious effect and Togo and Toyoda later did not mention it. (p. 204)

I agree, of course, that Hasegawa correctly cites what the official history says and that Togo and Toyoda did not mention it later. Asada Sadao points out, however, that in Toyoda’s post war statement, he maintained that the attitude of the Big Six initially was “bullish” on continuing the war. This is with knowledge of Soviet intervention and the Hiroshima bomb. It’s only later that the Big Six agree for the first time on a set of terms. If chronology is our guide, then it points to the significance of the Nagasaki bomb. [29]

Further evidence that Nagasaki was not without effect appears within hours. At the afternoon cabinet meeting, Anami states that the U.S. might have more than a hundred bombs and the next target would be Tokyo. (p. 208). This was contrary to what he said just that morning in the Big Six meeting that “they could not base further action on the assumption that Japan would be attacked by additional bombs.” Does it really appear valid to argue that Nagasaki was unconnected to Anami’s stance later that the U.S. had a huge supply of bombs? If Anami is

telling other policy makers that this is the case, he was undercutting his main argument about carrying on the war, not to mention what the emperor would have thought when he learned that the army is crediting the U.S. with a huge supply of atomic bombs. Looked at this way, the evidence has been there in plain sight but not identified that Nagasaki did indeed have an important role.

When I wrote *Downfall*, I saw the Nagasaki bomb as being an indirect factor in that it simultaneously undermined the argument that the U.S. did not have a supply of atomic weapons and thus undermining the arguments of some in the die hard camp. But if Anami himself makes such a flip flop on the U.S. supply of bombs after news of Nagasaki arrives, then I think its effect was not so indirect.

Suzuki Meets Kido at 1330, August 9

As *Racing the Enemy* reports, Suzuki reported to Kido at 1330, and said the Big Six had decided to accept the Potsdam terms with four additional terms. Kido “at first approved acceptance” of this proposal that satisfied the dictates of the “war party.” So if chronology is the key, the fact is that by the early afternoon of August 9, neither the atomic bombs nor Soviet intervention has brought the government of Japan or the emperor to terms that would end the war. What is further illuminated here is that even as late as this point, the emperor and Kido clearly were not encamped with the “peace party.”

Hasegawa explains that when Konoe learned of Kido’s stance, he was “aghast.” Konoe recruited Prince Takamatsu to call Kido. Kido “told the prince with obvious annoyance, that they had little choice but to accept the four conditions.” Then at 1500, as Kido talked with Hirohito, Konoe enlisted Shigemitsu who went to the imperial palace and met Kido at 1600. Shigemitsu insisted: “In order to break through the impregnable wall of the army, they had no alternative but to rely on the emperor’s intervention.” Shigemitsu’s “desperate plea” finally convinced Kido and at 1635 Kido had a long audience with the emperor. At 1720 Kido reported back to Shigemitsu that the emperor now supported the single condition. (p. 206)

I concur with Hasegawa on the key importance of the meeting of Kido and Hirohito between 1635 and 1720 August 9 (or maybe I should say he concurs with me since he generously acknowledges this was a point made in *Downfall*). As Hasegawa affirms, it “was perhaps one of the most crucial events that moved Japan decisively in the direction of surrender. We still do not know what they discussed or what changed their minds.” Hasegawa speculates that Hirohito initially resisted relinquishing the three additional conditions, and finds it even more likely that he was reluctant directly to involve himself in the decision to terminate the war. What is clear is that they were convinced that the Konoe-Togo path was the only way to preserve the kokutai and preservation of the imperial house was “foremost in their minds.” (pp. 206-07) I respectfully disagree in part with this assessment. I submit that the available record can also be read for the proposition that Hirohito had not abandoned his plans not only to remain on the throne, but to assure he retained the powers to secure that objective.

Racing the Enemy then adds that they may have changed the definition of the kokutai from simply preservation of the imperial house to “the preservation of the emperor’s status within the national laws.” This later definition is what would emerge from the imperial conference that night. “The question is who changed this definition and where the change took place,” Hasegawa points out. “Although there is no direct evidence, a process of elimination points to the crucial Kido-Hirohito meeting in late afternoon. Perhaps this was a concession Kido had to make to obtain the emperor’s approval for the one-condition acceptance of the Potsdam terms.” (p. 207)

Based on the current record, we are all reduced to speculation about exactly what Hirohito was contemplating during these hours in the afternoon of August 9. It seems to me that one reasonable way to interpret the behavior of Kido when he first gets the news from Suzuki about the “four conditions” offer is that this was presented as something Anami and the other militarists were prepared to accept. If, as I believe, one of the factors to which Kido and Hirohito were keenly attuned was the compliance of the armed forces with surrender, Kido and Hirohito may well have found the “four conditions” offer acceptable precisely because it seemed to come with a guarantee of likely compliance by the armed forces. Hasegawa may be correct that somehow Kido and Hirohito may have thought they could distance themselves from the surrender decision, but such thinking seems to me to border on the delusional.

The Imperial Conference, August 9-10

I found Hasegawa’s discussion of the veiled meaning of the language in the printed “one-condition offer” at the Imperial Conference and Hiranuma’s amendment masterful and extremely important.

At the beginning of the Imperial Conference that opened at 2350, Sakomizu read the Potsdam Proclamation and then Suzuki presented the rival “one condition” and “four conditions” responses. The “one condition” offer had been printed and a copy placed on each desk. It included the language that Japan would “accept the Potsdam Proclamation on the understanding that it did not include any demand for a change in the status of the emperor under the national laws.” Hasegawa emphasizes that this was a change from the (minimalist) position of Togo earlier in the day that the exception was just to the preservation of the imperial house. He goes on to explain:

“[t]his much broader definition of the emperor’s status came close to the position advocated by Tatsukichi Minobe in his theory of the emperor as an organ of national laws. The writer of this proposal, however, was most likely referring to the Meiji constitution when he spoke of ‘national laws.’ Given that the Meiji constitution stipulated that the emperor had exclusive authority over the military command, the very cause of Japan’s unbridled militarism, one can argue that his condition was contrary to the Americans’ fundamental objective of eradicating sources of militarism. Nevertheless, this condition contained a narrow strip of common ground, though tenuous, with Stimson’s notion of a ‘constitutional monarchy.’” (p. 211)

My view is that this amended language signifies Hirohito's aim to retain the throne and to assure he has the power to do so by his own authority. He clearly was distancing himself from Togo's narrow vision that was probably compatible with Stimson's ideas.

During this meeting, Baron Hiranuma Kiichiro proposed an important amendment to the "one condition" offer. He argued that the imperial prerogatives of the emperor originated not from any laws, but from the national essence. Hence, the condition should be changed to read "on the understanding that the Allied proclamation would not comprise and demand which would prejudice the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler." (pp. 211-12)

As Hasegawa points out, Togo's original proposal had been watered down, most likely at the Kido-Hirohito meeting. But now Hiranuma proposed an affirmation "of the emperor's theocratic power, unencumbered by any law, based on Shinto gods in antiquity, and totally incompatible with a constitutional monarch." Hasegawa believes that the original printed draft might have had a narrow and tenuous common ground with Stimson's proposal, but "Hiranuma's amendment removed any possibility that the United States would accept this condition." (p. 212)

Hasegawa further explains that Hiranuma's understanding of the kokutai had been the prevailing orthodoxy since Minobe's emperor organ theory was denounced in 1935. No one dared to challenge it, and says Hasegawa "perhaps Suzuki and Yonai even agreed with this interpretation." He believes that it was hard enough for Togo to fight for the one condition, and he did not see any point in arguing against Hiranuma's amendment. (p. 212)

Hirohito and the Hiranuma Amendment

Hasegawa and Bix are divided about how Hirohito regarded the Hiranuma amendment. Bix believes the other participants at the imperial conference, including Hirohito, shared Hiranuma's right wing Shinto notion of the kokutai. But in the post-war statement, Hasegawa points out that Hirohito identified the kokutai with highly personalized matters of the imperial house, like the imperial regalia. Rather than clinging to absolute theocratic power, he was preoccupied with the household, which might be swept away unless he ended the war. I believe Hasegawa is shrewd to connect this passage to what Kido and Hirohito discussed between 1635 and 1710 on August 9. "They were determined to save the institution of the emperor. But the price Kido had to pay for Hirohito's acceptance of the one-condition proposal was the dilution of the definition of the kokutai from the narrow preservation of the imperial house to the preservation of the emperor's status with the national laws, Hirohito and Kido knew that to save the institution of the emperor, they had to cut off the military as the sacrificial lamb." (pp. 213-14)

Hasegawa then goes on to make what I regard as a key point: "It is difficult to speculate how Hirohito and Kido reacted to Hiranuma's amendment. One possibility, as Bix argues, is that they may have welcomed it. But it is also possible to argue that Hirohito was annoyed by Hiranuma's amendment, thought he was not averse, at least at this point, to present this maximum demand to the allies to see how they would react. What is clear is that Hirohito and Kido did not raise any objections to Hiranuma's amendment." (p. 214)

My view on this matter is that while it is possible to read the record for the proposition that Hirohito was driven by an overall controlling Shinto theocratic theory, his actions are also consistent with a pragmatic concern about preserving the imperial house and particularly his seat on the throne. His later actions suggest to me that Hasegawa is probably correct that he regarded the amendment as a potential maximum demand to see how the allies would react. I suspect he did not comprehend how this stance might be potentially disastrous for Japan and himself.

Collapse of the “War Party” Opposition to Surrender

This now brings us to the emperor’s “sacred decision”—and yet another mystery. The sources we have quote Hirohito as supposedly beginning his “decision” by endorsing Togo’s “one condition” offer. Hasegawa points out that Hirohito did not object to the amendment, but this still leaves the question of through what mechanism was Hiranuma’s amendment adopted as part of Togo’s proposal and made Japan’s official position? We are left to wonder whether the emperor actually expressed his support for the Hiranuma amendment then or before it was dispatched.

If that mystery is unresolved, another matter is not mysterious to me. When does opposition to ending the war on terms acceptable to the U.S. collapse or at least begin to collapse among the key “war party” leaders? The answer based on chronology is after the emperor announces he thinks Japan must terminate the war at the Imperial Conference in the early hours of August 10. It is when Umezu brings this news that Kawabe’s diary reflects his resignation to surrender, not before. The diary entry reads like a splash of cold water hit Kawabe and as Hasegawa acknowledges the emperor’s loss of confidence in the army is a great shock to Kawabe (p. 214). The Japanese war history volume declares that news of the emperor’s “decision” likewise came as a great shock to officers at Imperial General Headquarters. [30] Chronologically, the collapse of will of the “war party” to settle for an end to the war that will not involve a continuation of the old order in which they dominate follows the emperor’s announcement.

In emphasizing this point, I respectfully disagree with the view advocated by Dr. Bix that Hirohito was always in control as sort of generalissimo. When Hirohito speaks in the early hours of August 10, it is not as if he simply issued an “order” in the ordinary sense of that word. Even after his opinion is known, plenty of Imperial Army officers— notably including the War Minister--continue to act as though whether Japan will surrender remains an open question. Hirohito’s words pack a powerful wallop not because they are an “order” but because they have a shattering morale effect when Japan’s supreme symbolic figure announces that he no longer thinks Japan can go on with the war.

Racing the Enemy describes Hirohito’s comments in the Imperial conference and concludes that “the game plan for Hirohito and the peace party was clear: they wanted to save the emperor and the imperial house by putting the blame on the military.” (p. 213)

I do not disagree in the least with this conclusion that Hirohito and the “peace party” aimed to shift the blame to the military. But I believe there were further important purposes in Hirohito’s remarks. He well knew that the whole rationale advanced by Anami and the “war party” for

continuing the war was their confidence in Ketsu Go. This is what sustained their morale through all the tribulations of 1945 and now even Soviet entry. I think Hirohito and Kido remained very much concerned about the compliance of the armed forces with any surrender “order.” This was not simply the high command in Tokyo, but also the field forces— as Anami had warned in this very meeting.

I believe the emperor dwelled at some length upon why he no longer had confidence in Ketsu Go precisely because he knew that it was necessary to not only issue an “order,” but also to strike directly at the underlying rationale of the militarists for continuing the war. By striking directly at their rationale, he was trying to destroy their morale and thus greatly increase the likelihood of compliance with his decision. I see the evidence Hasegawa notes of Kawabe’s reaction and what Hasegawa sees as his resignation, as more powerfully influenced by the shock of learning the emperor had turned against them and the reasons he offered than Soviet entry or atomic bombs.

Hirohito’s remarks may also have been connected to Umezu’s opinion that Soviet entry made no difference as to Ketsu Go. It is very telling that Hirohito chose not to challenge that argument, but to strike directly at Ketsu Go itself. One other extremely significant point is that there is no recorded evidence that Hirohito made any reference to Soviet intervention. Moreover, by emphasizing the weakness of defenses in front of Tokyo, he clearly was indicating his doubts stemmed from a lack of capability to resist American actions, as a Soviet landing before Tokyo was impossible.

Hasegawa sets down further evidence about the perilous situation even after the emperor’s “sacred decision.” Postwar, Admiral Takagi would report that there remained strong currents with the army and navy to continue the war. He charged that Suzuki showed no leadership and kept going back to the emperor. Many stood on the sidelines to see how it would come out and only Togo and Yonai “risked their lives to achieve peace” (p. 215).

This brings us to the next piece of evidence I would highlight. As *Racing the Enemy* portrays him, Anami is a “loose cannon.” I believe Hasegawa pictures him as verging even closer to defying the emperor and supporting the coup than anyone else ever has. But what finally brings Anami around? He mentions neither the atomic bombs nor Soviet entry. He says that his decision was based on just the emperor’s personal plea.

Thus, Hirohito took the first indispensable step on the path to Japan’s surrender: he became the legitimate authority to make the political decision that the war must end. *Racing the Enemy* convinces me that Hirohito’s sacred decision, not the atomic bombs or Soviet intervention, was the single most shattering blow to the leaders of the “war party.” One popular Japanese historian, Hando Kazutoshi, maintains that Soviet entry killed any hopes of the politicians for a negotiated end to the war while the atomic bombs finished the military’s vision of a fight to the finish. [31] I believe Hasegawa concurs with the first part of this formulation. In *Downfall*, I concurred with the second part of Hando’s formulation insofar as the senior officers in Tokyo were concerned. I believed those senior officers recognized that with atomic bombs, the U.S. would not need to attempt to invade and if there was no invasion, they really had no strategy other than national suicide. [32] *Racing the Enemy*, however, convinces me that the emperor’s

intervention takes primacy even above the atomic bombs in collapsing the will of the militarists in Tokyo.

Hirohito's Motives

What then finally motivated Hirohito? The short and most candid answer is that the record so far contains no definitive answer. *Racing the Enemy* illustrates that there were further dimensions to his decision making that add yet more complexity to this puzzle.

In my view the most probative evidence about Hirohito's thinking, as with any historical figure, consists of his contemporaneous recorded statements. Here is where Hasegawa and I disagree and I believe he misinterpreted my analysis. In *Downfall*, I examined Hirohito's statements. The first point I would highlight is that his statements do not neatly break down into those that emphasize the atomic bombs and those that emphasize Soviet entry. One constant thread that runs through this period is repeated references to "the situation at home" or "the domestic situation." This appears at the Imperial Conference on August 9-10, the Imperial Conference on August 14 and in both the Imperial Rescripts of August 15 and 17. This was his deepest nightmare that the imperial institution and his place on the throne would be destroyed by an internal revolt. It was the effects of the American campaign of blockade and bombardment (of which the atomic bombs were a part) that sparked this fear. Indeed, one reason the atomic bombs may have prompted Hirohito's alarm was precisely because they threatened to bring the simmering civil unrest to a boil faster than the rest of the campaign of blockade and bombardment. As Kido would lecture Suzuki on August 13, if Japan rejected the Byrnes Note; "tens of millions of innocent people would suffer as a result of air raids and starvation. More important, there might be unrest" (p.232). (I think the actual level of civil unrest to this point in Japan was minimal and that the fears of Hirohito and others were greatly exaggerated. But the U.S. was poised to deliver hammer blows that would have made the nightmares come true very quickly.)

The second and third reasons he identified were military: his loss of confidence in Ketsu Go and the vast destructiveness of atomic and conventional attacks. He referred to both the Soviet entry and the enemy's "scientific power" (the fast rising euphemism among Japanese leaders for the atomic bombs) when he conferred with the most senior officers of the armed services on August 14. In the Imperial Rescript on August 15 announcing that Japan will surrender, he expressly makes reference to what could only be the atomic bombs, but makes no mention of Soviet intervention. On August 17, an Imperial Rescript is issued to the Soldiers and Sailors. As Hasegawa reveals, this was actually drafted at the same time as the August 15 Rescript but not issued until later. This later Rescript mentions Soviet intervention but not the atomic bombs. But what is lacking in the accounts emphasizing the August 17 Rescript as the "real reason" for Hirohito's decision is that it was issued in the context of the refusal of overseas commanders to comply with the surrender order.[33] This is exactly as Anami predicted at the August 9-10 Imperial conference and Kawabe (and Togo) anticipated. No wonder the emperor offered to issue a separate Rescript to his soldiers and sailors to deal precisely with this challenge and that such a Rescript was drafted in anticipation that it would be needed. Soviet intervention, not atomic bombs, was a vastly more persuasive argument to present to commanders on the Asian

continent for compliance. As I noted earlier, I do believe Soviet intervention was important in exactly this arena: securing compliance of the overseas armed forces with the surrender.

What Hasegawa omits from the enumeration is one other piece of evidence. Shortly after the formal surrender, Hirohito wrote a letter to the Crown Prince. As John Dower describes it, “this most private of communications at this extraordinary moment,” reflects Hirohito ascribing Japan’s loss of the war to the fact that her armed forces underestimated the British and Americans and exulted spirit over “science.” He made no reference to the Soviets. [34] Unless you believe this letter was manufactured to give a false impression and then hidden for decades, it is very telling.

On the basis of this evidence, I concluded that the atomic bombs were more significant than Soviet entry in Hirohito’s decision. I further pointed out that because I believe Japan’s surrender was in two steps, Soviet intervention was critical with regard to securing the surrender of the overseas commanders who initially balked. But since the surrender process did not reach this question until after the initial political decision was made, I found that primacy had to be accorded to the atomic bombs as the motivator of the emperor.

In challenging this line of argument, Hasegawa takes two tacks. The first is that he disputes my enumeration of Hirohito’s references to the atomic bombs. He argues that Hirohito made no reference to the atomic bombs at the imperial conference on August 10. Hasegawa points out that the only source for attributing a reference to the atomic bomb at this session is the Lt. Col. Takeshita Masahiko diary. This he finds is obviously hearsay since Takeshita was not present. But Takeshita was Anami’s brother-in-law and in constant contact through these days. Takeshita’s diary records many other events of this period that are accepted as correct. The Japanese official military history which is sober and careful accepted the Takeshita diary entry as valid.

The second tack in my view stems from perhaps a misreading of my argument. I was not examining Hirohito’s contemporary statements for an assessment of why other actors made the decision they did. My argument was that the best evidence of Hirohito’s decisions was his own contemporary statements. Hasegawa totals up the statements of Hirohito and a host of other parties on how they perceived the relative importance of the atomic bombs and Soviet entry. (Interestingly, he comes up with a total of twelve opinions: two giving primacy to the atomic bombs, three to Soviet intervention as the dominant factor and seven instances where contemporaries cited both factors.) This is comparing apples and oranges: what others said overall does not carry high probative weight about Hirohito’s thinking as does his own statements. Moreover, I would respectfully add that if Hasegawa’s math undermines my argument for the primacy of the atomic bombs, it does the same for according primacy to Soviet intervention!

The Role of Grew, Dooman and Ballentine in the American Response to Japan’s Note of August 10

The arrival of the Japanese note of August 10 in Washington prompted an episode that Hasegawa illuminates for the first time. I found his whole discussion of the role of the three “Old Japan Hands,” Byrnes and the others one of the high points of the book. It is new and connects up with some other evidence I find pertinent.

I certainly concur that there is great irony in the fact that the supposed “appeasers” within the State Department are the very men who recognize and halt the attempt to get the U.S. to agree to a condition that would negate the overall American war aim.

I also find it odd that the recorded evidence about what transpired at the policy meeting with Truman does not reflect that Byrnes set out clearly what was at stake if the U.S. bowed to the Japanese proposal. I would speculate that perhaps the explanation is that the other parties who made diary entries like Forrestal and Stimson either did not grasp the full significance of what Byrnes may have argued on this point or perhaps because they opposed him they failed to faithfully record his whole argument.

When Hasegawa presented this story, it made me think back to earlier notes in the Stimson diary in July and August where he recorded the expectation voiced by Byrnes that Byrnes and Truman believed the war would end with an armistice followed by negotiations. During the negotiations, Byrnes and Truman anticipated providing a guarantee about the imperial institution. [35] This contemporary evidence indicates that Truman and Byrnes believed no serious peace exchange could take place until Japan’s militarists clearly believed the end had come. Seen in this light, Byrnes’ initial disposition to accept the Japanese offer is consistent with this entry in the Stimson diary. When he believed the Japanese were actually serious about ending the war, then he was prepared to make the concession about the imperial institution.

Noncombatant Deaths

With respect to the Soviets, *Racing the Enemy* has left everyone else in the dust in coverage. Hasegawa’s argument that Soviet intervention was more significant than the atomic bombs in securing Japan’s surrender is important, but I find it contains one very significant omission that has to be considered in judging whether it was “better.” That is the issue of the numbers of Japanese dying in Soviet captivity. Hasegawa does address the fate of prisoners-of-war, however, he does not address the fate of Japanese noncombatants. John Dower and Takemae Eiji give a ranges of between 300,000 to half million total deaths of Japanese nationals in Soviet captivity. Dower cites a report that 179,000 Japanese civilians and 66,000 military personnel died just in the first winter after the war in Soviet hands in Manchuria. [36] Since there is an excellent chance that the Soviets might have seized half or all of Hokkaido, the implications for Japanese civilians of falling into Soviet hands loom large with regard to that possibility also. I believe this issue is significant because any argument that waiting to see if Soviet intervention alone would end the war should forthrightly confront the costs of Soviet occupation.

Coupled to the issue of Japanese noncombatants dying in Soviet hands is the larger issue of noncombatant deaths in general. It is the death of noncombatants that forms the core of the moral issue surrounding the atomic bombs. But I believe that if noncombatant deaths are

properly an issue, and they are, then as historians we must deal with all the noncombatant deaths. This includes not only those dying in Soviet hands, but also the toll of noncombatant Asians dying each day in Japanese hands and the prospective toll of noncombatants who would have perished in alternative ends to the war like invasion or the strategy of blockade and bombardment. One example of this is that the Japanese had seized about twenty to twenty-five percent of the Korean rice crop and were preparing to ship it to Japan to stave off the food crisis in the Homeland. It is very likely that had the war gone on, most of this rice would have ended up on the bottom of sea rather than in Korea or Japan. The implications for the Korean people in this scenario are dire. [37]

THE ALTERNATIVES

Modifying the Potsdam Proclamation

This brings us to an assessment of the various alternative methods of ending the Pacific War. I concur with Hasegawa that adding a guarantee to preserve the imperial institution to the Potsdam Proclamation would not have secured Japan's surrender prior to Hiroshima—just as the “Magic” Diplomatic Summary of July 22 foretold. He raises what is certainly a realistic possibility that this might have somewhat advanced the path to peace, notably that after Hiroshima it might have strengthened the negotiating power of the “peace party.” I believe there was an at least equal prospect that such a promise would have fortified not just the government but also the emperor to believe that if they held out they could procure concessions that would preserve the old order. Thus, there is a very real danger it perversely might have impeded surrender.

Surrender Without Either Atomic Bombs or Soviet Intervention

A combination of the cumulative effects of the blockade and the new August 11 strategic bombing directive on top of Japan's dire food shortage would have produced a massive upheaval. The urbanized and densely populated area of southern and western Honshu would spew out millions of civilians seeking food and the government would face a crisis of civil disorder in the face of famine. The upheaval would have started in Japan's major cities on Honshu within about two weeks after the rail bombing began, however, its potential effects would have been recognized by senior Japanese leaders almost immediately. Moreover, it would have been impossible to conceal from the U.S. as intercepted messages and perhaps even public broadcasts would have indicated the crisis. Fearful that the unraveling “domestic situation” would topple the throne, I believe Hirohito would have attempted to intervene to end the war regardless of whether atomic bombs or Soviet intervention occurred. Abandonment of Ketsu Go by the emperor and the collapse of civilian morale would have undermined the will of the leaders of the armed forces in Tokyo to continue. The surrender of the government probably would have occurred between the end of August and the end of October. Overseas commanders, however, would not have obeyed promptly and hostilities in those regions would have dragged on for weeks or possibly months. They would only end after Soviet intervention.

There are very significant ramifications of a delayed and possibly piecemeal surrender. This scenario would result in the deaths of all or some significant fraction of the ten million Japanese

on the edge of starvation when the war ended. The Soviets would have overrun all the areas they actually seized, plus probably all of Korea. The entire Korean population would have then experienced decades of rule by the Kim Il Sung dynasty. This presumably avoids the Korea War, but the cost to the Korea people would have been fearful. In a more protracted surrender scenario, the Soviets likely would also have seized half or all of Hokkaido. Given the Soviet record with Japanese noncombatants elsewhere, the death toll of Japanese noncombatants would have increased by hundreds of thousands. Stalin would have demanded and probably received an occupation zone in Japan. Total noncombatant deaths from this scenario would have vastly exceeded those who actually died in 1945.

Although not probable, there also exists the possibility that a more protracted surrender process would permit radical die-hards to mount a more effective last ditch effort to thwart peace. Additional time may have allowed enhanced opportunity to subvert more officers and more important officers to a coup attempt. Recalcitrant officers may have been assassinated. If overseas commanders weighed in against surrender, the impetus of the die-hards may have increased. This scenario lurks as a great unknown when we contemplate the path history did not take, but the portrait of War Minister Anami in *Racing the Enemy* suggests it cannot be entirely dismissed.

The Atomic Bombs

Two atomic bombs, coupled to the blockade, the new targeting directive and the dire food situation would have prompted surrender by the end of August or very early September. The emperor would have intervened as in the prior scenario. The atomic bombs would have eased the process compared to their absence because they would signal that the U.S. would not need to invade Japan, thus invalidating the Ketsu Go strategy. Absent the prospect of inflicting huge casualties in an invasion, the senior military leaders in Tokyo had no strategy to offer save national suicide. Thus, their concurrence with the emperor's decision would have been expedited.

This scenario also probably has the same additional effects described in the first scenario. Once again, surrender of overseas commanders would have been later and probably only after Soviet intervention. And once again, there would have been a much higher death toll among noncombatants. The prospects for the ultra die-hards would diminish, but not wholly disappear.

Soviet Intervention Without the Atomic Bombs

Absent the atomic bombs, Soviet intervention would have been delayed by ten days to two weeks. During this interval, the new strategic bombing directive would have commenced to produce the massive upheaval. Soviet intervention at that point would have helped Hirohito to secure compliance of all the armed forces with the surrender. Because Soviet intervention would have been later than the atomic bombs, the most likely result would be that the surrender would be similarly delayed to a date between the first part of September and the first part of October. On the other hand, the overseas commands would have complied with the surrender more

promptly than they would have under either the scenario without atomic bombs and Soviet entry or just with Soviet entry.

This scenario would also result in the same collateral effects described in the first scenario. Once again, deaths from this scenario would have been substantially greater than those that occurred in 1945. The prospects for the ultra die-hards would diminish, but not wholly disappear.

Summary

Racing the Enemy is vitally important because it will move the debate over the end of the Pacific War to a much sounder footing as to the realities of 1945. It provides a quantum leap in our understanding of many political elements of ending the Pacific War, particularly in Japan and the Soviet Union. This work, however, distorts the whole picture by minimizing the military elements in both coverage and analysis, although it does properly acknowledge the issue of compliance of Japan's armed forces with the surrender decision. The most provocative argument that President Truman and Secretary of State Byrnes deliberately dropped a guarantee of the imperial institution from the Potsdam Proclamation to assure Japan's rejection and thereby justify the use of atomic weapons does not rise above a weak inference. It further ignores powerful evidence to the contrary.

Notes:

[1] Robert J.C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1954).

[2] Herbert P. Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000).

[3] *Racing the Enemy*, 4.

[4] Bix points out that after the Japanese lost Saipan in the Marianas, Hirohito flatly ordered that the island be retaken. Bix characterizes this as an example of "paramount importance in assessing the role [Hirohito] played in the war." After feverish work at Imperial Headquarters to prepare a plan for such an expedition, Prime Minister Tojo and a senior naval officer told Hirohito the plan "must be cancelled." One can scarcely imagine that a direct "Fuhrer Order" in Germany on such a major issue would ever have been so handled. In my view what is significant about this episode is not the fact that Hirohito issued such an "order" but the fact that it was not followed. *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, 475-76. Another example is provided in the emperor's postwar monologue where he states that when he Hirohito finally realized Okinawa would fall and then advocated that Japan launch a new offensive in China. Once again, Imperial Headquarters failed to follow his "order." Richard B. Frank, *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (New York: Random House, 1999), 99-100.

[5] *Downfall*, 87-88. My thanks to Edward Drea who I think correctly points out that Hirohito understood his role and influence and used both to shape policy decisions. He was neither a figurehead nor a fighting generalissimo, but a shrewd bureaucratic tactician. Email to author, 16, Nov 05.

[6] I started to total up coverage of “military” elements, but quit after a time when it became clear that only a tiny fraction of *Racing the Enemy* sketched out such matters as the American campaigns of blockade and bombardment, the invasion plans, and Japanese plans and efforts to meet the expected U.S. invasion or a Soviet attack. By far the most detailed coverage of “military” elements comes in the section on Soviet operations in the Kurils, where actions down to company level (p. 281) are discussed.

[7] *Downfall*, 99-100.

[8] *Racing the Enemy*, 2, 158-60.

[9] “There is no information to show that Truman, Stimson, and Byrnes were aware of [military intercepts] or that this factor played an important part in their decision to drop the bomb.” *Racing the Enemy*, fn 44, p. 335. In keeping with the conclusion, the text does not discuss the military intercepts on the premise that these policy makers did not see them or that they had no influence.

[10] “History of the Special Distribution Branch Military Intelligence Service, WDGS Part 3, Section 7,” SHR 132, Record Group 457, National Archives and Records Administration. I am working on an article to address a number of matters concerning the handling and distribution of radio intelligence in 1945.

[11] *Downfall*, 240-44.

[12] “Magic” Diplomatic Summary, 16 to 22 July 1945, RG 457, NARA.

[13] Deputy Chief of Staff from Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2. 12 and 13 Jul 45, reel 109. item 2581, George C. Marshall Library.

[14] Joseph C. Grew, *Turbulent Era; a Diplomatic Record of Forty Years*, vol. 2 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 1438-39.

[15] Also absent from Hasegawa’s analysis is the fact that on 7 July 1945, Grew advised Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal not to publish an article prepared by a Japanese journalist predicting that Japan would surrender if she only were promised that there would be only token occupation forces on the basis that it was “precisely the type of overture which [Grew] had predicted would come from Japan,” and which would be simply propaganda designed to weaken U.S. determination to carry out the complete defeat of Japan. *Downfall*, p. 224, quoting from the Forrestal diaries.

[16] E-mail to author, 16 Nov 2005.

[17] *Downfall*, p. 234 (quoting from Herbert Bix, “Japan’s Delayed Surrender,” *Diplomatic History* 19.2 (Spring 1995), p. 208).

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] I am referring to the works of John Dower, *War Without Mercy* (New York: Pantheon, 1986) and *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W.W. Norton/New Press, 1999), Edward Drea, *MacArthur’s Ultra: Codebreaking and the War Against Japan, 1942-45* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992), as well as the previously cited works of Bix and Frank.

[20] One other variable is the Soviet plan to attack Hokkaido. This might have been a wild card on U.S. attitudes to an invasion of the Home Islands. Even the navy might have agreed to a plan under consideration in August 1945 for a landing on northern Honshu as an alternative to Olympic. The new purpose of this alternative, however, would be to block Soviet penetration to the south.

[21] USSBS, *Effects of Strategic Bombing on Japan’s Economy*, 64. Also along the same line is *War Against Japanese Transportation*, 1, 17-18, 27-28.

[22] *Downfall*, 349-54.

[23] *Ibid.*, 310.

[24] *Ibid.*, 297, 308-09, 311-13, 328-29.

[25] My authority for Anami’s warning that the overseas commanders would not surrender and Umezu’s statement to the emperor that Soviet intervention was unfavorable, but did not invalidate Ketsu Go is the “Hoshina Memorandum” which Hasegawa identifies as the best record of the conference. This document was translated in *Statements of Japanese Officials*, Doc. No. 53437, Center for Military History. It shows on page 2 that Umezu stated: “Though the participation of the USSR was disadvantageous to JAPAN, it did not create a situation calling for unconditional surrender.” (the companion Ikeda Memorandum reports Umezu said at this point: “Preparations for the decisive battle of the homeland are already completed, and we are confident of victory. Although the participation of RUSSIA made the situation unfavorable, I do not think we need abandon the opportunity to deliver one last blow to both America and ENGLAND.” Doc No. 54483) The Hoshina memorandum reflects that War Minister Anami flatly stated that the troops overseas would never accept unconditional surrender. Later in the same memorandum, the emperor’s reported reasoning for deciding to terminate the war included his reference to the lack of arms to outfit the numerous new divisions the army was raising, and that “if this is true, there is no possibility of winning the war against the US and Britain who pride themselves on their mechanization.” Nowhere in the evidence recorded in this memorandum does the emperor allude explicitly to the Soviet intervention as a reason to end the war.

[26] *Downfall*, 277-83

[27] The best description of Soviet capabilities is provided by David Glantz, *Soviet Operational and Tactical Combat in Manchuria, 1945 "August Storm"* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 242-310.

[28] Edward Drea, "Missing Intentions: Japanese Intelligence and the Soviet Invasion of Manchuria, 1945," *Military Affairs* (April 1984).

[29] Asada, Sadao, "The Shock of the Atomic Bomb and Japan's decision to Surrender: A Reconsideration," *Pacific Historical Review* 64.4 (November 1998), 490-91.

[30] *Downfall*, 297.

[31] Sakamoto Takao et. al. *Showashi no ronten (Points of Controversy in Showa History)* (Bungeishunju, 2000) 201. I am indebted to Edward Drea for bringing this to my attention.

[32] *Downfall*, 348.

[33] I see now that what appeared to me clear at the time I wrote *Downfall* was by no means so obvious to others. I failed to mention expressly the August 17 Rescript on the assumption that it was clearly in response to the refusal of senior overseas commanders to comply with the surrender order from Tokyo and the emperor's Rescript of August 15. It became painfully clear afterwards that I should have made the direct connection explicitly in *Downfall*.

[34] *Embracing Defeat*, 290.

[35] *Downfall*, 247; Stimson Diary, 16-25 July 9-10 August.

[36] *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 51-53; Takemae Eiji, *Inside GHQ* (New York: Continuum, 2002) 111.

[37] *Downfall*, 350.

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